

The complaint

Mr and Mrs B complain that their account with Lloyds Bank PLC was made dormant and that it won't accept their proof of ID (identity) to reopen the account.

What happened

Mr and Mrs B live abroad. They were contacted by Lloyds in August 2021 as part of the annual dormancy programme as their account had been inactive for more than three years. Mr and Mrs B assert that Mr B sent in proof of his identity in the form of a driving licence but as this was not a UK or EEA licence Lloyds didn't accept it. When in the country Mrs B visited a branch of Lloyds she was told that as it was a joint account she could not reopen the account without Mr B being present. She says she was told in the course of phone calls over 18 months that the driving licence would be acceptable. After making a complaint and speaking to an adviser on 27 January 2023 she was told that a copy of an in date passport of any country, certified by a public notary (as proof of ID) and a document such as a household bill, less than 6 months old, showing the name and address of the passport holder were acceptable.

Mrs B sent in those copy documents in her letter of 24 February 2023 but the ID document was rejected by Lloyds as it could not accept certification by an electorate officer. It provided a guide as to who was an acceptable certifier.

Lloyds responded to Mr and Mrs B's complaint on 31 May 2023 but said that having checked its records, it wasn't able to find any information to support its interaction with them. It invited them to provide the dates and times of their calls, any names of the colleagues spoken with, the number dialled and the number called from. It then went on to set out what was acceptable proof of ID and certification.

On referral to the Financial Ombudsman Service our Investigator said that he couldn't see that the bank had made any errors and he was satisfied that Mr and Mrs B were aware of what the certification criteria was. He said the bank is still prepared to review acceptable documentation to reinstate the account, which he recommended discussing with it.

Mr and Mrs B were not happy and said that they were assured that Mr B's driving licence or a passport from his country of residence were an acceptable proof of identity. Then, going through Lloyds' complaints process, they were told that his passport was 100% acceptable proof. They need to know in writing from Lloyds that their passports are acceptable. They say that Lloyds keeps rejecting them as unacceptable proof of identity.

The matter has been passed to me for further consideration.

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.

On the question of the account being made dormant in the first place, whilst I can't see that

Mr and Mrs B raised this point with Lloyds, nevertheless it has explained why the account was dormant. This was because there had been no customer initiated transactions on the account for over three years. There had been payment of share dividends into the account but these were not customer initiated. So I don't think that Lloyds did anything wrong in making the account dormant and in any event advised Mr and Mrs B how to reactivate the account.

Mrs B says that during several phone calls over 18 months, they were assured that a driving licence or passport from their country of residence was an acceptable proof of identity. Then, going through Lloyds' complaints process, they were told that their passports were 100% acceptable proof. She says she needs to know in writing from Lloyds that their passports are acceptable, as Lloyds keeps rejecting them as unacceptable proof of identity.

Lloyds has no record of Mrs B being told that Mr B's driving licence was an acceptable proof of ID. It did invite Mr and Mrs B to provide the details of any such phone conversations. But they have not done so. They have provided a handwritten note of their conversation with the customer adviser on 27 January 2023 (and this call is briefly mentioned in Lloyds' notes), with additional notes from later. But I think in that conversation Mrs B was told that the passport was acceptable proof. I assume that she provided the copy passport with her letter to Lloyds of 24 February 2023. The proof of ID was rejected by Lloyds because it was not certified appropriately. I can see from Mrs B's notes and from her letter that she was told that it had to be certified by a public notary or a solicitor or accountant. The copy passport presented by Mrs B was rejected by Lloyds as proof of ID because it was not certified appropriately.

So I can't see from the evidence provided that Mr and Mrs B were told that a non-UK or EEA passport were not acceptable proofs of ID. The letters and leaflets provided by Lloyds I think make it clear that a valid passport from any country is acceptable, so long as the copy is appropriately certified. As far as I can see Lloyds has already confirmed that the proof of address supplied is acceptable so Mr and Mrs B just need to provide a certified copy (certified by the appropriate officer) of one of their passports. They should probably resubmit a proof of address as the one previously submitted may be out of date (more than six months old).

Overall I don't think that Lloyds has done anything wrong in this case. It has provided Mr and Mrs B with the information about what they need to send to it to get the account reactivated, and I'm not persuaded that it misled them about this.

My final decision

I don't uphold the complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr and Mrs B to accept or reject my decision before 21 December 2023.

Ray Lawley
Ombudsman