

The complaint

E, a limited company complains about the way that Barclays Bank UK PLC (Barclays) handled its international money transfer requests.

E is represented in its complaint by a director, Mr M.

What happened

In early February 2023, E instructed Barclays to make two international payments from its account. There were delays due to checks by Barclays and because it used the wrong account details for a payment.

Barclays apologised to E and refunded the difference in exchange rate on the incorrectly made payment. Barclays also paid E £100 compensation.

Mr M didn't think £100 compensation was anywhere near the amount Barclays should pay for the problems he faced with the transfers. Mr M said he spent time on the phone going through security but the next day, the transfers still hadn't arrived.

Mr M visited a branch and found out that one of the payments didn't have the correct details. Mr M says he then spent a few hours reissuing the payments. The same day, Mr M was asked to go back to the branch as there were further issues. Mr M said this involved a great deal of stress, particularly as he had to leave a family gathering.

Barclays gave Mr M conflicting information over whether E's account was blocked or not and he was left not knowing when the payments would be made. Mr M says that Barclays then made the payments even though it said E's account was still blocked.

Mr M says that E's suppliers were left unhappy as he couldn't pay them and he lost money due to fluctuations in exchange rates.

Our investigator originally considered that Barclays' compensation offer was fair but after Mr M responded to the investigation outcome, she sent a revised view asking Barclays to pay an additional £100. This was because she didn't think £100 fairly compensated E when Barclays used the wrong account details to make a payment.

Mr M doesn't think a total of £200 adequately reflects the impact Barclays' errors have had. He says he found the day he spent trying to sort the payments out extremely stressful. Mr M would like me to listen to the calls made with Barclays as the service he received was terrible.

Our investigator told Mr M that Barclays couldn't locate the call recordings but that she'd already agreed he received poor service, so listening to them would be unlikely to change her view of the complaint.

Mr M remains unhappy with the investigation outcome. He says the calls would show that Barclays kept giving him conflicting information. Mr M says that because of the experience, he has moved banks which has taken months of work to complete.

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.

Barclays agrees that its level of customer service fell below what E could reasonably have expected and Mr M has clearly explained the impact Barclays actions had on him. I do not in any way seek to diminish the importance of the problems Mr M faced but the complaint is made by E, not Mr M. E is a limited company and so its own legal entity. This means I can't consider the upset or stress that Mr M has felt personally. Instead, I am considering whether the investigator's recommendation that Barclays pay a total of £200 compensation is a fair way to resolve E's complaint.

Mr M acknowledges that some of the delay with the payments was due to Barclays' security measures, which while inconvenient, were something he'd expected and planned for. So, I've taken this into account when considering a fair outcome to E's complaint. There's also no dispute that Barclays made mistake with the payment details which led to further delays – although Barclays points out that the customer is responsible for checking the payment details are correct.

Mr M's biggest concern appears to be with the events of 3 February 2023 which involved multiple branch visits, conflicting information, and stress, particularly as Mr M was then due to be out of the country. For the reasons outlined above, I can't consider the impact on Mr M personally but I can take account of the time he spent sorting the payments out, over and above what could reasonably be expected.

Some of the disruption was to Mr M's personal plans but I also assume the additional work needed to sort the payments out, meant Mr M's time was unnecessarily diverted away from running the business of E. For this inconvenience, I consider an overall compensation payment of £200 is fair. Particularly as Barclays has already accounted to E for the loss caused by the fluctuation in exchange rate.

As the investigator told Mr M, I've accepted that the level of service E received was poor, so I don't think listening to call recordings would change my decision, even if they were available. And this service isn't the regulator – that's the role of the Financial Conduct Authority. So, I can't punish or fine Barclays for any failures in customer service.

Overall, I agree that Barclays let E down and this is reflected in E's decision to leave Barclays. I appreciate that this in turn led to additional time and effort but as it was E's choice to make and not something Barclays required E to do, I don't award additional compensation to reflect the inconvenience to E of switching banks.

Putting things right

To put things right, Barclays should pay E £100. For the avoidance of doubt, this in addition to the £100 it has already paid.

My final decision

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint. In full and final settlement, I direct Barclays Bank UK PLC to put things right as set out above.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask E to accept or reject my decision before 18 September 2023.

Gemma Bowen
Ombudsman