

The complaint

Mrs A complains Lloyds Bank PLC can't locate an account she held with them.

What happened

Mrs A says she had a very old Lloyds account which had money in it. She said due to her relocating, she did not keep track of the account, so she sent Lloyds her statements and all of the details of the account, but she can't find her money or the account. Mrs A made a complaint to Lloyds.

Lloyds did not uphold Mrs A's complaint. They said that despite contacting multiple departments regarding her account, they have been unsuccessful in locating any information on the account that she held with them, as part of the reason is due to the time that has passed and the type of account she held. Lloyds said they were unable to assist Mrs A any further in relation to the account. Mrs A brought her complaint to our service.

Our adjudicator did not uphold Mrs A's complaint. She said in situations such as this, our service would expect a bank to show that it undertook reasonable searches of the records it holds, to see whether any information on the account can be found. She said Lloyds have shown us that it undertook numerous searches, using the information provided by Mrs A, but there is no record of this account or the outstanding balance. She said it was more likely than not that the account was closed, and it's not unexpected after 25 years, that Lloyds don't have any records to show exactly what happened.

Mrs A asked for an Ombudsman to review her complaint. She said she didn't believe she had been informed of the closure of her bank account and if it was closed, she asked where her money would be located now. She queried whether the funds could have been taken without her consent.

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.

While Mrs A is in the possession of statements for what appears to be two different accounts, this is not proof that the accounts still have funds in the accounts. It simply shows that at a point in time the accounts had funds in them at a particular time and that statements were issued on the account.

I have thought about what I would expect Lloyds to do in these circumstances and if they have treated Mrs A fairly in their investigation and I think they have. They took the available information from her and conducted a search of their systems. But due to the time that's passed, Lloyds aren't able to provide any more information about these accounts. As the statements are dated around 30 years ago and older, I can't say it's unreasonable that Lloyds does not have any further information about these accounts.

On the balance of probabilities, it's likely these accounts were closed by Mrs A. I say this because if they were still open, then I would expect the search results from Lloyds to show an open account(s). I've noted at least one of the accounts appeared to be automatically renewed on maturity – and more importantly didn't need Mrs A's instruction to do so. Therefore if it was still open, it would be reasonable to expect Mrs A would have been sent out further statements, but there is no evidence of these accounts still being open, which would indicate they were closed.

Mrs A has queried whether the accounts could be closed without her consent. But on the balance of probabilities, it would be likely that she would have to sign and/or show identification to close the accounts, and therefore she would have instructed Lloyds what to do with the funds in the accounts, and she would have been aware she was closing the accounts. But ultimately, too long has passed to be able to say for certain what happened here. So it follows that I don't require Lloyds to do anything further.

My final decision

I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs A to accept or reject my decision before 25 January 2024.

Gregory Sloanes
Ombudsman