

The complaint

Mr C complains a Barclays Bank UK PLC trading as Barclaycard (Barclays) system error resulted in his payment for a flight to be cancelled causing financial loss.

What happened

Mr C says he booked an overseas flight using two separate credit cards, one with another provider which was successful. Mr C says when he attempted to make the transaction using his Barclaycard he received a secure message asking for security details which he provided but the payment was still declined. Mr C says he then contacted the travel company asking them to split the payments and got a further message from Barclays asking him to confirm the payment was genuine, which again he confirmed. The payment was still declined.

Mr C says he made attempts to call Barclays on 23 and 24 September 2022 but couldn't get through as the lines were busy. Eventually Mr C says he spoke with Barclays' fraud department on 25 September 2022 who explained there was a system error, and the payment should have been made.

Mr C says Barclays should have authorised the payment on the first attempt after he had cleared its security measures, but because it didn't he had to re book his flights by which time they had increased in price by over £1,000. Mr C wants Barclays to compensate him for the financial loss he incurred.

Barclays says it has security measures in place to protect its customers and after further security checks were completed Mr C's card was cleared on 25 September 2022, but Mr C only made the payment for the flight booking on 28 September 2022 when the agent he was using had returned to work. Barclays agreed the telephony service he had received was poor and paid him £25 by way of apology.

Mr C wasn't happy with Barclays' response and referred the matter to this service.

The investigator says she looked at all the available information but didn't uphold the complaint. Initially the investigator felt Barclays were entitled to carry out its security checks and she wasn't able to tell it what security measures it must have in place. On further review the investigator felt that Barclays' agent had provided Mr C with misleading and confusing information surrounding the transaction and felt it should increase the offer of compensation for this by a further £50.

Mr C didn't agree with the investigator's view and asked for the matter to be referred to an ombudsman for a final decision.

What I've decided – and why

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

Having done so, I will also be partially upholding this complaint and I will explain how I have

come to my decision.

I can understand it would have been frustrating for Mr C to have his credit card transactions declined even though he believed he'd done everything he could to authorise the payments for his travel booking.

When looking at this complaint I will consider if Barclays acted unfairly when it declined Mr C's credit card transactions, after he had already confirmed it was him making those transactions.

Mr C's complaint centres around the fact even though he had acknowledged electronically, that the credit card payments he was making for his travel arrangements were genuine, Barclays still refused these payments, and this was because its security systems had failed. Mr C says this was confirmed to him in a telephone conversation with a Barclays agent on 25 September 2022 and as a result of Barclays actions, he missed out on a beneficial offer on the price of the flights he wanted to book.

While I understand the points Mr C makes here, I'm not fully persuaded by his argument. I say this because although Mr C may believe by him having authorised the payments for his flights on more than one occasion by electronic message, that must mean the payments must be authorised - but that's not necessarily the case, as Barclays have explained it was still carrying out further background checks in light of recent increased activity of fraud and scams on travel bookings.

Although Mr C may not fully agree, it's not my role to tell Barclays what security and fraud procedures it must adopt or have in place. I have listened to the phone call Mr C refers to on Sunday 25 September 2022 with the Barclays agent and although Mr C implies he was clearly told Barclays had a security system problem at the time he attempted the payments, I can't say he was actually told that here, that said the agent does slightly complicate matters when she went on to say she couldn't understand why the payments had failed.

The agent also admitted she didn't have access to all of the systems as she was working from home, but then went on to explain frauds were "*manic*" on holiday bookings at the moment and fraudsters could have knowledge of its customers text messages. So, it's reasonable to say Mr C was given an explanation why the payments he'd attempted were held for further security checks, although I agree this could have been made clearer at the time.

Barclays have also informed this service there wasn't a security system failure at the time and it was conducting further security checks in the background, and I am satisfied that isn't unreasonable in the circumstances.

I can see that after the telephone call on 25 September 2022 Mr C's credit card was cleared ready for the payments to be made - although it's not immediately apparent why Mr C didn't make the booking until the 28 September 2022, although this may have been a result of his travel agents' availability.

Barclays agreed Mr C didn't get the best level of service when he was attempting to telephone them and he experienced long wait times, so it paid Mr C £25 for that, but like the investigator I agree a further £50 is more appropriate here.

While Mr C will be disappointed with my decision, I can't hold Barclays responsible for the fact Mr C's flight bookings were delayed while it carried out additional security checks, for the reasons I have already explained.

Putting things right

I instruct Barclays Bank UK PLC trading as Barclaycard to pay Mr C a further £50 for the poor service it provided.

My final decision

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint.

I instruct Barclays Bank UK PLC trading as Barclaycard to pay Mr C a further £50 for the poor service it provided.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr C to accept or reject my decision before 9 October 2023.

Barry White
Ombudsman