

## The complaint

B, a limited company, complains that Barclays Bank UK PLC blocked its account causing business disruption and loss and didn't deal with disputed transactions on the account.

## What happened

B says that it raised a fraud claim in September 2020 and that Barclays didn't take action about this. It has been waiting for statement copies so it can review the transactions on the account. B also says that its account has been blocked since November 2021 and as a result it couldn't trade, and this has affected its business. The problem is still not resolved, and this has affected the director's health.

Barclays issued a final response letter on 31 January 2022. It said that there had been an issue with B's ability to access the account online and not a block on the card. And it made a payment of £100 to reflect the inconvenience caused and said a colleague would be able to assist with the problems with online banking. It also said that once B had confirmed the transactions that were fraudulent then it could start the process around this.

Our investigator recommended that B be paid a further £200 in compensation as he didn't think that B had dealt with an IT issue quickly enough. He said that the first record of B stating it couldn't access its account online was on 16 December 2021. It is accepted that B was wrongly told that online access was blocked when the problem was an IT error. B complained on 6 January 2022. Barclays looked into this from 12 January 2022 and found that the issue then was that B had two online profiles and that this could be resolved. He also said that from 14 February 2022 online access was restricted because of arrears and not due to any technical issue. This has been confirmed by Barclays in two calls with B on 24 June 2022. He noted what had been said about the director's health, but said this was a complaint from B, a separate legal entity, and so he couldn't take into account what had been said about the personal impact.

Our investigator said that he couldn't see that a lack of online access to the account due to the IT issue prevented B receiving payments and selling its stock. He was unable to quantify the value of the stock B had provided evidence about but in any event he didn't think Barclays was responsible for financial losses.

He said he was unable to comment on the disputed transactions as Barclays hadn't yet looked into them. Barclays said it had sent statements, but B said it hadn't received the relevant ones. He told Barclays this and it said it would send that information. In a follow up to his assessment he also sent B a copy of the information he'd relied upon.

B is represented in this complaint. Its representative said that this was a very unfair assessment, and it requested an ombudsman's review. B had provided video evidence that it still couldn't access the account online. It had only received recent statements and not those for 2019. Barclays' actions had 'destroyed' the business and affected the health and wellbeing of the director. It had closed the account for no valid reason. B insisted that it couldn't sell the stock online as it didn't have access to the account, and it believed the card had been blocked due to fraud. B lost in the order of £50,000 as a result. B thought we'd

ignored the evidence about this it had provided and said it had first contacted Barclays about the account problems in November 2021.

B explained the ongoing issues it was having. It had still not had all the statements it had requested. It had been receiving communications from Barclays saying the account was still open. But when it called was told that the account was closed. This communication hadn't stopped despite it raising the issue. B said that companies are run by real people, and it was unacceptable not to consider the health aspects. It referred to Barclays not showing it hadn't paid direct debits and had told Barclays it couldn't deal with things when it didn't have access to the account. It believed that the account had been closed in November 2021 when fraudulent payments had been reported. It didn't think that the information provided by our investigator that we'd relied upon was sufficient in light of all these issues and this didn't explain the IT error. B maintained that Barclays has misled it, and this undermined what we'd been told by Barclays. B wanted all genuine evidence to be looked at

### **What I've decided – and why**

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

I need first to say that I'm only going to be able to look at the complaint that Barclays dealt with in its final response of 31 January 2022. Further complaint issues that have since arisen would need to be raised by B with Barclays. I know our investigator has contacted B about that.

I'm going to deal with the disputed transactions first. I understand that B raised this with Barclays in September 2020 and that some of these dated back to 2019. It seems that the person the director spoke to at Barclays on the phone couldn't access these on the system. And the director was asked to visit a branch. He says he did, and the branch was closed. He called back and says that he was assured the claim had been logged. But when he phoned in June 2021 this hadn't been done and he needed to look for the payments again and would call back. I don't see this was raised again until December 2021 and B has since been asking for a copy of the statements on the account as it doesn't have online access. While Barclays says it sent these B says it hasn't received a copy for 2019.

The position is that I don't have details of these transactions and Barclays hasn't reviewed them. So, I won't be able to make any finding about whether any or all of them were authorised. I would reasonably expect B as a company to review payments on its account and promptly highlight any it didn't recognise. While I accept that it's been trying to access statements to look at these again it didn't seem to keep its own records of these. B does need to highlight which are fraudulent so that Barclays can review them and there is nothing further I can now do on this aspect of the complaint.

Our investigator has set out the position regarding access to the account and I agree with what he's said. While B says it was contacting Barclays from November 2021 about this the first record of this is from 16 December 2021. And Barclays didn't look into this until B raised a complaint. While Barclays says that the technical issue was resolved I don't see evidence that B was able to log into its account again. Notably Barclays said that from 14 February 2022 this was because the account was transferred to collections. As I referred to above I'm not looking into that here or any further recovery action B has provided evidence about. I only give this information as it means that I can't reasonably find that any technical issue was the ongoing reason for the lack of access to the account. And that would apply to the videos B has provided for example of trying to access the account on a date I understand to be 24 November 2022.

I've also watched the videos showing the stock that B had around September 2021 and note that it planned to sell this up to the end of that year. I don't have a basis to find that its inability to access its account online was a reason why it couldn't sell that stock and have payments made to its account or even to arrange another means to sell it. So, I won't be holding Barclays responsible for that.

B was clearly inconvenienced by not being able to look at its account online. There were other ways to access the details including in branch or by telephone. And as I say I don't see the account was blocked from receiving payments. B is a separate legal entity. I fully understand what's been said on behalf of the director about his health issues and distress and don't have any reason to doubt that. But I'm afraid I won't be able to recognise those in a complaint from B.

Having considered what happened and taken into account our published guidelines about compensation I find that the recommended total compensation of £300 is fair. I know that the director of B will be disappointed by that given what he says has been the impact.

### **My final decision**

My decision is that I uphold this complaint in part, and I require Barclays Bank UK PLC to pay B a further £200 making a total of £300.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask B to accept or reject my decision before 11 September 2023.

Michael Crewe  
**Ombudsman**