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MONEY BOX LIVE

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DUGGLEBY: Good afternoon. It's hard to know where to start when we talk about banking on Money Box Live. Should we concentrate on overdrafts where new rules on charging are coming into force? And, if like me, you've recently received booklets on the terms and conditions, have you actually read them beyond the headlines such as 'some simple helpful changes to your current account' and 'we're moving your banking and savings accounts to one simple efficient system', followed by no fewer than 99 pages by explanation? The very last page helpfully tells you how to complain and, if necessary, go to the Financial Ombudsman whose caseload in the last year totalled more than 71,000. I'm afraid we're unlikely to get through more than a dozen calls on this afternoon's programme, but we'll try to make it as wide-ranging as possible. Maybe you're concerned about how safe your savings are and whether you're fully covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. Limits are due to be increased in line with Europe from the present UK level of £50,000 per institution, but you need to know where banks are licensed and, equally important, who owns what. Then there's the OFT investigation into the time taken to transfer cash ISAs and the transparency of interest rates, especially those with introductory bonuses. New guidelines on that will come into effect at the end of this month. Another area of concern is identity theft and other types of fraud where plastic cards are cloned. The chances of becoming a victim may be statistically small, but it can be very unpleasant and time-consuming to prove your innocence. Is it worth taking out insurance for this, or indeed the widely misunderstood payment protection policies on loans? The overriding principle of the banking code, now known as the banking

conduct of business, is to treat customers fairly and reasonably. So let's put that to the test with your calls to my guests: Eric Leenders, Executive Director of the British Bankers' Association; Craig Donaldson, Chief Executive at Metro Bank; and James Daley, Editor of Which? Money, a relentless critic of customer service standards. The Money Box Live number - 03700 100 444. First up, Derek in Telford. Hello Derek.

DEREK: Hello.

DUGGLEBY: Your call.

DEREK: Yes, my call is concerning the problems that I think many people have in transferring cash ISAs from one financial institution to another. My wife tried to transfer a cash ISA from Lloyds Bank to another bank, which I shan't name - I'll just call them XXX - and the XXX Bank made a complete shambles of everything. She opened up the online ISA in July 2008 with this organisation. By the end of October, there were a whole series of phone calls between her and customer services. They had lost the paperwork. They said ...

DUGGLEBY: Okay, I get the picture, Derek - it just didn't work.

DEREK: It didn't work.

DUGGLEBY: Right, now Eric Leenders ...

DEREK: And what I'm asking you, is there any kind of information we can get as to which financial institutions appear to give the maximum number of problems in terms of not being able to effect a cash transfer?

DUGGLEBY: I'll bring in Which? Money in a moment. But, Eric, the point is the bank is actually addressing this problem.

LEENDERS: Yes, I think 2008 was a bit of a watershed moment. There was a

certain peak in transfer activity and as a consequence the banks have been working to improve cash ISA transfers.

DUGGLEBY: Under pressure from the OFT?

LEENDERS: Well I think we would argue that actually we'd done a lot ahead of the super complaint by Consumer Focus, which led to the work we've since been doing with the Office of Fair Trading. The most important thing for people to know before we get into the next cash ISA transfer season round about March/April 2011 is that the transfer window has shortened to 15 days. A number of banks transfer their cash ISAs electronically and we're looking to broaden that. And at the same time we've seen some competitive initiatives which include paying interest from day one of that 15 day process. So I think there's a number of things to bear in mind as you think about where you're going to place your cash ISA balances for the year 2011 and beyond.

DUGGLEBY: Indeed. James, are you happy with the present set-up or do you think there's still room for improvement?

DALEY: We get dozens of complaints every month from readers of our magazine you know who've had problems with the cash ISA transfer process. And when we've tried to look at it, the difficulty we have is that there's always two parties involved and they tend to blame each other when things go wrong, so you know I sympathise with Mr Armstrong. And the one thing we do know is there are a few banks out there that tend to sort of come out top for customer service all round and at least you know if you're a customer of one of those and you're moving to one of those institutions, then at least you can have faith that one of them is acting in your interest even if the other one isn't.

DUGGLEBY: Well clearly Derek, you find that the one that you wanted to go to was the bad one?

DEREK: They seemed to be the worst. They kept on ... Well there were all sorts of

problems. You know people would phone back and they'd say, "Well we'll get somebody to call back".

DUGGLEBY: Why did you persevere? Why didn't you just effectively tell them to get lost if they couldn't do it?

DEREK: Well in the end my wife aborted the whole thing and she decided to withdraw it.

DUGGLEBY: Quite right.

DEREK: And the problem is that unfortunately - I'm retired now, my wife is still working - she just didn't have the time to pursue this anymore.

DUGGLEBY: Absolutely. Now let me stop you there because that is the nub of the issue, isn't it, Craig? I mean people just haven't got time to argue with recalcitrant bankers.

DONALDSON: And they shouldn't have to. The point is we should be focusing on the customer and what the customer wants, and we need to listen and communicate with the customers - totally agree - and some organisations are better at it than others. I think for me though, if a customer is looking to switch their cash ISA, I would say think about the value - and that's of the organisation as well as things like rate and how quick they do it. And also there are a couple of banks out there that do offer the interest from the point of opening the account - Metro, Halifax, people like that. Do use them.

DUGGLEBY: Yuh. There is the other issue which has been raised, and that is whether you can transfer existing money because many of these accounts still only allow new money and I find that really kind of quite inexplicable, James.

DALEY: Well absolutely. There are tens, thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of

customers who are languishing in poor accounts; and then when they finally wake up to that, they ask to move to a better one and they're told that they can't without closing their current account down and sometimes even going away for a few months and coming back again. An insane system really. And thankfully Nationwide actually has just come out and said that you know they're going to stop that policy and you know we hope we see other banks starting to follow suit.

DUGGLEBY: Have you got any league tables as to which banks are the most efficient in dealing with ISAs, or is it just ...

DALEY: Well not ISAs specifically. We do have savings satisfaction tables, and First Direct and Co-op, which come out sort of top in many of our satisfaction surveys, are the two again that top those tables there. You know customers seem to have a good experience with them time and time again. They don't always pay the best rates, but they do know how to look after their customers.

DUGGLEBY: Okay, we must move on now to Alistair in Fife. Presumably a snowbound Fife, is it Alistair?

ALISTAIR: It is, yes. I'm completely snowed in, which is why I've got time to speak today. I sympathise very much with the previous caller about the time it takes to argue with banks. My issue is that I've had online banking with the Bank of Scotland for 5 years, and in July of this year it stopped working and it's taken me from then until now to try and persuade them to fix the problem. They haven't been able to fix it and nor will they send me my online information in any other format, so I can't have it on a disc, for example, which would be helpful to me because I use it to feed my own computerised systems. And I'm absolutely frustrated. They even told me at one point to write to Eric Daniels who's the Chief Executive of the Lloyds Banking Group, which I did, and that didn't solve the problem either. So am I entitled to online statements, or is this a sort of perk of being a customer of the bank?

DUGGLEBY: Okay, well I'll put that one to Craig. He's with Metro Bank, but again I'm interested to hear your views about online banking generally. And we do know

that the online systems can leave you in the lurch for say three or four hours because there's a general breakdown, but when you get a specific one on account I mean presumably there's just a glitch in that particular piece of equipment in the branch or in the central set-up?

DONALDSON: I have to say I'm very shocked to hear. I mean that's several months of this issue. Alistair, is it just you or is it a wider one?

DUGGLEBY: We don't know.

ALISTAIR: Well I don't know. I'm assuming it's just me, but I'm not sure.

DONALDSON: I mean for me things will go wrong and it's about a bank responds to it that's the important thing, and it just doesn't seem like they're responding and communicating with you appropriately, Alistair. My view's very simple on this. It's taken so long. Move. Other people can support you in what you need. If the bank you're with can't, move.

ALISTAIR: I do understand the thing to move, but I've been very loyal to my bank. I've been with the bank all my life and my family for three generations and, frankly, where else would you go?

DUGGLEBY: Well can I just ask Eric Leenders this. I mean, Eric, is it not the case here to say to the bank, "Look for some reason or other this account isn't working, so can you please completely close it down and transfer everything to a brand new account with a brand new number?" - in other words get out of this rogue account, if you like. Is that the answer?

LEENDERS: Whilst I can't speak on the specifics, I'm sure there is plenty more that can be done than to leave a customer waiting for that period of time, and I'm absolutely with Craig when he says that level of service is unacceptable. So maybe, regrettably, one of those difficult decisions that you need to take is to think about

moving to a bank that can provide you with the online service that you want and you rightly deserve.

DUGGLEBY: But I mean after all the Bank of Scotland, as any other bank, is perfectly capable of opening up a new online account. I mean it's not a big problem.

LEENDERS: Not at all.

DUGGLEBY: I mean surely it would just be a case of saying wipe that one out and start again? That's what I would do.

LEENDERS: Yeah, I'm a little bit unsighted as to why they have this particular problem and why they haven't been able to get to the bottom of it, particularly over that period of time. But clearly the delay is just too long.

DUGGLEBY: Yuh. I'm also a little bit concerned. You know I don't want to blame the bank entirely, James, because there could be a bug actually in the computer itself. I mean these bugs can be planted in such a way that can cause the thing to malfunction.

DALEY: But it's fairly easy to you know eliminate that.

DUGGLEBY: Or put a test on it.

DALEY: Test it elsewhere. You know there's no way that something like this should take months to sort out. And you know it's worth saying Bank of Scotland comes right at the bottom of our customer satisfaction tables for the banks and so it's not just Alistair who's having a bad experience with them. I understand his loyalty, I admire it, but you know if he's getting bad service, there are banks that will give him a good one and don't put up with it.

DUGGLEBY: Right, we've got a cri de coeur coming in from Barbara. Now

Barbara's 81 and she's never been overdrawn in her life with her bank, but she hasn't been able to get there. She's in Scotland and she hasn't been able to get to the bank to pay in some money and as a result she knows she's gone overdrawn and she's going to be charged. She's very upset about this and wants some help. Who can answer that? Craig?

DALEY: Well it's about commonsense, isn't it really?

DUGGLEBY: I think she may be unnecessarily worried, but you know she must ...

DONALDSON: I think she just needs to phone the bank, let them know what's going on. I'm sure they'll be sensible. So many people are going through a hard time at the moment. I'm sure the bank's struggling to get its staff in itself. I'm sure they'll do all they can to look after and reassure her.

DUGGLEBY: The great thing Eric is when that call goes through, get the name of the person who you speak to. Get them to ring you back if necessary and confirm. Is that the message?

LEENDERS: Yeah, absolutely. I think you know if you are discussing anything over the phone with your bank or with another service provider, you know do make sure you make a record of the conversation. Jot down the details, as you say, of the person that you're talking to. And if you don't feel that you're necessarily getting far enough in the conversation you're having, perhaps escalate it to a manager, someone more senior. Again take the details coming back to financial services. If you're still not satisfied, then of course you do have recourse through the Financial Ombudsman.

DUGGLEBY: I should be very surprised in this case, James, if when the snow's cleared and she goes into the branch, she won't be treated sympathetically. I would think she would be.

DALEY: Well you'd hope so. We've heard worse stories, so you know. But I mean

most banks would take sympathy in a case like this, you know, especially if you've been a good customer and haven't been stepping outside the terms of your agreement in the past.

DUGGLEBY: Also it's manifestly true. I mean nobody can argue with not being able to leave your home because of snow.

DALEY: No.

DUGGLEBY: It's a fact, you know.

DALEY: You'd be surprised. You know sometimes when they can refer to terms and conditions, they often do.

DUGGLEBY: Oh well. Okay, well anyway we'll make sure that we follow that one up. Barbara, if you find that you aren't given a sympathetic hearing, you get back in touch with me and we'll sort it out for you. Right, Michael a mobile. Right. Or Michael in Mobile. Right, hello Michael, your call.

MICHAEL: Oh good afternoon. My question is about a bank's automatic right of set off obviously where the bank has the right to take money from one account which is in credit and transfer it to one where there is money owing, such as in my case a credit card account. Basically as an overview, I had a joint account which was opened with HSBC (or at the time Midland Bank) many years ago. When my marriage failed, the account was closed and the bank offered me a basic bank account with no credit facilities. But soon after it was opened and I reached the princely sum of £200 in my account, the bank actually took £177.32 from that account to pay off alleged historic joint credit card debt. I have an ongoing complaint with the Ombudsman Service, and you did say earlier in the programme that they are snowed under with complaints at the moment. Mine's been ongoing for a very long time. I've appealed twice. But basically my question is the banks' automatic right of set off, is it to benefit the bank or is it to be of assistance to the customer, as we're led to believe, because you know it's of help to make sure that the account is paid from the account where it's being

held?

DUGGLEBY: Yeah okay, okay, we've got the message. Now because you've gone to the ombudsman, we can't possibly pre-judge what he may or may not do. But on the basis of achieving the general principle of set off, Eric, can you explain banks' legal rights?

LEENDERS: Yuh, certainly. The bank does have a right of set off and typically it can be quite helpful to customers because of course if someone does go inadvertently overdrawn, it's a useful customer service point to transfer money from a deposit account. For example right of set off would allow that. Equally though, right of set off can be used to deal with arrears and it sounds like that's how it's being applied in these circumstances. You point out that it's difficult for us to comment on this particular case. Equally there are a number of details that I would need to better understand to have a fuller picture around the nature of the card, who's responsible specifically for the debt, etcetera. But, yes, right of set off can be beneficial. Equally it can be used to deal with arrears. And just now, the Financial Services Authority is looking at the manner in which the right of set off is applied to make sure that consumers aren't unduly disadvantaged. And I guess just to close the point, it's worth mentioning that within the lending code, which is the bank sponsored code of conduct for lending, we have introduced more recently principles around how and when the right of set off should be used, so it is clearer for all concerned.

DUGGLEBY: Perhaps this is why the ombudsman's taking a bit of time to establish what his verdict will be if it's a fairly fluid situation, Craig? I mean normally he'd be acting fairly quickly, I imagine.

DONALDSON: Absolutely and you know the ombudsman will be looking at it. I mean I think for me, there's two things on this. One, it is about communication. It sounds as though Michael did the right thing speaking to the bank. You have to talk to your bank when these things happen. Work with the bank because they don't want things to go wrong either. Nobody wants to deal with the issues.

DUGGLEBY: Relationship break-up though should sound warning bells if you've got a joint account?

DONALDSON: You should speak to the bank. You should actually get a freeze put on the account, close the account if you can, because you're storing up possible problems for the future.

DALEY: But I mean to answer Michael's point directly, you know I think sadly these rules are there to look after the bank and not the customer. You know although Eric does say that this facility can be used you know to top up one account when you accidentally go overdrawn, that never happens. You know I've got a joint account with my wife and a sole account, and when we've gone overdrawn on the joint account they've never taken funds from my account to make sure. They've just charged us. So you very rarely see it working the other way.

DONALDSON: What you should get is a phone call though to say they're going to do it before they do it.

DALEY: Yeah, absolutely.

DUGGLEBY: Okay. Right, let's have an email from Ray now in Hartlepool. And he basically doesn't trust any bank. He says especially Alliance & Leicester and Santander because they've made several mistakes over the last few months. Now of course they're not on the programme, but he does say, 'I'm seriously considering closing all our accounts with this bank. I don't know whether all banks are the same, but I just can't get any immediate action and I have to argue with them all the time. Can the panel offer some advice as to how to handle the banks?' It's a slightly broad question, but James, you get the point. I mean do you play it tough or hard or soft or ... ? How do you do it?

DALEY: Well you know there is consumer legislation to protect you there. You know if you haven't got the service, the level of service you'd expect, follow the procedures that Eric was talking about earlier. You know they have to deal with your

complaint within 8 weeks. If they haven't, take it to the ombudsman. And you know I know all of that is a lot of hassle and so actually when you come to the end of it all move your bank whether or not you've got the right resolution or not, unless they solved it pretty much straight away, because there are banks out there that will solve your problems pretty much in one call and will give you the benefit of the doubt. And, Santander, you know we get hundreds of complaints about them. They're one of the worst out there. So I urge you to follow through with your instinct and move all your accounts immediately.

DUGGLEBY: Craig?

DONALDSON: All banks are not the same, absolutely not the same. You know my view is exactly with James. Banks should be resolving problems as soon as possible, straightaway. We have to trust our customers and work with them. I review every complaint every morning to see what's gone on because we do find things, we do do things wrong, and it's only by working with the complaints we can put them right.

DUGGLEBY: Eric?

LEENDERS: Well yeah, absolutely. You know you have to consider the sort of complaints that you're receiving and you have to make sure that you improve your service accordingly. Are all banks the same? I don't think so and I think that point's already been made. It's a great shame. Again it comes to this point of communication. It's a great shame that things have come to the situation whereby that particular customer's so aggrieved, but there's hope that there's a bank and a relationship out there that's far more productive for them.

DUGGLEBY: Okay, well you might take heart from this one, Eric, from Mark in London. I hope it's not a plant, but anyway he says: 'Before you bash the banks to oblivion, how much does the success of banking contribute to the Treasury each year?' Well you're in the British Bankers' Association, Eric. I guess not too much at the moment because of the propping up of two of the big ones?

LEENDERS: Well first I'd like to say hello to my cousin Mark out there. It's good to hear from him. (*laughter*) No seriously, the banks contribute about £36 billion a year to the Treasury tax take, including income tax from employees. And you broaden that out to financial services and it rises to about £60/61 billion. So that's a broad picture of the annual tax take.

DALEY: Well the supermarkets make quite a big contribution to our economy as well, but they manage to treat their customers well. So I don't think there's any excuse for poor service you know no matter how much the banking industry contributes to our economy. And of course, as Vincent was alluding to earlier, we did bail out well basically the whole sector. Two of them, yes. You know in the end all of them would have gone down if we didn't bail them out.

DUGGLEBY: I can never ...

LEENDERS: Hang on, I do need to step in there because I think that is particularly inflammatory and really wide of the mark. So with respect, yes a couple of banks ...

DALEY: (*over*) Contagion, contagion. There would have been ... Once you've had people queuing round the block to take their money out of Halifax and other big banks, suddenly there would have been queues at every bank.

LEENDERS: I don't think I need to get drawn into this particular spat just now.

DUGGLEBY: Indeed.

DALEY: I think actually we're rather stretching a point to make a bit of entertainment for this afternoon.

DUGGLEBY: Sure. One thing I think I would be speaking on behalf of a number of listeners in saying is that I can't really get my head around why some of the interest rates on deposits are so appallingly bad, well below the rate of inflation. Inflation 4%,

2% maybe on a bank deposit or a bank building society deposit, and yet charges going out at 19%. I mean I think some people might find those margins kind of a bit excessive. What do you think, Craig? I'm sure you'll say well that's the way things are.

DONALDSON: It's all about value. Make your decisions. If you're not happy with what you're getting from your bank, move.

DUGGLEBY: Yeah, but nobody will pay the rate of inflation on a deposit account. I mean you just can't get it.

DONALDSON: I think you'd be surprised what you can get out there. But again I'd say just take everything into account. Is it a bonus? You've got to look at how people do things. Make sure it's transparent and clear and be able to trust your bank.

DUGGLEBY: And in case you hadn't noticed, incidentally, I don't think, James, there are very many banks who are paying any interest now on current account balances. They've gradually all withdrawn that, haven't they?

DALEY: Yeah, gradually. Although you know actually there are a few out there that do still pay interest.

DUGGLEBY: (*over*) I know Lloyds do still do some.

DALEY: Lloyds are one. And actually Santander is another, although you know they start off with a very high rate and then drop it right back.

DUGGLEBY: And there are of course these ones which have a very high interest rate on a limited amount of money, say up to £100 a month. Is that something which you look favourably on?

DALEY: Well you know, I mean I think it's good to have competition in the market

and for some people current account interest is very important. You know we're fine with banks not paying current account interest as long as you know they're giving a great service to their customers and their customers are aware of that.

DONALDSON: I think for me, it's all about being upfront, transparent and clear. The banks have got to deliver on what they promise and they need to make sure that that's for the long-term, not just for the short. This is a six month or nine month play.

DUGGLEBY: Okay Stella in London, your call.

STELLA: Hello. Good afternoon.

DUGGLEBY: Good afternoon.

STELLA: My account was overdrawn and my bank deducted £35 twice on the same day. The deductions related to a transaction with one company only. This happened over a month ago and I wanted to know are they legally entitled to do this?

DUGGLEBY: It sounds to me like a mistake, but have you asked them?

STELLA: Well I only asked them about one deduction because that's the one I first was aware of. It's only when I received a bank statement, I realised it had happened.

DUGGLEBY: Okay, they've put it through twice?

STELLA: Yes.

DUGGLEBY: You know have you got a branch nearby?

STELLA: I do indeed.

DUGGLEBY: Well I think, James, just go in with a statement?

DALEY: There are often two sets of charges that you get hit with, so you might get hit with using an unauthorised overdraft and then you know a paid item fee. So you can end up sometimes with two fees for one misdemeanour, so you really need to go back and read the terms and conditions. And you know if they have mischarged you, then go and complain.

DUGGLEBY: You've got to go and ask first to find out what's happened?

DALEY: Yeah, absolutely.

STELLA: What are my chances of success? I mean is it normal procedure?

DUGGLEBY: Have you done anything wrong previously?

STELLA: No, no.

DUGGLEBY: Well ...

STELLA: I haven't been overdrawn with this bank, no.

DUGGLEBY: It's pretty likely if you go in and ... You know don't sort of be aggressive, but just say look I'm sorry I did this. I appreciate that I shouldn't have done it, but you too appear to have made a mistake, so could we call it quits, Craig?

DONALDSON: Absolutely, just go and talk to your bank. I'm sure if a mistake's been made, you know the first thing you should do - apologise; and the second thing is put it right. If they could have charged the two fees and you know if it is an error on your part, go and talk to them.

STELLA: Right, I mean I'm happy for them to take the one sum because it was my error, but I thought twice was pushing their luck.

DUGGLEBY: Well if indeed it is a double entry, well then they will correct it. And if they've made a mistake, I think they might well withdraw the first charge as well out of good will. Right, Alexis in Oxford, your call?

ALEXIS: Yes, I'm thinking of transferring some money into the Post Office Online Savings Account. I'm aware that they're operated by the Bank of Ireland, so I wondered if that money would be protected by the FSCS compensation guarantee?

DUGGLEBY: Eric, can you help us?

LEENDERS: Yes it is. The Bank of Ireland has established a separate company, so that it is specifically covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. And of course the limit increases at the turn of the year to the equivalent of 100,000 euro, which we anticipate will be £85,000.

DALEY: Where you need to be careful of course is if you do have any money in say Anglo Irish. You know banks that are EU based may not be covered by the UK Financial Compensations Scheme, but Bank of Ireland is now an exception there.

DUGGLEBY: Okay and we now have a call from David in Munslow.

DAVID: Hi. Yeah, I've got some money with Tesco Online Banking and there's no particular problem - I can view the balance etcetera online. But they only provide paper statements annually. Now what if I had a dispute with them about how much is in the account or if there was a catastrophe with their system? What proof would I have that I placed any deposit at all? Basically how safe is my money with online banking without written statements, paper statements?

DUGGLEBY: Panel?

DONALDSON: It's Craig here. I would say that your money's safe. The important thing is you know what the banks have to do is be able to prove you daily you know

what's going on. If that money was to disappear, you have a right to ask for that data under the Data Protection Act, so they have to provide it to you and that's how you could prove it. You wouldn't have a problem.

DUGGLEBY: Eric?

LEENDERS: I haven't really much to add actually. I think Craig's covered it.

DUGGLEBY: Yeah, okay. We have an email from Judith in Rothsay and she says, 'My son, who is on a minimum wage and lives alone, is in hardship. He's been in contact with the ombudsman regarding bank overdraft charges from over a year ago, but hasn't had a result yet. The amount in question is £400, which would make such a difference to his well-being.' Now this is a question about negotiating these overdraft charges. What room for manoeuvre, James?

DALEY: Well you know it's very difficult really. I mean it really depends what the individual circumstances were and if he did you know repeatedly step over the terms of his credit agreement then the bank probably did have a right to charge him. But you know a lot of banks will be reasonable with you and if you're in financial hardship ...

DUGGLEBY: Which he is.

DALEY: ... they are absolutely obliged to be reasonable with you.

DUGGLEBY: They are? Oh right, that is part of the banking code, is it?

DALEY: Yeah, they have to reconsider it. And Eric can clarify that, I'm sure.

DUGGLEBY: Eric?

LEENDERS: Yeah, that's absolutely right. Although again the point is that if the complaint is with the ombudsman, there's probably a little more to it than meets the

eye, so perhaps we shouldn't prejudice what the ombudsman has to say.

DUGGLEBY: No, it's very difficult. I mean we've had a number of calls about people who have incurred overdraft charges, which of course are mainly historical, James, because I mean something is being done now. At least you shouldn't be kept in the dark about it.

DALEY: No, absolutely not. But you know the problem is many people were hoping that they were going to be able to claim back a lot of charges from the past and then that court case went the wrong way last year and you know unfortunately that's not going to happen anymore.

DUGGLEBY: But, nonetheless, still the charges look fairly steep.

DALEY: Yeah, but I mean actually to be fair to the banks, most of them are sort of moving in the right direction. The difficulty now is that almost every bank has a different charging structure and it's very difficult to understand it.

DUGGLEBY: A very quick final word from you, Eric.

LEENDERS: I think that's a valid point, which is why we've got comparative case studies on individual websites and actually Office of Fair Trading has them all in one place. So if you think of the pattern of usage of your account, you can ascertain against each of the providers which is the best value for you.

DUGGLEBY: Okay thank you very much. That's Eric Leenders, Executive Director of the British Bankers' Association; Craig Donaldson, Chief Executive at Metro Bank; and James Daley, Editor of Which? Money. You can follow up anything you've heard on the programme by logging onto the website: bbc.co.uk/moneybox. And we'd especially like to hear from listeners trying to buy their first home. Have you managed to get a mortgage? Are you trying to move up the housing ladder? Have you been in a chain that's collapsed? And if you're a seller, have you had to drop your

price? You can email the team on moneybox@bbc.co.uk. Paul Lewis will be here with the next programme as usual on Saturday. I'll be back same time next week with Money Box Live taking your calls on pensions.