

The complaint

Ms D and Mr J are unhappy that debit cards issued by Metro Bank PLC didn't work.

What happened

Ms D and Mr J had a holiday booked in a European territory. Before the holiday, they opened a Metro account because Metro didn't charge to use debit cards in Europe. However, when Ms D and Mr J arrived on holiday, they found that the debit card issued to Ms D didn't work. Ms D and Mr J weren't happy about this, and they also weren't happy that when they returned to the UK and visited a Metro branch, Ms D's debit card was replaced but Mr J's debit card then immediately stopped working. So, they raised a complaint.

Metro apologised to Ms D and Mr J for what had happened and acknowledged that human error had led to their respective cards not working properly. Metro resolved the issue so that both Ms D and Mr J held working debit cards, and they made a payment of £75 to Ms D and Mr J as compensation for any upset and inconvenience they may have incurred. Ms D and Mr J weren't satisfied with Metro's response, so they referred their complaint to this service.

One of our investigators looked at this complaint. During their investigation, Metro acknowledged that Ms D and Mr J had incurred a degree of trouble and upset that the £75 compensation paid to date didn't fairly account for. So, Metro offered to increase their compensation payment by a further £175, so that the total compensation amount was £250.

Our investigator felt that Metro's offer of increased compensation represented a fair resolution to this complaint. However, Ms D and Mr J remained dissatisfied, so the matter was escalated to an ombudsman for a final decision.

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 issued a provisional decision on this complaint on 8 August 2023 as follows:

Metro have explained that when Ms D and Mr J first opened the account, human error meant the card that was issued to Mr J effectively superseded – and thus render useless – the card that had already been issued to Ms D. This meant Ms D and Mr J only had one working card between them when they went on holiday, rather than two as should have been the case.

It's clear from Ms D and Mr J's testimony that this had a detrimental effect on their holiday, including that Ms D and Mr J had to contact Metro from overseas as well as that Ms D needed to carry cash on her person – which she explained she was uncomfortable doing – so that she could pay for purchases when she was apart from Mr J.

Furthermore, when Ms D and Mr J returned to the UK and visited a Metro branch to resolve the issue, a further error meant the replacement card that was issued to Ms D effectively superseded – and thus rendered useless – the previously working card held by Mr J. And

this meant that while Ms D and Mr J left Metro's branch believing they both held working cards, it was unfortunately again the case that only one of them did. And this led to further frustration and upset for Ms D and Mr J when this fact was discovered shortly thereafter.

Metro have acknowledged that the £75 compensation they initially paid to Ms D and Mr J didn't fairly account for the trouble and upset Ms D and Mr J experienced. And Metro offered to pay a further £175 compensation, taking the total amount of compensation to £250.

Had it been the case that Metro had resolved Ms D and Mr J's issue at the time of their branch visit upon their return to the UK, so that the £250 compensation was solely for the frustration and worry Ms D and Mr J had experienced while on holiday, then I might feel that this compensation was a fair amount. This is because I feel the disruption Ms D and Mr J experienced while on holiday in and of itself fairly merits compensation of at least £250.

However, given that Metro unfortunately compounded an initial mistake with a further mistake, which meant that Ms D and Mr J's initial attempt to resolve the situation upon returning to the UK resulted in further exasperation and distress for them, I don't feel that a total compensation amount of £250 is a fair amount in this instance.

As such, I'll be provisionally upholding this complaint and instructing Metro to pay an increased amount of £325 further compensation to Ms D and Mr J – instead of £175 – so that the total amount of compensation payable is £400. Which I feel more fairly reflects the total amount of upset and inconvenience that Ms D and Mr J have experienced.

In my provisional decision letter, I gave both Ms D and Mr J and Metro the opportunity to respond and provide any comments they might wish me to consider before I moved to issues a final decision. However, neither Ms D and Mr J nor Metro provided a response.

As such, I see no reason not to issue a final decision here whereby I uphold this complaint in Ms D and Mr J's favour on the basis outlined above. And I therefore confirm that I do uphold this complaint on that basis accordingly.

Putting things right

Metro must pay a further £325 to Ms D and Mr J, for a total compensation amount of £400.

My final decision

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint against Metro Bank Plc on the basis explained above.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Ms D and Mr J to accept or reject my decision before 3 October 2023.

Paul Cooper
Ombudsman