

## **The complaint**

Mr C complains that National Westminster Bank Plc blocked and closed his account. He'd like an explanation for why his account was closed.

## **What happened**

Mr C had a foundation account with NatWest.

On 18 August 2021 NatWest blocked Mr C's account. Mr C's account was unblocked but on 2 September 2021 NatWest sent Mr C a letter advising him the account would be closed on 1 November 2021.

Mr C complained to NatWest initially about the block then the lack of an explanation for why his account was closed. NatWest didn't uphold his complaint, they said they'd acted fairly in blocking and closing it. And didn't have to provide an explanation.

Mr C didn't agree so brought his complaint to our service.

One of our investigator's looked into his complaint. After reviewing everything they advised Mr C that they thought NatWest's actions in blocking and closing his account were fair.

Mr C wasn't satisfied with their response – specifically he's unhappy that NatWest haven't shared the reason his account was closed and the term they relied on.

As Mr C didn't agree it's been passed to me to decide.

## **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.

NatWest are strictly regulated and must take certain actions in order to meet their legal and regulatory obligations. They're also required to carry out ongoing monitoring of new and existing relationships. That sometimes means they need to restrict customers' accounts – either in full or partially while they carry out their review. Having looked at what's happened I appreciate why Mr C may have found this inconvenient, but I can't say the block was unfair or was unduly long.

NatWest can only close accounts in certain circumstances and if it's in the terms and conditions of the account. Mr C's account was a basic or foundation account, and there's strict legislation which NatWest have to follow on closing it fairly. I've reviewed the evidence NatWest have shared with our service and the relevant terms and conditions. I realise this will disappoint Mr C but I'm satisfied they acted fairly here.

Mr C's main unhappiness is to do with *why* NatWest closed his account – and which term they relied on in closing it. I appreciate this will disappoint Mr C, but NatWest are under no obligation to share their reasons for closing his account or the specific term relied on. NatWest have shared that information with our service and our rules allow us to receive

certain evidence in confidence, if for example it includes security information or it's commercially sensitive. I consider that some of the evidence NatWest have provided is information that should be kept confidential. I understand this will disappoint Mr C but I'm satisfied that NatWest have aren't required to share the reason for their actions with Mr C.

For the reasons I've outlined above I won't be asking NatWest to do anything further here.

### **My final decision**

My final decision is I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr C to accept or reject my decision before 2 January 2024.

Jeff Burch  
**Ombudsman**