

The complaint

Mr W complains that Bank of Scotland plc trading as Halifax blocked his card multiple times when he was on holiday.

What happened

In August 2024 Mr W went abroad on a family holiday. On four separate occasions he was unable to use his credit card because it had been blocked. Each time he was unable to use the card Mr W had to contact Halifax. He says that in total he spent over 10 hours trying to resolve the issues with his card, which caused distress to him and his family and ruined the holiday.

Mr W complained to Halifax. Halifax issued a final response on 21 August 2024 in which it said the blocks had been applied for additional security checks and that it hadn't made an error. It acknowledged that the block wasn't removed from the additional cardholders card when it should've been and offered £150 compensation.

Mr W remained unhappy and brought his complaint to this service.

Our investigator didn't uphold the complaint. He said that whilst he appreciated the inconvenience caused to Mr W, the block had been applied as part of security measures which were in place to protect customers and this service couldn't ask a business to change these. The investigator said the compensation offered by Halifax was fair and reasonable.

Mr W didn't agree so I've been asked to review the complaint.

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 know it will disappoint Mr W, but I agree with the investigators opinion. I'll explain why.

I've read and considered the whole file, but I'll concentrate my comments on what I think is relevant. If I don't comment on any specific point, it's not because I've failed to take it on board and think about it but because I don't think I need to comment on it in order to reach what I think is the right outcome.

I've reviewed the terms and conditions of the credit card agreement. Mr W agreed to these when he took out the credit card. Under the section titled "Can we stop you using your card or refuse to authorise a transaction?" it sets out the circumstances where a card can be blocked as follows:

"We have reasonable grounds for suspecting fraudulent or unauthorised use of your account, including if the transaction seems unusual compared with your normal card usage

"We believe it is necessary as part of our procedures to prevent fraud or misuse of cards. You may be asked for further information, including proof of your identity, when we are

asked to authorise a transaction”

I appreciate that it must've been distressing for Mr W to have his card blocked. I also appreciate that he had to spend time calling the bank when he would rather have spent this time enjoying his holiday.

I've listened to the calls that Mr W made to Halifax each time the card was blocked. I agree that this took up a considerable amount of time (some of which was waiting time) but I can also see that each time the card was blocked, the block was removed once Mr W had completed the relevant procedures, and Mr W was able to use the card again.

As I've said above, I understand that it must've been very frustrating for Mr W to have the card blocked multiple times. However, having reviewed the information provided by Halifax, I'm satisfied that the cards were blocked in line with the banks fraud prevention procedures. Because of this I'm unable to say that Halifax has made an error.

I can see that on one occasion the additional cardholders card wasn't unblocked, which resulted in Mr W having to make a further call to Halifax. Halifax has acknowledged that it should've been unblocked and has apologised for the error and offered to pay compensation of £150 for this.

Taking everything into consideration, I'm unable to say that Halifax made an error when it blocked the card. There's nothing to suggest that there was a problem with the banks automatic fraud prevention measures or that Mr W was treated unfairly. I think the bank were right to acknowledge the error in failing to unblock the additional cardholders card and I'm satisfied the compensation offered for this aspect is fair and reasonable.

My final decision

My final decision is that I don't uphold the complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr W to accept or reject my decision before 14 January 2025.

Emma Davy
Ombudsman