



## **The complaint**

Mr G complains that Goldman Sachs International Bank said it would close his savings account if he didn't provide information.

## **What happened**

Mr G had an account with Goldman Sachs. In January 2023 Goldman Sachs emailed Mr G to say it had contacted him to request some important information in relation to his account. It said it needed this information to comply with its legal and regulatory obligations. And it said that if it didn't hear from Mr G it would need to close his account.

Mr G called Goldman Sachs the same day. During the call, Goldman Sachs said its systems had flagged that Mr G might be connected to a politically exposed person – and so it needed to check whether he was or not. Goldman Sachs then asked Mr G if he was the chief executive of a named organisation. Mr G confirmed he was not. Goldman Sachs then said that was all they needed from him and that Mr G didn't need to do anything more.

Mr G says he found this very distressing. He wanted to know what the connection was between him and the third party. He says he was worried the third party had been applying for accounts in his name. And he feels that Goldman Sachs hadn't explained things correctly. He complained to Goldman Sachs and then referred the complaint to us.

Our investigator looked at the complaint and didn't think it should be upheld. Mr G doesn't agree. The complaint has been referred 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.

I don't uphold the complaint. I'll explain why.

Goldman Sachs, like all financial businesses, is subject to legal and regulatory requirements. These mean it may need to carry out extra checks on its customers at any time. The terms and conditions of the account say that Goldman Sachs can ask Mr G for information about his personal details or circumstances, and that it could block access to the account if he didn't provide this.

In this case, Goldman Sachs thought Mr G might have been the chief executive of a named organisation. (Mr G subsequently learned he had the same name as this chief executive). Goldman Sachs contacted Mr G to check this, and Mr G confirmed he wasn't.

Based on what I've seen, I'm satisfied that Goldman Sachs was acting in line with its legal and regulatory obligations when it asked Mr G this question.

Mr G says the email caused him panic. In particular, the email says that "We need you to confirm further details about your application." He says he thought this meant someone else had fraudulently applied for an account in his name. He feels Goldman Sachs should have

been clearer that it wanted to talk to him about his existing account, not a new application.

I don't doubt this communication caused Mr G some concern – though I also note that the email began by saying “We have contacted you to request some important information about you, in relation to your account.” That said, I've listened to the call that followed and note that Goldman Sachs explained why it was asking for this information – and that after Mr G confirmed he wasn't the third party, Goldman Sachs confirmed he needed do nothing more. I appreciate that Mr G is unhappy that the person he spoke to wasn't able to give him specific reasons why he might be linked with the third party – but Mr G says he learned that the third party had the same name as him after a 10 second internet search. I acknowledge that Mr G feels that having the same name as someone shouldn't be grounds for concern. But given Mr G and the third party shared a name, and given Goldman Sachs's legal and regulatory obligations, I don't accept that Goldman Sachs was wrong to have asked Mr G about this or to have sent him the email.

With all this in mind, I don't uphold the complaint and I'm not going to tell Goldman Sachs to compensate Mr G.

### **My final decision**

I don't uphold the complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr G to accept or reject my decision before 22 February 2024.

Rebecca Hardman  
**Ombudsman**