

The complaint

Mr J complains that Tide Platform Limited cold-called him, placing him in a vulnerable position.

What happened

In July 2023, Mr J received a call from Tide, out of the blue. The caller asked Mr J whether they could ask him some questions as they needed to complete security. Concerned that he was being targeted for fraud, Mr J ended the call as the caller sounded suspicious.

Following the call, Mr J checked the number and the results confirmed it had come from Tide. He then contacted them via his online app. The agent he spoke with checked and confirmed the call was made by someone from Tide and that they would contact the relevant department to gain more detail.

The agent also raised a complaint for Mr J and confirmed that the call was made in order to let him know about additional services that were on offer for him to use while having a Tide account.

Mr J said this call put him into a vulnerable situation, causing him distress and making him concerned about the safety of his account. Given the number of fraudulent calls that are made in the world today, he was suspicious, especially as businesses tell people not to accept calls that are made out of the blue.

To resolve his complaint, Mr J would like Tide to stop cold-calling customers and for them to pay him £500 for the distress caused when putting him into a vulnerable position.

Tide responded to Mr J's complaint and explained that as a banking institution they provide additional services such as extra expense cards and other services. They said the call was made as they wanted to know whether Mr J needed any additional services to help him manage his business account. They confirmed the call was a genuine one, made by Tide, and that they had followed the correct verification process in order to make sure they were speaking with the account holder only.

Mr J wasn't happy with Tide's response so brought his complaint to our service.

Our investigator reviewed the complaint and was of the view that Tide hadn't done anything wrong. While he fully acknowledged Mr J's concern regarding the dangers of fraudulent calls being made, he didn't find that there was anything suspicious or untoward about the call that was made, and that the caller was obligated to ask security questions to make sure they were speaking with the right customer.

He also explained that our service wasn't able to take any action against Tide's policy on calling customers out of the blue. For these reasons, he didn't ask Tide to do anything further.

Mr J disagreed and asked for his complaint to be passed to an ombudsman.

What I've decided – and why

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

Having done so, I agree with the investigator for the same reasons. I know this will come as a disappointment to Mr J, so I will explain why I have reached this conclusion.

I have checked Tide's website and can see that in a section titled "Stay safe from fraud" they explain that they will never ask a customer to share their details or move funds to another account. The personal details they talk about include login details, QR codes and one-time passcodes. Tide also confirm that they'll never ask for account balances, full card numbers or the three security code digits on the back of a card. They'll also never ask a customer to move money - even if their account is compromised. They'll simply block it and secure it instead.

I have also had a listen to the call. The agent introduced themselves and asked whether they could run through some questions with Mr J in order to go through security. Mr J asked what the call was regarding, and the agent explained the call was in relation to Mr J's Tide business banking account. He said he wanted to make sure everything was up to date and working as intended. As Mr J found the call suspicious, he ended it.

Mr J is right in that we are seeing a lot of fraudulent activity in today's current climate, so I can certainly understand why he may have been suspicious and felt he had been put in a vulnerable situation when Tide called him out of the blue.

However, while I accept this was a genuine concern for Mr J, I can't see that Tide have done anything wrong here by calling him. Businesses can call their customers to offer different products and services, and here I can see that Tide followed the correct process in trying to verify Mr J to make sure they were speaking with the correct person. As Mr J found the call suspicious, he hung up and contacted Tide through his app, and they were able to confirm that the call had been a genuine one.

Having reviewed everything, it's my decision that while I appreciate Mr J's strength of feeling on the matter, I can't say that Tide did anything wrong in contacting him out of the blue. And I'm pleased to note that the call was a genuine one, meaning Mr J's account is safe and secure.

Because of this, I will not be asking Tide to do anything further.

My final decision

My final decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr J to accept or reject my decision before 13 December 2023.

Danielle Padden
Ombudsman