

# Financial Lives: The experiences of vulnerable consumers – Case Studies

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## Case studies

The case studies presented here explore the experiences that vulnerable consumers had when dealing with retail financial services firms, based on face-to-face depth interviews, undertaken by IFF research.

They cover the experiences of vulnerable consumers in dealing with retail financial services firms. These consumers have one or more drivers of vulnerability – having low resilience, low capability, having suffered a negative life event, or having an ongoing health condition. These experiences covered a range of financial products including house insurance, car insurance, travel insurance, current accounts, loans, overdrafts, critical illness cover, mortgages, and equity release. It provides evidence from the real experiences of a small sample of people, in dealing with a broad range of financial services firms.

The 21 interviews are summarised in 23 case studies, published alongside this report. These case studies explore consumers' experiences based on what they perceive to have happened. So, the case studies are not an assessment of the individual firm's conduct nor are they an assessment of regulated firms' behaviour as a whole.

This should be read in conjunction with the Summary report published alongside these case studies.

There is a case study for every interview undertaken, which focuses on a particular interaction experienced by the participant. For a few interviews, there are two case studies where two relevant interactions were covered in detail.

Each case study summarises the indicators of the customer's vulnerability, the consequences of the firms' actions and the harms that the participant told us they had experienced. All participants had experienced a negative life event or serious health condition in the last three years. However, many also displayed other drivers of vulnerability related to their capability or resilience. The background section of each case study includes how the customer describes their financial situation and activity.

## 1. Current Account

<b>Overview</b>	The customer had to close his father's current account following his death but had encountered some difficulties and received misleading information.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>John is 71 lives by himself in a large, detached house. He has children from a past marriage but doesn't see them very often so he can be quite lonely. He has ongoing issues with depression which started around 20 years ago when his wife left him, but no longer takes medication. He met a new partner who subsequently died, of cancer, so he moved in with his father. Taking his three dogs for a long walk every day helps him manage his mood.</p> <p>He is on a very low annual income (solely from pensions) and has no savings in the bank, so he worries about unexpected costs, although he seems to manage his finances well. He acknowledges that his house is too big for him but enjoys being able to listen to his music without headphones. He is keen not to move and instead lives very frugally but misses having disposable income. He likes to keep around £200 as emergency cash in the house.</p> <p>He lived with his father for 17 years in the property, before his father's death 18 months ago. His father used to help him with financial matters, as well as paying for most things, so it has been a shock both financially and emotionally to cope without him.</p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	<b>X</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	He felt a bit overawed and was unsure how to approach the provider. He did not find information about the financial products easy to understand.			
<b>Situation</b>	After his father's death, he needed to sort out his father's financial affairs, including closing his bank accounts. He went in the branch to do this.			
<b>What did the customer do?</b>	<p>A couple of days after his father's death, John went into the local branch and explained that he wanted to close his father's account. The girl at the desk looked at the account usage and suggested he should contact the police because the account showed some activity dated after his father's death. This was resolved when he explained that the payments shown had been cleared with a couple of days' delay and were made before his father died. However, it left him feeling that the bank was not very empathetic to his situation.</p> <p><i>"I was being made to feel I had been doing things that I shouldn't have been."</i></p> <p>He was told his mother, who had died some years before, was still registered on the account so he had to send off for the death certificate</p>			



	<p>before the account could be closed. He made an appointment to come back.</p> <p>He came back for his appointment a few days later to find that, due to the payments still going out, his father's account was now overdrawn by £700. The bank told him that he would be responsible for paying this sum back. Luckily John's son, who works in finance, had already told him that he wouldn't be liable for the debt, and so John notified the bank that he would not be paying it back. He was not happy with the tone that they used, nor the fact that he knew the information they gave him was incorrect.</p> <p><i>"Dad had just died but they couldn't care less about that. They were just interested in knowing where the money was coming from to cover the debt".</i></p> <p>Upon returning to the branch a third time after not hearing anything back, he was then abruptly told his case was being transferred to a company that deals with insolvency. He did not have any further interaction with the bank from that point. The account was ultimately closed and he did not have to pay the £700 debt.</p> <p>The interactions had all occurred at the desk of the branch, which he felt was not appropriate. He would have preferred to be taken aside into a private room.</p> <p>In contrast, when he informed his father's motor finance company of his death, he found them very helpful and accommodating, particularly as they wrote off the debt that was on the account.</p>
<p><b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b></p>	<p>Although he fortunately did not incur any financial harm, this was a stressful experience and has made him mistrustful of the bank in question so he would be put off using them in the future. Had he not known that he was not liable to pay, he felt the emotional strain of having to deal with a £700 debt would have been immense. He felt that the pressure put on him by the bank could've made him more depressed than he already was.</p> <p>He has some concerns that others in his situation may not have known that they were not liable to pay the debt and therefore would have given in to the bank's demands, potentially shouldering a significant debt as a result.</p>

## 2. Current Account

<b>Overview</b>	Following the death of her husband, the customer visited her bank branch to update the account details, where she was given an appointment with a specialist bereavement advisor who helped her.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Patricia is 66 and lives on her own in Scotland. She is retired and has family living close by.</p> <p>Patricia's husband died about a year ago. Despite no longer being able to share the responsibility for managing the financial affairs, she is ok dealing with this. Her financial situation is not as good as she has the same day to day living costs, but her pension has decreased.</p> <p><i>"The pension my husband had didn't transfer back to me or anything. You still have the same outgoings because I am still in the same house so all the same, but the pension is less than what we had."</i></p> <p>Patricia does not review her financial products regularly, and last did this when her husband passed away, as she feels her knowledge about the range of financial products available is low.</p> <p><i>"I don't have stocks and shares and ISAs - there are lots of different ISAs and I don't know the differences."</i></p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	<b>X</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	She now struggles to cope managing her money.			
<b>Situation</b>	Patricia visited her local bank branch and joined the main queue, to cancel her husband's bank account following his death.			
<b>What did the customer do?</b>	<p>A member of staff approached her while she was in the queue, asking what she required. When she mentioned the death of her husband, he helpfully explained to her that there was someone specialist who could deal with this for her and that he would be able to make an appointment for her to take place in a couple of days.</p> <p><i>"I wanted to change all the bank accounts from both of our names ... current and savings account ... he said you can deal with a specialist team and they can deal with everything for you ... he gave me a date and time to come back up and it was a lady who was there"</i></p> <p>Patricia had a face-to-face meeting with the specialist adviser which took around an hour. The adviser was helpful and appeared to be well trained in bereavement matters. She talked her through the process</p>			

	<p>and cancelled certain Direct Debits that were no longer required. She came across as very caring and Patricia thought this was better than dealing with other staff members, who she feels do not always come across as helpful or happy.</p> <p>At the end of the interaction, the specialist adviser asked Patricia if there was anything else that she could help with and gave her a business card for the future.</p> <p><i>"You are better just phoning and asking for an appointment with the bereavement team ... I had his death certificate with me, and I didn't need that in the end ... I was very pleased and not as hard as I thought it was going to be ... I think it was having his name taken off stuff and the lady just put you at ease ... it was done right away and the direct debits that were Jim's were cancelled that day as well - all done in the one day"</i></p>
<p><b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b></p>	<p>Because of the interaction, Patricia will now tell others to call their bank first, to then make an appointment with specialist advisor.</p> <p>It has made her feel more loyal to her bank but also more likely to phone first rather than go in face to face in future in case there is a dedicated specialist that she can be transferred to.</p> <p>Further non-monetary harm was avoided while she was dealing with the death of her husband.</p>



### 3. Credit Card

<b>Overview</b>	A consumer with health issues who has struggled with debt received multiple warning letters from her credit card company and eventually contact them to get help.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Angela is 54 and lives in Wales with her son, his partner and their dog. Angela had a heart attack 5 years ago and she only has one kidney which is diseased.</p> <p>Angela lost her job, and she became depressed. Her husband left her because of her illnesses and after two years of separation they recently got divorced. Angela was left with her husband's debt as she was the homeowner and when she lost her job the debts spiralled out of control. She tried to consolidate the debts using a credit card, but struggled with the subsequent payments, and took a personal loan to help cover expenses.</p> <p>She is not very comfortable dealing with providers as she feels she is judged because of her financial situation and they take advantage of her.</p> <p><i>"People who don't know your circumstances on the phone can be quite judgmental. There are people out there who play on their illness ... but there are people who want to get back to work but can't ... I had a phone call from someone who wanted to sell me some insurance and I said I don't want it and he said, 'Why? Have you won the lottery?'"</i></p> <p>However, now she feels more in control of her finances and has made arrangements to have some debts written off whilst others are being paid back in instalments without interest.</p> <p>Angels feels confident about the future and believes she will be debt free in a year's time, but still needs to be very strict with her own spending. She checks off every event, bill and payment on her calendar and is now in a position where she is financially aware of her incomings and outgoings.</p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	She has fallen into debt because she has not wanted to deal with difficult financial situations and now struggles to cope with managing money.			

<b>Situation</b>	<p>As a result of Angela's heart attack, she lost her job and she was struggling financially, so she applied for a credit card in 2014 to consolidate her debts. At the time, she didn't use the card, but after her heart attack she used the card to pay her rent and council tax.</p>
<b>What did the customer do?</b>	<p>While still hospitalised, Angela missed card payments and incurred a charge which she did not pay. She received threatening letters in quick succession – she recalls three within a few weeks.</p> <p>The stress and lack of confidence prevented her from acting until the third letter arrived, threatening bailiffs, and her daughter-in-law assured her there must be a chance of renegotiating the arrangement. She rang the general customer service team for help.</p> <p>They explained that if she could prove her hospitalisation, they could have a stop on the interest accumulating, which she did. The card company accepted the proof and were helpful and sympathetic, organising for the interest to stop. She paid off the debt through a regular monthly payment of £50.</p> <p>Although the interaction was positive, she would've liked the company to contact her personally when she failed to meet the first payment to discuss the situation. She also believes the clause about serious illness triggering interest being stopped was not explained to her.</p> <p><i>"I rung them and said I'd been in hospital and he said that if I had told them earlier, they could have put a stop on the interest, but they never told me that. If they were more forward in giving you this information it could've helped."</i></p>
<b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b>	<p>Angela was distressed and frightened by the letters, and also worried that the situation could not be resolved.</p> <p>Further monetary harm was avoided when she approached the card company and they stopped further interest incurring.</p> <p>Angela feels she should not have been offered the card in the first place as her credit score was low at the time. She will not accept a credit card or any kind of overdraft again in the future. This was her view, and not an assessment on whether the lending was responsible or not.</p>

#### 4. Current Account

<b>Overview</b>	A customer in financial difficulty calls her bank for help and comes away feeling she has been supported and in a better position to manage her money better.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Sue is 37 and lives on her own in a small town near Belfast, where she works for a company in the transport sector. Around a year ago Sue separated from her husband and he left their rented property. This impacted finances significantly as the couple's expenses (rent, utility bills and credit products) were all in Sue's name. Sue used to pay for these expenses from her bank account and her husband would then pay her back in cash. When the relationship ended, Sue's husband stopped providing any financial support. Sue was unable to keep up the payments on her own and so began to incur debt.</p> <p><i>"All the bills were in my name and my entire wages were dedicated to bills. He walked away quite cleanly and left everything to me, so I'm left with this mountain of debt in my name"</i></p> <p>Her circumstances had a negative effect on her mental health, eventually resulting in a nervous breakdown. Sue's employer put her on sick leave for six weeks, which meant that her monthly salary was halved. This situation exacerbated Sue's financial challenges, which in turn exacerbated the issues Sue was experiencing with her mental health.</p> <p><i>"I was put off work sick. I basically just lost my mind. I wasn't coping in work... I ended up on half pay from work which was even worse"</i></p> <p>Sue feels she is bad at managing her finances and she often behaves impulsively when she gets paid by her employer, spending most of her monthly income over the course of a few days. Sue tends to ignore financial matters and avoids engaging with financial service providers because the thought of her current financial situation causes her anxiety.</p> <p><i>"As soon as I get paid, I think I'm a millionaire and I can have whatever I want for 2 days. Then I spend the rest of the month struggling. I'm terrible with money"</i></p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	✓	✓	X	✓
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	She felt a bit overawed and was unsure how to approach the provider. She also found fees and charges complex.			

	<p>Struggles to cope with managing money, put off dealing with financial matters, fallen into debt because you have not wanted to deal with difficult financial situations.</p> <p>Been turned down for a financial product or service, fallen into debt because not wanted to deal with difficult financial situations, struggles to cope with managing my money and frightened to tell financial service providers about change of circumstance in case they withdraw insurance cover or charge more.</p>
<b>Situation</b>	<p>Sue contacted her current account provider to try to arrange an overdraft as due to the reduced income, many of the Direct Debits that Sue had set up from her current account were not being paid. Consequently, Sue was being charged by her bank for the use of an unarranged overdraft.</p>
<b>What did the customer do?</b>	<p>Sue contacted the bank by phone and spoke to the customer service team. The call handler told Sue that the bank was unable to offer her an overdraft on her current account, at which point Sue became very upset.</p> <p>The call handler subsequently transferred Sue to an account manager who listened to her circumstances and, with permission, made a note on their records about Sue's financial situation and mental health issues. The account manager helped to calm her down, listened to what she had to say and responded with empathy. It sounded as though she was a 'local' and was not in a call centre which made her feel more comfortable.</p> <p>Sue felt that she received excellent customer service and, although Sue did not receive access to the product she wanted, she considered the interaction to be positive.</p> <p><i>"I didn't get the overdraft, so I didn't get the result I wanted, but I still came away with a benefit which I wasn't aware of."</i></p> <p>Sue felt she was given helpful advice and access to useful tools to help her manage her account more effectively e.g. temporarily freezing fees when payment bounce, setting up a text alert when her bank balance falls below £150.</p>
<b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b>	<p>Although Sue was unable obtain an overdraft, the support of the bank enabled her to avoid further charges and manage her bank account more effectively.</p> <p>She continues to use the tools recommended by the provider and considers them to be very useful.</p>

## 5. Current Account

<b>Overview</b>	A customer wanted to change the date his credit card payments came out of his account as a result of his divorce, which he finalised through a call to the bank, where he was offered further help given his circumstances.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Craig is 37 and lives in Wales, having part time custody of his two children every other week. He got a divorce in October 2018, and as a result of having to live off one wage, he moved back in with his parents. He works in customer services for an insurer.</p> <p>His wife was solely in charge of the finances and so he is not very financially knowledgeable, savvy or confident. As a result, he has started to take control of his budgeting, with a long-term goal of buying a house.</p> <p><i>"I was married for ten years so all finances were left to the wife – she was the bookkeeper ... now only having the one wage ... I need to sharpen up and see what I am getting for my money and what I have left to cope with the month."</i></p> <p>Since his divorce, he had to buy a new car to get to work and to take his parents to the hospital, so he has taken out motor finance and insurance. He now uses credit cards more to fund unplanned expenses, although does not miss payments.</p> <p><i>"Credit card bills have gone up because I have relied on those more than before so in one month it may have been £50 previously it could be £100 the next because I have had to use it for unforeseen circumstances like the car insurance."</i></p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	<b>X</b>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	He found fees and charges complex, and found he had paid fees unexpectedly.			
<b>Situation</b>	As a result of his divorce, Craig needed to change the dates that the payments for his credit card payments came out of his accounts, so all payments out were closer together to make it easier for him to budget. He also wanted to update the bank on his change in circumstances.			
<b>What did the customer do?</b>	Craig initially tried via the app to change the dates of his payment, as he had received some communications explaining how it had been improved. However, he was worried about making a mistake and missing a payment, so called the bank instead.			



	<p>The interaction went smoothly and the call handler was quick and helpful. He was impressed that the changes were made and showing on his app within 24 hours.</p> <p><i>"With [the bank] it was within fifteen or twenty minutes it was done. I came off the phone and sat there and thought – alright. Even to the extent that they said it would take 24 hours to change your account, but I was there next morning on the app and it was updated for me – a weight off my shoulders."</i></p> <p>He made them aware of his change in circumstances and they offered to transfer him to another team if he envisaged problems making his payment in the future, but this was not needed currently.</p> <p><i>"They asked if it was going to be an issue with monthly payments – well not at the moment but I will keep in contact if I feel I am going to fall behind and they said, not a problem, we can put you in touch with an advisor that could potentially help you out."</i></p> <p>Subsequently helpful tools and alerts were sent to him via email such as a calculator that shows the minimum amount to pay whilst still being comfortable as well as highlighting different payment paths and options. He found this useful.</p>
<p><b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b></p>	<p>The overall experience has given him greater confidence when dealing with financial providers.</p> <p>The interaction was positive, and he avoided any charges being incurred because of missed payments. He was given the option of specialist support if it was needed, so a trigger was in place to help him avoid future financial harm.</p>

## 6. Current account / overdraft

<b>Overview</b>	The customer has bowel cancer and queries with his bank why he was being charged for his overdraft use but did not get an adequate response. Although he did not tell the bank about his health, they did not enquire as to whether he was ok despite the payment constituting unusual behaviour.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Steve has progressive bowel cancer and was diagnosed in May this year. He is finding that it really affects how he feels day to day, which is also impacted by his chemotherapy treatment.</p> <p>As much as possible, he is trying to continue with normal life in the meantime and is motivated to do because of his 21-month old son (he also has two grown up children from a previous marriage). He is still working at least a couple of days a week, when he is up to it, because he finds that it helps him to stay mentally positive. He is actually on paid sick leave currently, but 'banking' working days for when his sick pay stops.</p> <p><i>"I've been quite clever. It should be the end of November before it starts affecting me, and I've got savings, so I've got a bit of flex but it could change like that...it's hard to tell."</i></p> <p>He is financially comfortable for now, with various savings pots he can dip into, but there is an element of uncertainty because he is not sure how long he will be able to work for – it will depend on how treatment goes. He is currently on his second round of chemotherapy, with 6 planned in total. He is also conscious that while he is receiving full pay at the moment, it will go down to half pay in September. He has therefore been careful to track his income and outgoings and to make a plan for the future. This has also involved cancelling a holiday he had booked.</p> <p><i>"The biggest worry for me is if the cancer's not in remission by the end of cycle 4, how am I going to financially cope? I have savings behind me that will last 6 months. I'm 90% sure I'll be back fully fit by end Sept but deep down I'm worried, what if I'm not? I cancelled a holiday to be on the safe side. Deep down I think hold on a minute should I be doing that?"</i></p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	✓	✓	X	X

<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	<p>He found fees and charges complex. He doesn't want to shop around in case he is turned down because of a change in circumstances.</p>
<b>Situation</b>	<p>He was in hospital in May and decided to pay off a credit card bill earlier, in case he forgot later. He thought the payment was within the overdraft limit agreed and was not expecting to be charged so he contacted the bank to find out. He would not normally have used his overdraft.</p>
<b>What did the customer do?</b>	<p>He wanted to find out the reason for the overdraft charges and understand how charges were calculated. He contacted his bank via email in the app, which is his preferred channel of communication with them, particularly as he did not feel like talking while he was ill.</p> <p><i>"You're in hospital, you don't have great reception [on your phone], I wasn't my normal self. I was trying to work out what money I owed, what I had to pay. I was trying to pay things that didn't need to be paid. It was probably my fault, but I can't work out why they charged me this money."</i></p> <p>He ended up liaising with their general customer service team. He did not tell them about his health condition as did not think it was relevant and was not entirely comfortable discussing it given the diagnosis was recent.</p> <p><i>"I didn't think how relevant it was. I didn't feel I could phone them up and tell them. I think if I'd been in a situation when I couldn't pay my mortgage, I would tell them. I feel quite comfortable that I would have that conversation with them."</i></p> <p>Their communication was prompt and he was happy that they got back to him when they said they would and were reasonably helpful. However, they gave a very unsatisfactory response to explain the charges and he did not feel that they adequately explained why he was charged such a large amount. They told him the amount was computer generated. They reimbursed half the amount as a gesture of good will.</p>
<b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b>	<p>He is still almost £50 out of pocket for the additional charges that were not reimbursed. He has since decided to remove overdraft facility from account. He is still not happy with the explanation he received from the bank as to why he was charged.</p> <p>He would normally look around to switch providers if unhappy with their service but does not feel up to it currently due to his illness.</p>



## 7. House Insurance

<b>Overview</b>	A customer had his property damaged in a storm so contacted his home insurance provider to make a claim. However, it transpired that the damage was not covered by his policy and, due to his financial situation, he could not afford to undertake the repairs himself.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Rob, 44, lives in a large detached house in the countryside, with his wife and his 2 children. Rob is now a wedding photographer, after previously being an aerospace engineer.</p> <p>Rob only recently changed professions, as three years ago his contract as an aerospace engineer came to a sudden end. Unfortunately, this happened just after he had committed to buying a new house, a house which was a significant step up from his previous home (£150,000 more than the current property at the time). He was out of work and without an income for a year, so his financial situation was impacted, also affecting his mental health and relationship.</p> <p>The loss of income did not impact on the house purchase as Rob and his wife had a large savings pot and did not have any outstanding debts. However, it did impact on their lifestyle, as they had to avoid some of the previous luxuries they had been used to.</p> <p>Rob sees himself as very financially savvy and does tend to shop around for financial products. However, he hasn't reviewed his mortgage, current account or his car insurance for some time, as he feels he already has the best deals.</p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	<b>X</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	He felt a bit overawed and unsure how to approach the provider. He found fees and charges complex. He was turned down for a financial product.			
<b>Situation</b>	In October 2017 Rob's property was damaged by a storm. The storm caused considerable damage to his large electric gates. Rob contacted his home insurance provider to make a claim.			
<b>What did the customer do?</b>	<p>If Rob had still been working at this time, he would not have bothered contacting the insurer, he would have just replaced the gates. However, as he was in a less financially comfortable situation, he decided to pursue the claim.</p> <p>The initial call handler he spoke to informed him that the repairs to his gates would be covered by his policy. Rob sent a claim for the cost of restoring the gates to the insurer when he was then informed that they would not cover the costs, as the gates were classed as fencing which is</p>			

	<p>not included under the policy. He later realised that this was mentioned in the small print of the policy documents.</p> <p><i>"None of them [financial providers] cover it [gates and fences]. It was in the small print. I wasn't covered. My problem with it was being told that I was. That's why I was disappointed with them. It stinks a bit of underhandedness. Would I use them again? Absolutely no, never in my life would I use them again."</i></p> <p>The insurer offered £250 compensation for Rob being originally informed that the gates would be covered by the policy. The insurer sent a cheque, but Rob did not cash the cheque out of principle.</p> <p>Rob was extremely unhappy with the service he was provided and being misinformed on the initial call, so he contacted the Financial Ombudsman Service by phone. He did not find them to be particularly useful and described the individual who had been assigned to his case as "rude" and not very helpful. The case continues and his gates are still broken.</p> <p>Rob feels there is too much small print in financial documents and even a "savvy" customer like himself can end up missing things. He feels customers should not be expected to read all the small print.</p> <p><i>"There's too much small print. For an average person like myself... and I consider myself to be fairly savvy about these things... but a normal person cannot read all that small print. It's too much. And you're getting that with every single thing you apply for."</i></p>
<p><b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b></p>	<p>Rob had a very negative experience with the insurer due to being provided with the wrong information on his initial call. The insurer did offer some compensation for the error, but Rob did not feel this was sufficient. His gates are still broken.</p> <p>He has suffered emotional distress as a result and there is potential for monetary harm, although at this point he has not paid to have his gates repaired.</p>

## 8. Current Account

<b>Overview</b>	A customer approached his bank for help after getting into financial difficulty as a result of a delay in pay-out from his car insurance and was pleased with the service they provided and the solution which helped him to manage his debt.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Ahmed lives with his mother, wife and young daughter in Greater Glasgow. He has some mental health issues, involving depression and anxiety, which means he doesn't like having to go out to work and face people and finds it difficult to be in crowded areas. His depression also affects his memory.</p> <p>He is the sole earner in the family but unfortunately because of his health condition, he was asked to leave a previous role due to underperformance and is currently working only part time, meaning the family are having to get by on a lower income than they would ideally. He worries about financial stability and the future for his family.</p> <p>Overall, he doesn't have much confidence in dealing with financial providers as his mental health condition affects his judgement and memory, and he often finds himself side-tracked in conversations.</p> <p><i>"The paranoia kicks in - I don't want to make a fool of myself by asking silly questions."</i></p> <p>However, he has been with his bank for 12 years now and has a good relationship with them. He knows the individual advisors and trusts them.</p> <p><i>"One in particular knows what my situation is and I sometimes sit down and speak to him. I feel that they're quite empathetic and they understand. When I get good service, sympathy and understanding I appreciate that."</i></p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	✓	X	X	✓
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	<p>He felt a bit overawed and unsure how to approach the firm. He has in the past made a claim with a car insurance company.</p> <p>He is frightened to tell financial service providers about his change of circumstance in case they withdraw insurance cover or charge more and doesn't want to shop around in case he is turned down because of his change in circumstances.</p>			
<b>Situation</b>	Having had his car written off in a car accident which was not his fault, he was pursuing a claim with his insurers, but this was taking longer than expected to pay out. In the meantime, Ahmed was unable to drive and was finding it difficult to use public transport due to his anxiety when among crowds. This meant he could not get to work or to the Job			

	<p>Centre and was starting to get into debt, causing great stress. He decided to approach his bank for help.</p>
<p><b>What did the customer do?</b></p>	<p>Ahmed went to the branch and saw two advisers with whom he gets on well. He didn't phone them as he prefers dealing with the bank in person. He found the advisors to be very helpful.</p> <p><i>"They took the time and didn't treat me like a number."</i></p> <p>The advisers asked a probing question about what had happened, and so he volunteered information about the ongoing claim with his insurance company and the impact that a lack of settlement was having on his finances and his health.</p> <p>As he had an established relationship with some staff members, he felt happy discussing his health issues, which he would not have been comfortable discussing with other providers that he did not have an existing relationship with.</p> <p>Once the bank knew about his mental health condition and situation, they were very sympathetic and reassuring. They reiterated that if there was anything they could do, he should let them know. He trusted the advisers and knew they wouldn't take advantage of him, based on his previous experience.</p> <p>He had originally hoped to get a loan but ended up getting an extended overdraft limit interest-free and a small loan. They advised him to take the lowest amount possible to tide him over and to try and keep everything manageable. The bank gave him a decision within 10 days. He was given in-depth calculations and assessments of his situation.</p> <p>He was also signposted to Money Advice Service or Citizens Advice if he needed any further help.</p> <p><i>"It had a positive effect...I was in a worse place before with my finances. I could see light at the end of the tunnel. It gave me more confidence as I was in a bit of state at that time."</i></p>
<p><b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b></p>	<p>The bank helped him to come to an arrangement that eased his financial strain when he needed it. He was very pleased with the outcome and feels they did more than he expected them to. He feels more warmly towards that particular bank as a result, though still lacks confidence and trust in financial providers in general.</p>

## 9. Current Account

<b>Overview</b>	Ongoing health issues have meant this consumer so is struggling financially, causes her to switch to a basic bank account with another provider.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Lisa is 37 and lives in Wales in a council house with her two teenage children, a daughter and younger son with ADHD and Tourette's. She has severe Crohn's disease and has had multiple operations. Her illness impacts her ability to work regular hours, so she often has to review her Housing Benefit and as a result sometimes she gets warning letters from the council if it's not paid. She has found herself in an ongoing cycle where her anxiety triggers her illness, which prevents her from working.</p> <p>She almost lost her house 3 years ago when she had her first operation and couldn't pay her rent. The council assigned a Support Worker, a friend helped to pay off most of her rent arrears and a repayment scheme was set up for her council tax debt of over £2,000. Her house is under threat of repossession by the council if she fails to pay her rent. Her illness is likely to worsen with further hospitalisation needed, but she has not made financial provision for this.</p> <p><i>"I had 4 and a half months off for surgery. I'm on Housing Benefit and when your income changes, you're waiting for that to be changed, it can be stopped, you've all kind of bills which is stressful which is a vicious circle because my Crohn's gets worse."</i></p> <p>She is not confident dealing with financial services providers and shopping around, which has been a result of her illness and financial difficulties.</p> <p><i>"When you're discussing money with people, I get embarrassed, so it is difficult to talk about money. I never worried about money before, or paying bills, and then you become a single mum with a chronic illness... I think I knew what I needed to know about the products I was using. Now, I'm more likely to say, 'Yes, yes, yes' but I wouldn't read the small print anymore."</i></p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	✓	✓	X	✓
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	She feels a bit overawed and is unsure how to approach the provider She has found herself in debt or arrears. She now struggles to cope with managing money, and is frightened to tell financial service providers about change of circumstance in case they withdraw insurance cover or charge more. She doesn't want to shop around in case she is turned down because of her change in circumstances.			

	She puts off dealing with financial matters, e.g. by ignoring warning letters or not opening correspondence.
<b>Situation</b>	As result of her financial difficulties, Lisa became overdrawn without an overdraft facility and payments were bouncing, so she approached the bank for help and then went to another bank.
<b>What did the customer do?</b>	<p>Lisa first spoke to someone on the phone at the bank to ask for a week to arrange for money to go into her account. She explained that she was in financial difficulty but did not get offered any help.</p> <p><i>"She [the call handler] could see I was getting worked up. I couldn't explain to them properly what I needed to say. They made me feel like I was trying to rip them off, like I was doing it on purpose, that I had no intention of putting money into my bank account. It didn't make me feel very good."</i></p> <p>She went to the cashpoint to withdraw cash and was unable to, so visited the branch and was informed her account would have to be closed.</p> <p>Feeling rather anxious and emotional, Lisa went directly to a local branch of another bank and was able to speak to the manager immediately who helped her set up a new basic bank account. She had the product explained to her, was told how she could help raise her credit score, felt comfortable asking questions and was reassured that her account would not allow her to be charged if a Direct Debit bounced.</p> <p><i>"She [the manager] really put me at ease. It wasn't embarrassing chatting to her about finance and the difficulties I'd been through. She was very empathetic. She said everyone's been in a position before where they've struggled."</i></p>
<b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b>	<p>Lisa experienced stress and panic when she was told she could no longer use her bank account. This resulted in her leaving her bank that she had been with for 25 years. Although the new bank was very good, arranging to transfer all her payments to a new bank account caused her further stress.</p> <p>Lisa continues to lack confidence in making financial decisions and remains reluctant to shop around. She has not asked for any other services since she opened her new account as she would be embarrassed if they said no. However, she feels confident she could arrange an appointment to see the same manager if she needed to.</p>

## 10. Travel Insurance

<b>Overview</b>	A customer with significant health issues has some very negative experiences when shopping around for travel insurance, but eventually finds a suitable provider.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Jane is no longer able to work since having a heart attack 5 years ago. She also has long-standing asthma, epilepsy and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). Within the last 2 years she has been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), following three unsuccessful attempts to live with a pacemaker. She is very concerned about her life expectancy, especially as she also has a severely ill adult daughter.</p> <p>She was already very careful about managing money, shopping around for goods and services, including financial products. Her preference is to look for good deals in person, checking out goods on quality as well as price. She also does not retain information very well and finds telephone calls difficult when they cover a lot of detail. She says she lacks confidence and can't cope with 'big words' in policies and other financial services documentation. Her PTSD has exacerbated her anxiety about making wrong decisions.</p> <p><i>"You're questioning yourself all the time in everything you do. It's a weird illness to have, because you are, you're questioning everything".</i></p> <p>Consequently, she has an increased preference for face-to-face contact. She finds telephone calls more difficult than before, especially automated phone calls.</p> <p>The family income has reduced significantly since she stopped working. This led to applying for home collected credit, having been turned down by many companies because of her medical condition. She and her husband are paying off the loan each month.</p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Harms experienced because of vulnerability</b>	She has a lack of knowledge about products and does not find information about them easy to understand. She is struggling to cope with managing money.			
<b>Situation</b>	In 2018, her husband booked a surprise week's holiday for them to go to Tunisia. He asked her to arrange the travel insurance for the trip.			
<b>What did the consumer do?</b>	Due to her medical condition, the cost of the travel insurance on offer to Jane from the holiday company was more than the cost of the whole holiday itself. Their bank wouldn't offer her travel insurance due to her medical condition. Jane decided to shop around.			





Jane found a list of potential providers on the internet and recalls contacting eight or nine different companies, with a variety of different prices. Her experience followed a similar pattern. There was an online form which included medical questions where she selected that she had a heart condition and a further drop-down menu appeared. She often struggled to answer them correctly. When she added details of her heart condition and epilepsy this triggered an online request for her to call the insurer.

Jane recalls phoning between five and six different companies, with calls taking around half an hour each. She found the calls she had to make very difficult – perceiving staff to be abrupt and unprofessional, receiving expensive quotations or being refused a quotation.

*"They were horrible on the phone. As soon as I started saying about my medical problems, they just cut me off. They didn't even say 'No, sorry. We can't.'... I was there for about five minutes thinking 'Have they put the phone down on me, or they had just gone that they're looking into something?' ... They put me off phoning back because I was thinking everybody had the same attitude."*

She also struggled to understand call centre staff whose first language was not English or those who used complicated language. These experiences made her delay getting travel insurance for three weeks, and she didn't start looking again until her husband reminded her, which added to her anxiety.

Jane had more negative experiences in phoning, being asked insensitive questions given her medical conditions.

*"I expected questions about general health and things like that, maybe medication? I thought they might ask what medication I'm on, but not if I had a heart attack what would I do? Because at the end of the day I wouldn't be doing anything, it'd be the people around me, wouldn't it? Some just ask irrelevant questions, stupid questions."*

Eventually she found a travel insurance provider who didn't ask insensitive questions, but rather confirmed that they could provide travel insurance cover for her and explained clearly what the policy covered and what it did not.

*"I got so fed up in the end, I was like, 'Right, as soon as they answer the phone, I'll explain the medical conditions and then they can ask me questions.' Then as soon as they came on the phone, I said who I was and said that I wanted to take out travel insurance, I said these are my conditions is there any way that you can help me. They were like, 'Yes, of course we can.' They didn't ask stupid questions"*

The person on the phone was very personable and human, which also impressed Jane, making her feel more comfortable, in what was a stressful situation for her. He explained things in plain English and responded to her as someone who was ill. She says he found the person the phone "Quite



	<p><i>funny, because we did have a bit of banter, it was like, 'I don't expect I'm going to die.'</i> They were like, 'You never know, you could have too many Tequilas.'" The person she spoke to gave her his name, and that made her feel further at ease because she had a contact there if she needs to communicate with them further.</p>
<p><b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b></p>	<p>It took her a lot of time to find an appropriate policy.</p> <p>The questions that were asked and the way she was dealt with by some firms caused her upset and anxiety, even though this was a product being offered to those with severe medical conditions.</p> <p>The main impact of her negative experiences is that she is now less likely to shop around as she doesn't want to have to go through the difficult processes.</p> <p>She has since taken out an annual travel policy with the same provider because she realised that an annual travel policy was going to be cheaper, as she is now going on holiday more often with her whole family. She didn't consider other providers for her annual policy because of her experience of shopping around before.</p> <p>Jane suggested that these organisations need to provide more training to their staff to be more sensitive.</p>

## 11. Mortgages

<b>Overview</b>	A customer was made redundant and suffered a relationship breakdown so when his mortgage was up for renewal, he was concerned about being able to get a new deal. He called a broker who gave him the support and reassurance he needed.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Sam is 36 and lives in Scotland. He used to rent but has now bought a house in a small town outside of Glasgow where he lives with his two young children and new partner. He was made redundant about three months ago. His job experience gave him some understanding of dealing with financial providers over the phone, appreciating that they are well trained and knowledgeable.</p> <p>Due to his redundancy, he is now temporarily a house husband, which he enjoys. He feels he has always been reasonably sensible with his money, and this has not changed.</p> <p><i>"You need to make amendments straight away. It's had a big impact. I had to re-budget again. We had two salaries coming in every month so, straight away, there is no holiday this year. Shopping had to be reduced to what is absolutely needed. You can't go to a wedding just because you were invited. Buying things like clothes has to be put aside."</i></p> <p>He was more financially resilient and confident prior to his redundancy, but there is now only one income. He is not very knowledgeable about products. He found searching for mortgages confusing and difficult, even though he studied economics at university.</p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	<b>X</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	<p>He finds fees and charges complex. He has made a claim with an insurance company and been in debt.</p> <p>He struggles to cope with managing his money and does not want to shop around in case he is turned down because of a change in his circumstances.</p>			
<b>Situation</b>	Sam was concerned about his mortgage renewal after being made redundant and suffering the breakdown of his relationship, so he called a broker to discuss the best options for him.			
<b>What did the customer do?</b>	After being made redundant, Sam was aware that he did not have three months of payslips which are required as proof of income in the mortgage renewal process. He knew that the bank would need proof of his income, so he decided to call his broker. He was frightened to tell			

	<p>his mortgage provider his situation and he was worried about his mortgage repayments increase beyond what he could afford. He approached the interaction with his broker openly and honestly as he had an established relationship, explaining that he had lost his job and his household now only had one income.</p> <p><i>"We wanted to be honest. This is our situation and I am looking for work and I was not fired but made redundant and had no choice but not in a position to have £3,000 a month or whatever."</i></p> <p>Sam was apprehensive and worried before he picked up the phone to the broker, wondering <i>"How much information should you reveal, should you tell them the full story or play it cool?"</i></p> <p>He called the broker, as opposed to emailed, as he thought it would be better to speak to someone. He said that he was very understanding. This led to a strong relationship and a number of subsequent face-to-face meetings.</p> <p>Sam was aware that his broker was speaking to representatives the bank, which he found reassuring. In between their meetings, his broker provided daily updates, predominantly around potential interest rates.</p> <p>The time between the initial contact and securing the new mortgage was only a few weeks. During this time, he relied on the broker and didn't do any further research, as he trusted him to find the best deal. Sam had done some initial "homework" but realised that this was a job for an expert as he found it complicated when he had approached banks directly.</p> <p><i>"He [the broker] was quite understanding and very reassuring. The final outcome was a new mortgage and an interest rate we could afford and then revise it in a few months based on our situation, hopefully when my job situation changes. It was all done in less than two weeks."</i></p> <p>The outcome of the interaction was a new rate, and although it was not as good as before, it was better than he expected. It can be reviewed again in a few months. Overall, it was very positive, with a quick outcome, a helpful broker and good communication.</p> <p><i>"That is what creates loyalty and I will always go back to him for our mortgage."</i></p>
<p><b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b></p>	<p>Sam explained that the losing his job has made him feel slightly worthless, as he wants to do the best for his children.</p> <p>The reassurance from the broker prevented ongoing distress and monetary harm was avoided as his broker secured him a suitable mortgage given his circumstances, which he may not have been able to do himself.</p>

## 12. Critical Illness Cover

<b>Overview</b>	The customer had taken critical illness cover 25 years ago. Two months after her heart surgery she realised she had this cover and phoned the insurer and quickly received a substantial pay-out.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Alice is 47 and lives in a bungalow with her husband and their two dogs. Alice has worked in nursing for 30 years and is currently working full time as a Nurse Disability Assessor.</p> <p>She was diagnosed with silent heart attack 2 years ago. Alice had not realised the heart attack had taken place, but she had started to feel fatigued and fainted at work, so went to the doctors and was diagnosed. The heart attack had taken place two years prior to the diagnoses.</p> <p>Alice had surgery a week after the diagnoses. She went back to work very quickly (only 3 weeks after the surgery), but found she wasn't ready. She was concerned about the lack of sick pay after 6 weeks, but before the illness she had been given a £15,000 bonus from work, so this helped to elevate some of her concerns.</p> <p><i>"I was with a company that didn't pay sick pay. Well, I'd accrued something but only 6 weeks. The only saving grace was that just prior to this I had achieved my bonus for the year, so that was £15k... that cushioned the blow."</i></p> <p>Two months after giving up work Alice remembered that she had taken out critical illness insurance 25 years ago when she married her husband. She phoned the insurer and received a substantial pay-out. Alice only recently returned to work, as the pay-out and bonus enabled her to take a substantial break from work.</p> <p>Alice does not tend to review or switch the financial products she owns. She feels it is too much of a hassle and that there are benefits to being a loyal and consistent customer. Her health condition meant she has had difficulty finding affordable life and insurance.</p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	✓	X	X	X
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	She has difficulty getting to a bank branch. She has been offered a financial product at a price and with terms and conditions, she felt to be unfair and expensive. She has also been turned down for a financial product or service.			
<b>Situation</b>	Alice had a silent heart attack four years ago but was only diagnosed two years after it took place. Two months after her heart surgery she			

	<p>realised she had critical illness cover taken out 25 years ago and phoned the insurer.</p>
<p><b>What did the customer do?</b></p>	<p>Alice only took three weeks off work after the surgery and instantly realised that she had gone back too soon and needed to take some more time off. She was very aware that her company only provided six weeks paid sick leave.</p> <p>When she remembered she had critical illness cover, she phoned the insurer and explained what had happened. Alice was very happy with the person she spoke to. The individual was very personable and sympathetic.</p> <p><i>"They said how sorry they were to hear about my circumstances, they asked how I was feeling."</i></p> <p>They also appeared to be knowledgeable about the medical side of what had happened to her, which put her at ease.</p> <p><i>"The person I spoke to, it was almost as if they had a medical background. They were totally au fait with the terminology I was using... as a nurse you sometimes forget yourself with using medical terminology, angioplasty etc, but they seemed to know."</i></p> <p>The insurer needed to see a few documents before confirming the pay-out. Alice provided them with the documents they requested and then three weeks later they called to confirm the pay-out, which was in her account the next morning. She was very happy with the insurer and the process. She felt it was very smooth and hassle free.</p> <p><i>"They said don't distress yourself, don't put yourself to any hassle, we will get it all sorted for you. And about 3 weeks later, they called to say it's all done and dusted, and the money will be in your account in the morning."</i></p>
<p><b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b></p>	<p>Alice was very happy with her experience. She felt the claims process was very smooth, sympathetic and hassle-free. She also received a substantial pay-out which enabled her to stop working and recover fully, avoiding any financial difficulties.</p> <p><i>"They made it easy. I wasn't in a position to phone and chase and everything... they made it easy."</i></p>

### 13. Travel insurance

<b>Overview</b>	The customer has been diagnosed with bowel cancer and is currently undergoing treatment. He had to cancel a holiday due to treatment and was able to claim on his travel insurance.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Steve has progressive bowel cancer and was diagnosed in May this year. He is finding that it really affects how he feels day to day, which is also impacted by his chemotherapy treatment.</p> <p>As much as possible, he is trying to continue with normal life in the meantime and is motivated to do because of his 21-month old son (he also has two grown up children from a previous marriage). He is still working at least a couple of days a week, when he is up to it, because he finds that it helps him to stay mentally positive. He is actually on paid sick leave currently, but 'banking' working days for when his sick pay stops.</p> <p><i>"I've been quite clever. It should be the end of November before it starts affecting me, and I've got savings, so I've got a bit of flex but it could change like that...it's hard to tell."</i></p> <p>He is financially comfortable for now, with various savings pots he can dip into, but there is an element of uncertainty because he is not sure how long he will be able to work for – it will depend on how treatment goes. He is currently on his second round of chemotherapy, with 6 planned in total. He is also conscious that while he is receiving full pay at the moment, it will go down to half pay in September. He has therefore been careful to track his income and outgoings and to make a plan for the future. This has also involved cancelling a holiday he had booked.</p> <p><i>"The biggest worry for me is if the cancer's not in remission by the end of cycle 4, how am I going to financially cope? I have savings behind me that will last 6 months. I'm 90% sure I'll be back fully fit by end Sept but deep down I'm worried, what if I'm not? I cancelled a holiday to be on the safe side. Deep down I think hold on a minute should I be doing that?"</i></p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	✓	✓	X	X
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	He finds fees and charges complex. He has made a claim with an insurance company. He doesn't want to shop around in case he is turned down because of the change in his circumstances.			

<b>Situation</b>	Steve had to cancel his flights for an upcoming holiday in Turkey as he had a course of chemotherapy starting the week they were due to fly, so he wanted to claim on his travel insurance.
<b>What did the customer do?</b>	<p>He was worried that he had lost the money from the holiday. He rang up the airline company who told him to contact his insurer.</p> <p>He then phoned his insurer, and was transferred to a specialist travel insurance team, who he told about his health condition. He was impressed with their response, in which they displayed genuine concern for his situation, and came away feeling that he had been treated like an individual rather than just as a number.</p> <p><i>"I had to tell them I had cancer. First of all their reaction was 'Really sorry to hear that. When were you diagnosed? What have you got? It didn't feel false, it felt genuine. They asked a few questions: 'How are you now?' 'How are you feeling?' I remember feeling 'wow, that doesn't [normally] happen'. I felt they were actually listening... it sticks with me."</i></p> <p>They were clear and informative. They told him to cancel his flights and to get a letter from the consultant with details of his health condition and an original invoice. He then phoned the insurers back after he had done this and the advisor told him that the money would be in his bank account in five working days, even though they had not yet received the proof.</p> <p>In the end, he received it within 48 hours. They had to take £50 admin, but he was happy with this and understood why this charge was necessary. Overall, he was extremely pleased with how smooth the process was and the service he had received.</p> <p><i>"I was amazed, I didn't even have to provide any documentation, although I could easily get it. I had the money in my account in 48 hours. I couldn't believe it!... It's the trust level that I really like. What that's done for is made me think you trusted me when I was really down and it gave me a little boost....and it's made me more loyal."</i></p> <p>He was happy with the channel of communication for this interaction. He could have used other channels such as live chat but felt it would be easier to call up.</p>
<b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b>	<p>Feeling like he was trusted by them has made him feel more loyal to the company in the future.</p> <p>He avoided monetary harms and the interaction gave him an emotional boost.</p>

## 14. Overdraft Charges

<b>Overview</b>	A customer suffering with bipolar disorder struggles to curb her spending and as a result finds herself in her overdraft. Her bank helps her with her overdraft charges and put measures in place to avoid it happening again.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Rebecca is 41 and lives in Birmingham with her three children. Rebecca is close to her family, with her mum visiting every day to help, and her dad and brother visiting when they can. She doesn't have many friends, as her Bipolar disorder can cause mood swings, which people other than her family don't understand.</p> <p>Rebecca was made redundant 18 months ago and as a result, her income has decreased. She receives disability living allowance (DLA) but must pay a lot out, so is left with very little money. She does not feel confident that she spends her money on appropriate products and has little knowledge and savviness with financial matters.</p> <p><i>"If you gave me £200 now, I'd more likely go and get a takeaway or buy a new top online rather than pay bills. I'm not very responsible. I don't think about the responsibility of what I should or shouldn't do."</i></p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	✓	✓	X	✓
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	<p>She feels a bit overawed and unsure about how to approach providers. She has a lack of lack of knowledge about financial products and does not finding information about it easy to understand.</p> <p>She has difficulty getting to a bank branch and finds dealing with customer services on the phone confusing and difficult.</p> <p>She has been turned down for a financial product or service and offered a financial product or service at a price, or with terms and conditions, she felt to be unfair or expensive.</p> <p>She is anxious to shop around for financial products or services in case she makes a mistake and struggles to follow instructions making it hard to interact with financial services providers.</p> <p>She struggles to cope with managing her money, puts off dealing with financial matters and has fallen into debt because she has not wanted to deal with difficult financial situations.</p> <p>She is frightened to tell a financial service provider about her illness or condition in case they withdraw insurance cover or charge her more.</p>			



<b>Situation</b>	<p>Rebecca suffers from bipolar which results in erratic spending. Consequently, she went into her overdraft for which she was being charged on a recurring basis, so she contacted her bank for help.</p>
<b>What did the customer do?</b>	<p>Rebecca telephoned her bank and explained that she suffered with bipolar and had recently been made redundant. Upon explaining the circumstances, Rebecca hoped to get some of the charges refunded back to her, although she did not expect anything. She thought it was worth a try, hoping that she could get the fees stopped or even pay them on a later date.</p> <p><i>"It's my fault - I'm the one who's spent the money. I'm the one who's used the card. No one else has taken it from me so I'm not asking for something that's been stolen from me."</i></p> <p>During the call, the representative at the bank calmed her down, reassured her that they could help and explained that they could refund the overdraft fees of around £400. They also immediately put a stop to her incurring any further overdraft charges.</p> <p><i>"As soon as I said I had bipolar and I get nervous and started to stutter, straight away they said not to worry, that they would resolve it and there were things they could do. That just made me feel 'I'm going to be alright'. I felt like it was personal, like it was a friend I'm talking to. They were helpful. You don't get that very often now."</i></p> <p>As well as this, the bank changed her account parameters so that she can no longer go overdrawn on contactless payments, avoiding overdraft fees in the future.</p>
<b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b>	<p>The interaction has left Rebecca feeling like she accomplished something herself, not needing someone to do it for her. This has given her confidence in dealing with similar issues in the future and feels that she will be able to explain her situation over the phone without being judged. Rebecca would feel happier if there was more awareness around mental illness.</p> <p>The interaction prevented her incurring further monetary harm and improved her emotional wellbeing.</p>

## 15. Motor insurance

<b>Overview</b>	Following a car accident, the customer made a claim on her motor insurance and received more than she expected as well as proactive help to receive an insurance refund and cancel further payments.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Sarah, 62, lives with her adult son and dog. She has lived in her current home since her divorce 13 years ago. She is very happy with her life at the moment but the only thing that worries her is her financial situation. She has concerns around low income and lack of savings.</p> <p><i>"It can keep me up at night ... awful, it's a worry when something goes wrong or breaks."</i></p> <p>Sarah was in a car accident earlier this year. Sarah's car was quite old, so unfortunately, she was unable to repair her car and had to buy a new vehicle. She decided not to take out a loan but to use her savings. However, using up her "nest egg" has led to her being very concerned about her current financial situation and what she would do if an unexpected cost arose.</p> <p><i>"It took away my nest egg and a bit more, which wasn't much in the first place ... If I get ill and I can't work, or my washing machine breaks tomorrow, it's another burden."</i></p> <p>She keeps a close eye on her spending and after the accident she reviewed her outgoings and decided to cut back on any unnecessary spending, such as her gym membership. She also spoke with her utilities suppliers to ensure she could cancel at any time if she could no longer afford the service.</p> <p><i>"I said I can't be tied ... I said I don't want to spend any more in case I lose my job ... they said you can cancel at any time and I asked if I could have that in writing."</i></p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	<b>X</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>✓</b>
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	She struggles to cope with managing money.			
<b>Situation</b>	The car accident led to Sarah calling her motor insurance provider to find out what pay-out she would receive.			

<p><b>What did the customer do?</b></p>	<p>Sarah was not injured in her car accident but in a state of shock at the time. Her daughter was with her so exchanged details with the other driver and took photographs of the incident. She then proceeded to call the AA as she did not have her insurance company's details to hand, who towed her car and provided a courtesy car.</p> <p>When Sarah returned home, she immediately called the insurance company. She spoke to someone from the customer service team, she provided them with all the details of the incident and emailed the photos her daughter had taken. She was concerned about the financial impact and wanted to be reassured that she would not have any additional excess to pay. She felt the individual she spoke to was very "calm and kind" and ensured that they spoke slowly after she requested this.</p> <p><i>"When I came home, I phoned them to tell them what happened ... in between crying. They were very calm and kind ... They asked very brief questions and said they would post me a thing to fill out what happened ... They said they're stopping the insurance and when I get a new car, I start it up again. I said, 'Does that mean you're not covering me for the accident?' and they said, 'You're absolutely covered' but it would save me money and I got an insurance refund... I said to speak very slowly because I'm traumatised, and they did."</i></p> <p>The insurer also made it clear that they would stop her insurance until she bought a new car. The money she had already paid for some of this time was refunded. Sarah was very happy with this.</p> <p>Sarah received the postal form that the insurer had mentioned, she filled this in and returned it recorded delivery. Around 7 to 10 days after the accident the insurer phoned to inform her that her car had been written off. They made it clear that the reason was that it would cost more than the car is worth to fix it. They offered her £1000 as pay-out for the accident. She knew the car was only worth £450 – 500, so she was pleased with the £1000 offer. Sarah opted for a cheque, as she knew this would take longer and provide her with more time to purchase a new car.</p> <p><i>"It was double what I thought ... I didn't have time to look for a new car because I was working so I asked them to post it ... 5 to 7 days so I could go with my son and get a car before I lost the courtesy car."</i></p>
<p><b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b></p>	<p>Sarah was very happy with the service provided. She felt the call was undertaken in a very kind and personal way and was not someone reading off a script.</p> <p>Sarah was also very happy with the pay-out she received as it was twice as much as she was expecting, plus they suggested she stopped her insurance and provided a refund.</p>

## 16. Mortgage

<b>Overview</b>	After experiencing financial strain following an accident a customer approached his bank to review his mortgage payments, but his request was rejected and no alternative options provided.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>David lives in a rural suburb of Glasgow with his wife, two children and two dogs. He works full-time as an undertaker; a job which can involve a significant amount of heavy lifting.</p> <p>In January 2019, he ruptured a disc while at work which has resulted in ongoing back problems, difficulties moving and a high risk of it re-occurring at some point. His job has accommodated him by giving him more admin and paper-based responsibilities, but he has also had to give up the gardening work he was doing for extra income to fund holidays etc.</p> <p><i>"My back injury was a big concern. It can be life changing to the degree that it can affect what I can do and it could, in the long run, be detrimental to employment. I'm getting by at the moment but I'm 45 in a couple of months' time, so not getting any younger."</i></p> <p>He already had to be careful with his money and so this has resulted in some financial strain for his family. However, he has managed to reduce his utility bills and phone contract, so was hoping to arrange something similar with his mortgage.</p> <p><i>"I've always worked so I've always had a wage to gauge what's going in and what's coming out. I've never been in arrears with a mortgage and always managed to handle my finances. I've never got into any financial difficulty where I've had to hand anything back or had it repossessed."</i></p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	✓	✓	X	X
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	He has a lack of trust in the financial services firms. He is struggling to cope with managing his money.			
<b>Situation</b>	David decided to ask his bank whether he could extend his mortgage term in order to lower his payments, or to defer some of his monthly payments. He saw this as a temporary solution and was hopeful of receiving some inheritance in the future which he could put towards paying off his mortgage at a later date.			
<b>What did the customer do?</b>	David used his online banking app to find the right number to contact the bank. He then phoned them to arrange an appointment to discuss his mortgage options, which was easy for him. They said he would have an appointment within 10-14 days. He didn't disclose his circumstances at the time of making the appointment but did so when face-to-face with the advisor.			



	<p><i>"Initially, I just asked to speak to someone about mortgages. I felt it wouldn't be relevant to explain any real reason for the appointment other than to discuss it (the mortgage)."</i></p> <p>The appointment consisted of a one-hour appointment at the branch. Despite this being face-to-face, he felt it was very impersonal. Though he had been with the provider for a number of years and never having missed a payment, they were unwilling to show any flexibility and rejected his request to defer or change the terms of his mortgage. They did not present him with any other options that did not involve paying a substantial exit penalty from his current arrangement, which he could not afford. He was frustrated and stressed as a result.</p> <p><i>"I was frustrated that there is no flexibility in the system for customers like myself who have never missed a payment and had a reasonable financial state. I've got a lot of equity in the house as well, but there was no room for movement."</i></p> <p>He felt that staff were polite, but they seemed to be reading from a script and sticking too rigidly to the company policy. He wanted to be treated as an individual and for them to look at his loyalty and financial history, rather than a straightforward yes / no answer.</p>
<p><b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b></p>	<p>David had to explore other ways of freeing up some extra cash, so sold his car and relied on family for transport. Overall there was no monetary harm, just stress because of the negative outcome and impact on his lifestyle.</p> <p>Although he will stay with the same bank for his mortgage, he did not feel optimistic about his future interactions with them. He anticipated that he would have to revisit his financial options with them at some point, which may involve selling the house and reducing his mortgage.</p>

## 17. Car Finance

<b>Overview</b>	A customer in financial difficulty calls her provider of car finance to renegotiate the terms of her loan, which was refused. This exacerbated her financial difficulty.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Sue is 37 and lives on her own in a small town near Belfast, where she works for company in the transport sector. Around a year ago Sue separated from her husband and he left their rented property. This impacted finances significantly as the couple's expenses (rent, utility bills and credit products) were all in Sue's name. Sue used to pay for these expenses from her bank account and her husband would then pay her back in cash. When the relationship ended, Sue's husband stopped providing any financial support. Sue was unable to keep up the payments on her own and so began to incur debt.</p> <p><i>"All the bills were in my name and my entire wages were dedicated to bills. He walked away quite cleanly and left everything to me, so I'm left with this mountain of debt in my name"</i></p> <p>Her circumstances had a negative effect on her mental health, eventually resulting in a nervous breakdown. Sue's employer put her on sick leave for six weeks, which meant that her monthly salary was halved. This situation exacerbated Sue's financial challenges, which in turn exacerbated the issues Sue was experiencing with her mental health.</p> <p><i>"I was put off work sick. I basically just lost my mind. I wasn't coping in work... I ended up on half pay from work which was even worse"</i></p> <p>Sue feels she is bad at managing her finances and she often behaves impulsively when she gets paid by her employer, spending most of her monthly income over the course of a few days. Sue tends to ignore financial matters and avoids engaging with financial service providers because the thought of her current financial situation causes her anxiety.</p> <p><i>"As soon as I get paid, I think I'm a millionaire and I can have whatever I want for 2 days. Then I spend the rest of the month struggling. I'm terrible with money"</i></p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	✓	✓	X	✓
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	She feels a bit overawed and is unsure how to approach the provider. She finds fees and charges complex. She also struggles to cope with managing money, and has fallen into debt because she did not want to deal with difficult financial situations.			

	<p>She has been turned down for a financial product or service, and is frightened to tell financial service providers about her change of circumstance in case they withdraw insurance cover or charge her more.</p>
<b>Situation</b>	<p>Sue had missed a monthly payment on her car finance loan and recognized that she was not going to be able to keep up with the remaining payments. She therefore phoned the provider up to try and renegotiate the terms of the repayments.</p>
<b>What did the customer do?</b>	<p>Sue spoke to them over the telephone around three times. These interactions were all initiated by the provider. Each time, Sue spoke with a different member of the customer service team and had a similar conversation. She explained the change in her circumstances and asked whether it was possible to extend the terms of her loan as to reduce the monthly payments. On each occasion Sue's request was declined.</p> <p>Sue felt as though she received poor customer service from her car finance provider. She explained that they seemed uninterested in her personal circumstances and only about the money she owed. She also said that the customer service team had an unsympathetic tone and unprofessional manner.</p> <p>Sue's car was due to be repossessed by her car finance provider. However, this did not end up happening because Sue was in a car accident and wrote off the vehicle.</p> <p><i>"I was trying to talk to them, I was like, 'Look, you know, I'm having a really hard time here, can I extend the length of the term of the loan and maybe bring the payments down even for six months or something?' 'No, absolutely not,' just shut me down completely."</i></p> <p>Sue was unhappy that the car finance provider was unwilling to adjust the terms of her loan. She had kept up with payments for three years and felt that they could have shown some flexibility in their processes to help her repay the loan. As she was unable to extend the term of her loan, she incurred charges for using an unarranged overdraft</p>
<b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b>	<p>Sue's interaction with her car finance provider had a negative effect on her financial situation. Furthermore, the situation acted as a "contributing factor" to her nervous breakdown. The result was monetary and non-monetary harm.</p> <p>Following the interaction with her car finance provider, Sue says that she is reluctant to deal with other financial service providers over the phone. She found the experience to be humiliating and does not want to go through it again.</p>

## 18. Current Account

<b>Overview</b>	A bank demonstrates a lack of suitable processes for dealing with a customer, with a mental health condition, who wants to deal with his partners account, following bankruptcy and serious illness.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Nate is 55 years old and shares a rented terraced house in Manchester with his partner and 16 chihuahuas. Nate suffers from clinical depression and has also had a recent hand accident which resulted in limited hand movement. He finds his depression and low mood to be debilitating, and the side effects of his high levels of medication means he lacks confidence. However, he continues to work as tutor, 28 hours a week, although his partner who doesn't work for health reasons</p> <p>In June 2018, Nate and his partner declared themselves bankrupt. Although Nate already suffered with depression prior to this, the situation led to a period of severe depression which was followed by his partner being hospitalised with sepsis and pneumonia.</p> <p><i>"I hadn't realised that my house at the time had been taken as a guarantee against a business loan so they got rid of my house and we lost everything - our business, our home, our dignity."</i></p> <p>He regularly checks what products are available to him but is not very confident dealing with financial matters currently and worries that firms won't help him due to past experience.</p> <p><i>"Since becoming bankrupt I've not been able to access very much so I don't know what else I could access. I wouldn't even know who to ask, which is why I don't ask anybody or have any help at the moment."</i></p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	✓	✓	✓	X
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	He has a lack of trust in the provider, and feels a bit overawed and / unsure how to approach them. He has been turned down for a financial product or service, and his struggling to cope with managing money. He has also fallen into debt because he has not wanted to deal with difficult financial situations.			
<b>Situation</b>	Nate tried to become an advocate for his partner to manage his current account while he was ill, as the account had been frozen due to bankruptcy. He expected to be able to look after his partner's financial affairs temporarily, until he was well enough to look after them himself.			
<b>What did the customer do?</b>	He and his partner took a letter into the bank branch, requesting that Nate could be an advocate and deal with his current account. This was unsuccessful as branch staff were unfamiliar with what this involved, so			





	<p>Nate made contact by phone. Several calls were made but they made little progress. The experience was stressful and frustrating as they had to repeat the story every time they called and get him to give permission to speak with his partner and start all over again with the case background.</p> <p><i>"I even had one woman who thought she'd put me on hold and I heard her say 'We've got a right one here!' When she picked the call up, I told her she needed to be really careful what she said as I'd heard every word."</i></p> <p>He found the process very difficult and the company made no effort / adjustments to take account of his partner's health condition. Each time, Nate would have to explain the circumstances and the partner would have to give permission for the participant to speak with them. There was no one point of contact or specialist team to deal with, only the main customer service team.</p> <p>The experience was a direct contrast to his own bank, who have responded to his needs given his circumstances.</p> <p><i>"[My bank] have been absolutely great. They have their own special mental health team and they've been very supportive."</i></p>
<b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b>	<p>The impact caused extensive emotional distress and had worsened his mental health condition.</p> <p>There remains an outstanding complaint regarding the bank freezing his partner's account and the effect it had on his mental and physical health.</p>

## 19. Loan

<b>Overview</b>	A customer missed her loan payments because her benefits were taken away from her because of ill health. A doorstep agent visited her house to discuss these missed payments, and her potential options.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Joanne is 63 and lives in a deprived estate in Scotland. Her husband passed away and she now lives on her own but has her granddaughter stay over sometimes.</p> <p>She suffers with arthritis, meaning that everything she does takes much longer, such as cleaning the house, but also has to sleep in her living room when she is in too much pain.</p> <p>Her struggle with arthritis means that Joanne cannot work, so she has become heavily reliant on benefits. However, due to a recent Work Capability Assessment which ruled her as "able to work", her disability benefits stopped. This has contributed to her lack of money, which has been a lifelong issue, even when her husband was alive. As a result, Joanne took on a doorstep loan.</p> <p><i>"I have no money to do anything. I have a bus pass now so I can go shopping but that is depressing because I can't buy anything ... okay so that might be a bargain but still out of your price range."</i></p> <p>She does not have any form of bank account and is concerned that she will struggle to set one up when she is moved onto Universal Credit, as she will need one so her benefits can be paid.</p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	✓	X	X	✓
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	<p>She feels a bit overawed and unsure how to approach the provider. She has been offered a financial product or service at a price, or with terms and conditions, she felt to be unfair and expensive.</p> <p>She has put off dealing with financial matters and fallen into debt because she has not wanted to deal with difficult financial situations</p>			
<b>Situation</b>	Joanne was reliant on benefits (due to ill health) which were stopped so she was no longer able to pay off her doorstep loan.			
<b>What did the customer do?</b>	In recent years Joanne has taken out several doorstep loans, which she found herself struggling to pay off. The doorstep agent paid a regular weekly visit to Joanne's home, during which they discussed her not being able to make her payments. She was expecting to be taken to			

	<p>court when she could not keep up with repayments. Other people who lived on her estate had previously advised her to simply not make any more payments, however this solution worried her too much. All interactions took place with the doorstep agent and Joanne never had any direct contact with the head office of the loan company.</p> <p>During the interaction, the agent suggested that an extra payment be made that week, but when Joanne said that she couldn't pay it, the doorstep agent explained that she would have to record and report it.</p> <p><i>"I said I couldn't pay so she asked if it would be okay to report it ... I got a bit angry at her and then you realise it is not her it is her job. Then I got a letter saying you are in arrears and not making your minimum payments. Well I know that I never like to miss payments."</i></p> <p>Joanne started to become fearful of the weekly visits and was worried that they would take her to court. In the end, the doorstep agent made an agreement with Joanne, where she would pay £2.50 each week as a minimum payment for each of her loans, if she could provide proof of her outgoings. Although it will take a few years to pay off, she settled for the agreement and is happy with the outcome. However, she is less happy that she still receives a monthly statement.</p> <p><i>"Maybe they could have informed me and not leave me full of angst. They realized the minimum payment was trouble so why wait ... rather than leave me sitting here every week nervous that this wee man was coming to my door and having to say I can't do it"</i></p>
<p><b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b></p>	<p>Joanne's confidence took a knock as she says she feels "silly" for paying thousands of pounds in interest for these small loans. As a result, she will never take out another doorstep loan again, despite having further offers.</p> <p>Joanne believes that it is too easy to receive these types of loans, as the potential interest charges are not made clear upon signing up.</p> <p>Joanne was happy with the outcome of the interaction, despite the emotional distress and monetary harm caused.</p>

## 20. Loan

<b>Overview</b>	After a period in hospital, this customer did not keep up with his loan repayments but did not feel well enough to respond to the communication from the provider. After eventually contacting them the payments were frozen for a time and then the loan extended by a year.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Ashley, 49, is self-employed and has worked in the commercial property industry for 30 years. Ashley lives with his partner, who is a full-time nanny.</p> <p>In February 2016, Ashley had a minor stroke, although at the time he had not realised this had happened. However, a few months later in April he had much bigger stroke and ended up in hospital for 6 weeks. Ashley now experiences headaches and tingling everyday due to nerve damage. In addition, if he becomes tired his vision and balance are affected. His speech also becomes impaired when he is nervous.</p> <p>After the second stroke, he was unable to work for a year and he had to be financially supported by his parents. Ashley had a few outstanding loans at the time, but he kept this from his parents as he did not want to worry them.</p> <p><i>"The interest was going up and the payments were going up...I didn't want to worry my parents any more than I had to. I was paying loans and credit cards off."</i></p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	✓	✓	X	X
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	He feels a bit overawed and unsure how to approach the provider. He has a lack of knowledge about the product and does not find information about it easy to understand. He struggles to follow instructions making it hard to interact with financial providers and has problems with travel insurance due to his health condition. He has also found himself in debt.			
<b>Situation</b>	Following his stroke and six weeks in hospital, Ashley started to miss his loan repayments and the provider tried to get in contact with Ashley by phone and text, but he felt too ill speak with them.			
<b>What did the customer do?</b>	<p>Ashley was very anxious about contacting the loan company and what the consequences might be. He was very concerned that bailiffs might end up at his door demanding payment.</p> <p><i>"I thought they might send the heavies round and have people breaking doors down."</i></p> <p>It wasn't until May 2016 that he felt well enough to speak to them and deal with the situation. Ashley had a direct point of contact at the loan company, so he called them and explained his health situation over the phone.</p>			

	<p>When he informed them of his situation, they extended the amount of time he had to make repayments and froze the payments for a while. However, this did mean he would have to pay more interest overall.</p> <p>They had a dedicated customer care team for dealing with people with health conditions, which meant they should know he was a vulnerable consumer if he contacted them in the future</p> <p>The call centre staff didn't do anything to him to make him feel worse, but they did not help him feel any better. It was somewhat impersonal.</p> <p>Once Ashley felt well enough to deal with the re-payments he contacted the firm and unfroze the payments. The firm extended the loan for another year. The extension of the payment by a year means that Ashley pays £30 more each week than was originally agreed. After he started to make the repayments they stopped calling and texting him. He has not contacted the loan provider since he started to make the repayments. However, he does receive weekly emails from them about borrowing even more money.</p> <p>He mostly blames himself for the situation and taking out the loan in the first place. However, he felt the approach to the telephone contact was impersonal and that it could have been approached in a better way considering the circumstances.</p>
<b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b>	<p>Ashley has had to extend the loan by a year and now pays £30 more per week than originally agreed, so he has incurred financial harm. The loan also caused him a lot of anxiety at an already stressful time in his life and it does not appear that the company did enough to support him after he explained that he had missed his repayments due to being in hospital after having a stroke.</p>

## 21. Current Account

<b>Overview</b>	A customer who has limited mobility so cannot visit her bank branch is offered an upgrade to her current account which makes it easier and gives her more options for interacting with her bank.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Susan is 70 years old and lives in England with her husband. They both retired in 2006 and moved away from London in 2007 where all their family are still based.</p> <p>3 years ago, Susan broke her ankle very badly, resulting in a five-hour operation and a ten day stay in hospital. The injury means that she is now partially disabled. As well as being recently diagnosed with breast cancer, Susan has diabetes. All 3 health issues interact with her mobility which will never improve.</p> <p>Thinking about her finances, Susan says that her financial confidence has come with age, and that she has good knowledge because she finds it interesting. She explains that she is relatively savvy, with a rough idea of what she is looking for when searching for products, it's the financial jargon which she finds confusing.</p> <p><i>"I have been around a long time and had lots of dealings with finance ... it brings wisdom ... Sometimes you learn the hard way but most times you can reason with financial people"</i></p> <p>Susan is not fearful of shopping around and reviews her financial products every year to <i>"get the best deal"</i>. She uses comparison websites but will always follow up with a phone call to ensure that she fully understands the terms.</p> <p><i>"We want to talk to people to make sure we have got everything ... it is not always there on the computer in black and white, sometimes something is missing"</i></p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	✓	✓	X	X
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	Susan has difficulty getting to a bank branch.			
<b>Situation</b>	<p>Susan had been making a lot of calls to her bank because of her limited mobility, so she believes her bank recognised this and offered to upgrade her current account a result.</p> <p><i>"Perhaps alarm bells could go off - why is this lady phoning more often than she used to? Maybe we should ask her a question or two, maybe"</i></p>			

	<p><i>she is housebound...This person goes into the branch every Friday to draw out their wages and why has this person not come in for a few weeks let's make an enquiry."</i></p>
<p><b>What did the customer do?</b></p>	<p>Susan and received a marketing email explaining that she was eligible for a current account upgrade. Upon receipt, she telephoned the bank to enquire, during which the handler sent her some details to assist with the set-up of the app. The upgraded account came with many benefits such as invitations to events, money off deals, offers, and provides customers an 0800 number. This meant Susan can now get through to someone very quickly.</p> <p>Susan described the interaction as an extremely simple process, with the entire journey taking just a couple of hours. She said that could not have been done better, and they couldn't have done any more for her.</p> <p><i>"I can do everything within these four walls: computer; tablet; phone and if I have a real question, we can ask it over the phone. It has made my life easier because I do not have to go into town."</i></p>
<p><b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b></p>	<p>Although the overall interaction was positive, and Susan benefits from the app, she still prefers some non-electronic communication and will never go with purely online options.</p> <p>She appreciated their awareness and being upgraded and now feels like a valued customer. Interacting with her bank is now easier so distress is avoided.</p>

## 22. Car Insurance

<b>Overview</b>	An elderly customer struggled to make herself understood when trying to renew her car insurance, resulting in her son having to make the renewal for her at a later date.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Diane is a 71-year-old retired female living on her own in Wales. Her partner visits her 3 times a week and her children help her a couple of times a week by taking her to the shops and running any errands.</p> <p>Recently she slipped whilst walking through her local park, breaking a bone in her back which now causes her extreme pain. The participant also suffers from diabetes and has borderline glaucoma.</p> <p>Her ability to keep up with household expenses had been exacerbated by her accident as she had to pay for extra support. She has had to borrow money from family and friends.</p> <p><i>"I'm only on state pension and I only get a small amount for the disability, but I'm having to pay out for the hairdresser to come out and do my hair, to get my garden done, for someone to come and do a good clean for me once a month... things I can't do."</i></p> <p>Diane doesn't review her financial service providers and she considers it to be too much hassle switching. She would also struggle to review a provider because she isn't confident with using the internet. Several years ago, she suffered identify theft which has also made her feel warier about changing providers. However, recently she switched her home insurance provider through going into her bank branch who found her a cheaper product.</p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	<p>She has a lack of trust in the provider and feels a bit overawed and unsure how to approach them. She is frightened to tell a financial service provider about her illness or condition in case they withdraw insurance cover or charge her more. She is also struggling to cope with managing money.</p> <p>She also has difficulty getting to a bank branch, found it difficult to arrange for a trusted person to deal with your finances on her behalf.</p>			



<b>Situation</b>	<p>Diane had to renew her car insurance, which she believed would be a simple process, so called her current insurance provider to do this but the interaction was difficult for her.</p>
<b>What did the customer do?</b>	<p>During the call Diane felt like she spoke to three different people, including someone who was not a native English speaker who she found difficult to understand.</p> <p><i>"They just ask so many questions. You answer them and they ask the same question in a different way ... I found it very confusing and very annoying...You get somebody that's foreign on the line and I'm not very good at understanding accents ... you're mis-hearing and you have to ask them to repeat, and they're asking you to repeat."</i></p> <p>She had a conversation about whether she was qualified to drive, as she has borderline glaucoma. She struggled to explain that her GP had given her the all clear to drive.</p> <p><i>"It's explaining what's wrong with you...that you're mild diabetic and I'm borderline glaucoma - to them it's black and white and if you've got it, you can't take out insurance."</i></p> <p>She became frustrated when she was transferred to another person who tried to sell her additional add-on insurance products that she didn't need. As a result, she ended the call without successfully renewing her car insurance, so her son completed the task – and got a cheaper deal - for her by phoning on her behalf a few days later.</p> <p><i>"He looked online and that was the better deal and he did get through because he knows all the right buttons to press, and he is very easy going and laid back... I do get stressed out more now [since the accident] and I just can't do things online."</i></p>
<b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b>	<p>Because of her recent accident, she is now unable to drive. The negative experience has meant that she does not feel confident telling the insurance provider and so her car is left unused whilst she still makes her full monthly payments, causing her monetary harm.</p> <p>The experience of the interaction caused her anxiety and she could have been left uninsured if her son had not helped.</p>

### 23. Equity Release

<b>Overview</b>	Having had to stop work in a period of serious illness and facing uncertainty about whether he would be able to return, the customer investigated equity release and ultimately decided that equity release was not suitable.			
<b>Background</b>	<p>Irvin has lived for the past 40 years with his wife in suburban east London in a comfortable detached house, which he owns mortgage-free. He works as a taxi driver while his wife is retired. They have 3 children and 4 grandchildren living nearby, who are extremely important to them. Irvin is keen to provide them with a good inheritance, and so manages his financial affairs carefully to ensure he is able to do so.</p> <p><i>"At the age of 71 it's just a question of living a normal life, as and when you can go on holiday, doing up the house, and saving money towards the future as much as you can.... three meals a day only!"</i></p> <p>Having had to give up work for an uncertain length of time due to illness, he proactively explored his financial options, including equity release. Though his heart condition was ultimately mis-diagnosed and he was able to go back to work, he was subsequently diagnosed with lymphoma which resulted in 6 courses of chemotherapy and some complications which are still occurring to date.</p>			
<b>Drivers of vulnerability</b>	<b>Health condition</b>	<b>Negative Life event</b>	<b>Low capability</b>	<b>Low resilience</b>
	✓	X	X	X
<b>Consequences of vulnerability</b>	He has made a claim with an insurance company.			
<b>Situation</b>	Despite being comfortably off and so not immediately feeling a financial strain, his illness left him facing financial uncertainty for the future, and so he decided to look into his options and approached a company to discuss an equity release product.			
<b>What did the customer do?</b>	<p>One of his financial options was to release some of the equity from his house which he owned outright. He had seen an advert for equity release in the financial pages of a newspaper he generally finds very informative. Because of this he decided to speak with a company to get more details about what this would entail.</p> <p>He declared his health condition and circumstances when they asked why he was exploring equity release and was transferred to a specialist team. He found them very helpful. They gave him some information about the different options available to him, such as the lifetime mortgage or the home reversion mortgage, and a calculation based on the value of his home of the interest he would pay with each option.</p>			

	<p>They were also clear about the fee that would be charged for arranging it for him: around £1000. They told him the funds would take 4-6 weeks to arrive.</p> <p><i>'I was just exploring possibilities, I had an open mind. But the financial arrangement fee can be upwards of £1000, I didn't find that particularly attractive. The idea of depriving my children of any inheritance as well...'</i></p> <p>He felt that the information they provided was thorough and neutral. He did not feel as they were pressuring him to take up the product.</p> <p><i>"They weren't pushing me in any one direction at all. I was happy with the level of integrity. You can always spot a person that's trying to flog you something... they weren't trying to be a Delboy! They explained the lifetime, the reversion mortgage, the equity release...."</i></p> <p>He then went away and did his own research on the internet, as part of which he looked at an article which he found extremely clear and helpful.</p> <p>Off the back of this, he decided that equity release was not a suitable option for him. This coincided with him feeling well enough to go back to work, resolving his financial uncertainty.</p>
<p><b>Impacts of this interaction (harm)</b></p>	<p>Ultimately, he felt that equity release would leave him financially worse off and that he would not be able to leave the inheritance that he wanted to be able to leave to his children. He therefore avoided taking out the product and did not experience any monetary harm.</p> <p>He was very satisfied with the outcome because he felt the product was unsuitable for his circumstances, and that the company had given him some useful advice which allowed him to come to that conclusion - they hadn't given him the hard sell. It left him feeling positive about exploring financial options with a provider.</p> <p>When the time is right, he believes they will downsize their house instead.</p>