

The complaint

Miss G complains that Metro Bank PLC hasn't dealt with her claim of money missing from her accounts and has provided poor service.

What happened

Miss G says that she deposited a cheque following a court settlement in 2017 of some £165,000 and that a lower amount was credited. She says that money of over £44,000 was taken from her account on 9 November 2022 and there was a further £12,000 missing on 21 November 2022. She thinks that Metro Bank has breached her confidentiality.

Metro Bank said it hadn't identified any error. It had seen that Miss G deposited just under £134,500 into her account in August 2017. There was no evidence that any higher amount had been credited or that money had gone missing. It accepted that on 8 November 2022 £44,269 was wrongly credited to her account and removed the next day. This should have been £2 as this was cash that Miss G had put into a 'Magic Money' machine and the receipt entry had been wrongly keyed by a cashier. There was no withdrawal shown for £12,000 later in the month. It had made a note of the concerns Miss G had raised about her privacy when in the branch and said it would take this into account on future visits. It also noted that she had her safety deposit box key stolen and that she could deal with this in branch and that the manager had offered to go through all her accounts with. Metro Bank said it was aware that although Miss G hadn't complained to it about accessing fixed rate deposits she had raised this with this service. It commented that this could only be accessed if there was evidence of hardship, and she would need to provide this.

Our investigator didn't recommend that the complaint be upheld. She considered that Metro Bank had explained what happened and there was nothing to support that money had gone missing. Miss G had two fixed rate deposits – one expiring on 7 October 2023 and the other on 22 June 2025 – and she would need to contact Metro Bank if this was causing her hardship.

Miss G didn't agree. She said that her money was in a 'stranglehold' with the fixed deposits and would have to remain a client until 2025. She was unable to obtain any cheques to show her deposit in 2017. She has been forced to use the money in her ISA. Miss G said she wanted to be taken seriously and that she has lost trust in Metro Bank. She was unhappy with the way her account appeared to have been used as a 'holding account' in relation to the deposit error. She had been accused of making a false claim as a result of Metro Bank's actions. One of the fixed bond accounts has by now matured and she wants this matter to be dealt with. Miss G said she hasn't been successful in switching from Metro Bank.

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.

I've looked at the information Metro Bank has provided about what happened. And what Miss G has provided to this service and her testimony about what happened.

Metro Bank has provided copies of her account statements and these support what it has said about the money in her account. I note the deposit of just under £134,500 in August 2017 and I don't have evidence to support that being incorrect or there being other money that wasn't then credited. I also can't see that £12,000 was withdrawn or transferred on 21 November 2022 or in any days around that period.

Metro Bank did make a mistake with the credit to her account on 8 November 2022. This should have been £2 from a receipt for cash deposited into a money counting machine. It is clear to me that the error came from the receipt number '44269' being wrongly input as the amount in pounds by the cashier. That higher amount of money was never paid in by Miss G or anyone else and the error came to light in the branch reconciliation. I can see Metro Bank noted it tried to call Miss G about this but was unsuccessful and she visited the branch. It has apologised for the error.

Miss G hasn't complained directly to Metro Bank about accessing her fixed deposits. It has though explained the position and that she would need to provide evidence of severe hardship to do so before the terms end. If Miss G thinks she since has done that and still can't access all her money then she would be able to raise a complaint. I note that she has had a number of fixed deposits in the past and she hadn't complained that she didn't know about the terms involved here. It does seem as she says that one fixed deposit she made on 7 April 2022 has now matured.

I can't know exactly what was said in branch to Miss G and whether someone was able to overhear that. I don't have evidence to support that Metro Bank breached her confidentiality or made any allegations. But now that it is aware of her concerns about privacy it has made a specific customer note to address this when she visits. And as Metro Bank has set out the branch manager is able to go through the account statements with Miss G and help her deal with the theft of her safety deposit box key.

I know that Miss G will be unhappy with my findings as she has lost trust in Metro Bank and is convinced money has gone missing. But I'm afraid I don't have a reasonable basis to require it to do anything more.

My final decision

My decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss G to accept or reject my decision before 16 November 2023.

Michael Crewe
Ombudsman