

The complaint

Mrs M complains that HSBC UK Bank Plc ('HSBC') should pay her more compensation, after admitting it provided poor service when she wanted to amend payment details on her account.

What happened

Mrs M phoned HSBC in April 2024 to make changes to payee information on her current account. The call was disconnected before the call handler Mrs M was speaking to was able to complete her request.

Mrs M phoned again a few days later to follow this up when she didn't receive a call back. She complained, saying that she had first been in touch with HSBC about this in December 2023.

HSBC agreed that ideally the call handler should have phoned Mrs M back and Mrs M shouldn't have needed to chase HSBC to complete her request. Following discussion, and after checking that amendments were now successfully completed, HSBC paid Mrs M £30 compensation by way of apology for its poor service and the inconvenience caused.

Mrs M didn't feel this went far enough to resolve things and she brought her complaint to us.

Our investigator thought that HSBC should pay Mrs M a further £70 to fairly reflect Mrs M's overall customer experience – bringing the total compensation amount to £100.

HSBC agreed with the investigator's view and paid Mrs M a further £70.

Mrs M contacted us to say that she didn't feel this was enough compensation and she wasn't happy with the time it took HSBC to pay this. She would like an ombudsman to review her complaint and so it has come to me for a final decision.

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.

This includes listening to the call recordings provided.

Having thought about everything I've seen and been told, I've independently reached the same overall conclusions as our investigator. I'll explain why I say this.

Mrs M feels strongly that HSBC let her down in terms of the service she was entitled to expect. HSBC has accepted that it wasn't as helpful as it could have been when Mrs M got in touch about the changes she wanted to make to her account. So, since HSBC has upheld the complaint, I don't need to say more about what happened. I will concentrate on the question of fair redress, which is the main reason Mrs M has requested an ombudsman referral.

The industry regulator, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), says our service can only look into complaints about regulated activities, and complaint handling isn't a regulated activity. We can however consider the customer service Mrs M received and I have kept this in mind when thinking about what HSBC needs to do to fairly compensate Mrs M.

Our approach to redress is to aim to look at what's fair and reasonable in all the circumstances of a complaint. One way we would try and do this impartially here is to put Mrs M in the position she'd be in if HSBC hadn't been responsible for the poor service issues it has admitted. So my starting point is to think about the impact on Mrs M of what happened.

I haven't been provided with anything to show that Mrs M is out of pocket as a result of any poor service on the part of HSBC. But fair compensation also needs to reflect the wider impact on Mrs M of HSBC's service failings.

HSBC's admitted poor service would've been frustrating and inconvenient for Mrs M. She had to make several calls to HSBC to complete the task she intended. I've taken into account that the changes she wanted to make to her account were relatively straightforward and that it took HSBC a lot longer than should have been the case to carry out her instructions and complete her request. In part, that seems to have happened because there were telephony issues – but the onus was on HSBC to attempt a call back to Mrs M in these circumstances when a call disconnected, which didn't happen.

Thinking about the overall compensation amount that is fair and reasonable here, I think it's worth bearing in mind that we explain on our website that, typically, an apology or small monetary award will fairly compensate a one-off incidence of poor service, especially where there is no significant or lasting impact. And it's important to remember that using any bank's services won't always be totally trouble-free and we wouldn't award for things that aren't more serious than the normal nuisances of everyday life. So just because HSBC agrees it didn't deal as well as it should've done when Mrs M asked it for help to change payee details, it doesn't necessarily follow that we would award significant compensation.

I think the £100 compensation now paid by HSBC is fair and reasonable in all the circumstances here. It reflects the upset and inconvenience Mrs M was caused. Beyond this, I don't agree that Mrs M's experience warrants further compensation. I am satisfied that £100 matches the level of award I would make in these circumstances had it not already been proposed and paid. It is in line with the amount this service would award in similar cases, and it is fair compensation for Mrs M in this particular situation.

Putting things right

I make no directions for any further action. I am satisfied that HSBC has already paid fair and reasonable compensation to reflect the extent and impact on Mrs M of its admitted poor service.

My final decision

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint, but I make no directions for any further action as I am satisfied that HSBC UK Bank Plc has already done enough to put things right for Mrs M.

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

Susan Webb
Ombudsman