

## **The complaint**

Miss P complains about Barclays Bank UK PLC and their failure to credit her account with a cheque she deposited before Christmas.

## **What happened**

On 13 December 2021, Miss P paid a cheque with a value of £3,244.91 into her Barclays account via a third party payment service Barclays provided. Miss P has explained she intended for the funds to clear before Christmas, so she and her family were able to enjoy Christmas without any financial worries and concerns.

But Miss P's account wasn't credited with the cheque amount. And Miss P called Barclays to chase the whereabouts of the funds on several occasions between 16 and 29 December, with no helpful answers being provided.

On 29 December, Barclays advised Miss P to return to the cheque issuer to obtain further information that would allow them to trace the cheque. Miss P did this, but Barclays were still unable to find the cheque and so, Miss P returned to the cheque issuer who paid the £3,244.91 into her account via BACS transfer on 30 December. Miss P was unhappy about this, so she raised a complaint.

Miss P was unhappy that Barclays hadn't credited the funds into her account before Christmas. And she was unhappy with the misinformation she'd been provided by Barclays when she'd called them to chase the whereabouts of the funds. So, she wanted Barclays to compensate her for the upset and stress this had caused her.

Barclays responded and upheld the complaint. They accepted Miss P was provided with incorrect and inconsistent information when she called them to clarify when her account would be credited. And they accepted they could've done more to support Miss P during the time she was waiting for the funds. So, they offered Miss P a compensatory payment of £150 to recognise the upset she'd been caused. Miss P didn't think this amount was enough to recognise the trouble she'd been caused and so, she referred her complaint to us.

Our investigator looked into the complaint and upheld it. They recognised Barclays had already accepted they had failed to communicate with Miss P effectively when she chased her funds. And they recognised Barclays admission that they could've done more to support Miss P. But our investigator didn't think the offer Barclays had made adequately recognised the responsibility Barclays held for the loss of the cheque, or the time of year in which the situation occurred. So, our investigator recommended that Barclays pay Miss P a further £100, taking the total compensation amount to £250 overall.

Barclays accepted this recommendation. But Miss P didn't. Miss P didn't think this amount fairly recognised the upset and worry she'd been caused over such an important time to her. And she thought Barclays should pay her around 20-50% of the total cheque amount. Our investigators view remained the same and because of this, Miss P's complaint has been passed to me for a decision.

## **What I've decided – and why**

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

Having done so, I'm upholding the complaint for broadly the same reasons as the investigator. I've focused my comments on what I think is relevant. If I haven't commented on any specific point, it's because I don't believe it's affected what I think is the right outcome.

I'm aware Barclays accept they failed to provide Miss P with correct and consistent information when she called them to understand when she'd receive the funds into her account. And Barclays also accept they failed to support Miss P during this time as they'd expect. As this isn't in dispute, I don't intend to discuss this any further.

I'm also aware that Barclays have accepted our investigators recommendation to pay a further £100 to recognise the responsibility they held over the loss of Miss P's cheque, and the time of year this incident occurred. As Barclays accepted this recommendation, I think it's reasonable for me to assume they have also accepted their failure here. So again, I don't intend to discuss this in further detail.

Instead, my decision has focused on Miss P's main dispute which centres around how much Barclays should pay to adequately compensate her for the upset she's been caused.

## **Putting things right**

Any direction or award I make is intended to place Miss P back in the position she would've been in, had Barclays acted fairly in the first instance.

While I deem Barclays to be partially responsible for the loss of Miss P's cheque, I must also recognise that the third party payment service Miss P used also had a part to play. So, even if Barclays had acted fairly, I'm unable to say for certain that this would've meant Miss P's cheque wouldn't have gone missing.

But what I can say is that, if Barclays had acted fairly, they would've done more to locate Miss P's cheque in a reasonable amount of time. They have confirmed it can take five working days for the funds on a cheque paid in through the third party payment service to clear into a customer's account. This means that by the 18 December, the funds should've cleared.

Barclays have confirmed Miss P spoke to them on 19 December. So, had Barclays acted fairly, I think they would've made it clear to Miss P exactly what information she needed to obtain from the cheque issuer to allow them to trace the cheque at this point. Based on Miss P's actions, I think it's likely Miss P would've done this by 20 December. Allowing Barclays the 48 hours they say it can take to trace a cheque, I think by 22 December Barclays should've been able to explain to Miss P that the cheque couldn't be located and that she would need to speak to the cheque issuer to arrange for a new cheque to be issued, or a BACS transfer completed.

I can see the cheque issuer did complete a BACS transfer so, I think it's reasonable for me to assume the cheque issuer would've taken the same action and so, Miss P would've likely received the funds contained within the cheque before Christmas, as she intended, had Barclays acted fairly.

So, I think Barclays are responsible for the upset Miss P would've been caused when

chasing them for updates, as well as the stress and upset she would've felt when she realised she wouldn't have the funds available for her family at Christmas. I recognise this is a time of year that most people look forward to and place an increased importance on, so I do think this needs to be considered when thinking about what Barclays should do to put things right.

But, importantly, Miss P did receive the funds that were intended when the cheque issuer issued the cheque. So, I can't say that Miss P suffered a financial loss, as she received the payment that was intended, albeit late.

So, any award or direction I make is unable to consider any aspect of a financial loss, as there wasn't one. Instead, it focuses solely on the upset and inconvenience Miss P has been caused.

Our investigator recommended that Barclays pay Miss P an additional £100, on top of the £150 they offered within their response to her complaint, taking the total compensation to £250. And I think this award is a fair one, and in line with what I would've awarded had it not already been recommended.

I think it fairly compensates Miss P for the upset she was caused by the delay in her receiving the funds over the Christmas period, whilst also acknowledging Barclays failures in the service they provided when Miss P chased them for updates.

But I think it also takes into consideration the fact Barclays weren't wholly responsible for the loss of the cheque and the fact Miss P has since received the funds from the cheque issuer. So, I think Barclays should pay Miss P an additional £100, taking the total compensation to £250 overall.

I understand this isn't the outcome Miss P was hoping for. And I want to reassure her I've carefully considered her comments regarding the compensation amount and why she doesn't think this adequately compensates her for the upset she's felt. And I want to make it clear my decision isn't intended to downplay the obvious upset she's experienced, at such an emotive time. But I believe the total compensation amount of £250 is a fair one, in line with our service's general approach.

### **My final decision**

For the reasons outlined above, I uphold Miss P's complaint about Barclays Bank UK PLC and direct them to take the following action:

- Pay Miss P an additional £100, taking the total compensation amount to £250 overall.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss P to accept or reject my decision before 6 July 2022.

Josh Haskey  
**Ombudsman**