

The complaint

Mr B has complained about the events that occurred when he attempted to switch his current account to TSB Bank plc.

What happened

Mr B wanted to switch his current account to TSB. To do so, he first needed to open a new current account with the bank, and this was completed on 28 September 2023.

Mr B then attempted to arrange the account switch. He said that the information he was given was that he would need to arrange the switch via TSB's banking app. However, when he attempted to use the app for this purpose, he found that it did not work, so he could not switch his account. A further problem Mr B encountered was that TSB's automated telephone system did not recognise the phonetic alphabet, when for example he said 'Oscar' to represent the letter 'O'. He also said that the live chat facility didn't respond effectively to him. Dissatisfied with TSB's account switching process, Mr B complained to the bank.

TSB responded that in order to request an account switch, Mr B should access a link which can be found on its website, rather than its app. It provided a website link with further information about how to switch. It also confirmed the incentives it had in place at that time for customers who switched their accounts to TSB, and provided a number to call for queries about account switching. TSB said that its phone system was not set up to recognise the phonetic alphabet, and it gave Mr B some tips about the most effective ways to access and use its phone banking service.

Unhappy with TSB's response, Mr B brought a complaint to this service. When sending in its submissions to us, TSB offered Mr B £50 compensation to reflect the level of service he had received from the bank. Mr B declined the offer, stating he did not consider that it fairly reflected the extent of the difficulties he had experienced as a result of TSB's customer service.

Our investigator upheld this complaint, concluding that the account switch had taken longer than it should have done, and that initially TSB had incorrectly advised Mr B to use its app to start the switching process, rather than its website link. She proposed that TSB should pay Mr B £100 (including the £50 already offered) to reflect the service he'd received. The investigator did not consider TSB was at fault for its telephony system not recognising the phonetic alphabet.

Mr B considered the proposed compensation was not enough to reflect the problems TSB had caused him. He said overall he had been pursuing this matter for three months, and had spent many hours doing so. Mr B asked for his complaint to be referred to an ombudsman.

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.

Mr B has described the extent of the problems he encountered when attempting to switch his current account to TSB. It is clear that the process did not run as smoothly as it should have done, and took longer than would have been expected. My understanding is that the switching delay did not cause Mr B any financial loss. However I appreciate that it did result in him spending unnecessary additional time and effort as he attempted to get the switch arranged.

In particular Mr B has explained how TSB initially told him to use its banking app to initiate the switch. TSB has confirmed that the process should in fact be started via its website link. The incorrect information Mr B was originally given caused a delay in starting the switching process, and also led to him having to spend time contacting TSB in order to rectify this matter.

I have carefully considered Mr B's comments about the difficulties that he says he was caused as a result of TSB's failings, and I acknowledge that he remains dissatisfied with TSB's overall customer service. When considering what level of compensation might be appropriate for difficulties caused to a consumer as a result of a business' poor service, I must assess what additional inconvenience a business' errors may have caused, over and above matters that might reasonably arise when making changes to financial arrangements.

Overall, taking into account the problems that occurred in this case, and the levels of compensation awarded by this service on complaints with similar circumstances, my view is that the investigator's proposal that TSB pay £100 compensation in total is a reasonable one. I would also agree with the investigator's comments that TSB was not at fault for its telephone system not recognising the phonetic alphabet. I recognise that Mr B might be disappointed with the level of compensation awarded, but in conclusion my view is that this represents a fair resolution to this complaint.

My final decision

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint, and I require TSB Bank plc to pay Mr B £100 compensation for inconvenience caused (this amount includes the £50 it has already offered).

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr B to accept or reject my decision before 20 March 2024.

John Swain
Ombudsman