

The complaint

Mr M complains that he was locked in a branch of Barclays Bank UK PLC and was treated poorly by its staff.

What happened

In September 2023 Mr M went to a branch of Barclays to make a cash withdrawal. He says that during the visit, the branch locked its doors and he couldn't leave. Mr M says that he made a member of staff aware of this but they didn't acknowledge him – and instead spoke to a colleague. When a member of staff did come back to let him out – they didn't offer an apology.

Mr M complained to Barclays about this. It said that he entered the branch just before 15:00 when the doors of the branch were closing and that once he was able to use its machine to withdraw cash he was seen at the door to be let out. Barclays says that it followed its procedures on the day, which is that one member of staff will unlock the door while another monitors the alarm. It said that this took no more than a few minutes and so didn't think it had acted wrongly.

Mr M was unhappy with this and brought his complaint to this service where one of our investigators looked into it for him. They felt that Barclays had acted fairly too. Mr M disagreed and so the complaint was passed to an ombudsman to decide.

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.

In doing so here, I wasn't present during the events being complained of. That means that I have to base my decision on the evidence that is available to me and decide, on balance, what is more likely than not to have happened.

Mr M's recollection of this event is that he was locked in the branch for what he acknowledges was likely only around five minutes. But Mr M says that the duration of the event isn't the main issue here – it was more about the fact that this happened in the first place and that he felt ignored and treated poorly by the branch staff.

Barclays' version of events is that Mr M came into the branch around closing time and as a result the doors of the branch were closed during his time there. In order to let Mr M out, the branch had to follow its security procedures, which meant that one member of staff had to open the door to let Mr M out while another waited by an alarm. Barclays says that the delay Mr M experienced was because one member of staff had to wait for another to carry out this procedure.

I find that a persuasive explanation of what is more likely than not to have happened here. Mr M acknowledges that the event likely took around five minutes and so both sides are agreed that he was indeed locked in the branch for a period of around this time. But Mr M

says he felt ignored by the staff.

I think what's likely to have happened is that Barclays' staff were focusing on serving other customers at the end of the day and, as it says, needed to wait for staff to become free so that it could follow its security procedures and let Mr M out of the branch. It may be that they didn't communicate as Mr M would have liked about what was happening – but I don't think that would have materially changed the situation here.

Ultimately, Mr M visited a branch to withdraw some money. It seems he was able to do that, but faced a small delay in being able to leave the branch because it had to follow its security procedures. I can see why Mr M was upset by this but I don't see any grounds that it would be fair for me to say that Barclays has to take any further action in relation to this complaint.

Mr M makes the point that the only people to have viewed the CCTV footage from the day are the very people that he is complaining about. I can see why he'd be unhappy with this – but equally I think it shows that Barclays has treated his complaint seriously and investigated it fully using the records it has available. I see no reason to doubt what the member of staff has said about what they viewed. And while that evidence is no longer available I don't think it's necessary here for me to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances.

My final decision

My final decision is that I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr M to accept or reject my decision before 29 May 2024.

James Staples
Ombudsman