

The complaint

Mr W complains that Barclays Bank UK PLC made a number of errors when he switched his account to it.

What happened

Mr W opened a new account with Barclays on 30 November 2023 with a switch-in date of 8 December 2023. Barclays wrote to him on 12 December 2023 confirming the switch had been completed. However Barclays advised him that no direct debits had been transferred over when he had specifically set up two. He tried to contact Barclays as he was concerned that he would not get his switching bonus. However he had problems in using the online chat as the system kept crashing and he had to start new conversations. This meant he had to keep repeating himself as Barclays couldn't see the old conversations.

Mr W sent in a complaint to Barclays asking for it to reply in writing rather than over the telephone as he worked long hours. However Barclays attempted to telephone him and then wrote a final response letter to him saying that the complaint had been resolved. He managed to get through on the online chat and was told that his complaint hadn't been closed and that his switching bonus would be received within 28 working days of the switch date. He was prepared to leave it at that but then received through the post a copy of the switching conditions for receiving the bonus with a post-it note attached and an arrow pointing to the 28 days condition. He felt insulted by this.

After Mr W referred his complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service, Barclays sent him a further final response letter essentially accepting that it was at fault in respect of the various issues and paid compensation of £75.

Our Investigator noted Barclays' acceptance that it was at fault in respect of various matters but thought that a more appropriate compensation payment would be £150 (a further £75).

Barclays believed it had paid reasonable compensation and asked for an Ombudsman's decision. The matter has been passed to me for further consideration.

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.

direct debit transfer

Mr W understood from Barclays that no direct debits had been transferred over despite his request for two to be transferred. He was understandably concerned about this as to be eligible for the switching bonus he was required to transfer two active direct debits. Barclays said that this was an error on its part, one direct debit was transferred properly but Mr W needed to set up the other direct debit again.

difficulties using the app for online chat

Mr W said that when trying to conduct online chats through the app the system kept crashing. And the system deleted his previous chats, meaning that he had to repeat his complaints several times. Barclays admitted that some messages were ignored when they should have been acknowledged. I understand that Mr W found this very frustrating.

communication by telephone

In his written complaint Mr W asked for a response by letter or e-mail rather than telephone as he worked long hours during the week. He then found Barclays tried several times to contact him by telephone. Barclays admitted that it had made an error in this respect.

closing the complaint

Barclays sent Mr W a final response letter in January 2024 setting out that it had had a telephone conversation with him and agreed the outcome. In fact no such telephone conversation or agreement had taken place. Barclays acknowledged this and said that it was likely that its adviser had chosen the wrong template. It recognised that Mr W's complaint could have been rectified and dealt with sooner.

sending terms and conditions with a post-it note

After Mr W had managed to contact the chat line and agreed that his complaint would be looked into properly he was surprised to receive through the post a photocopy of the switching terms and conditions with a post-it note with an arrow pointing to the 28 working days for receiving the bonus. No covering letter was provided.

Barclays agreed this had happened but didn't say that its adviser had done anything wrong. I think it's likely that this was sent by the adviser on the chat line. And that sending it with a formal letter would have taken longer. Nonetheless the impression given to Mr W was that this was unprofessional and that he had no reason to complain because the 28 days hadn't yet expired. I'm inclined to agree with him, if it had intended to send an informal response at the very least it could have enclosed a compliment slip or something to indicate that this came from Barclays.

in summary

I do think that overall Mr W received a poor service from Barclays. A number of errors which led on from each other caused Mr W great frustration. Nonetheless he tells us that he might have been prepared to accept the position had he not received the copy of the terms and conditions with a post-it note attached. As Barclays has pointed out, we say that an award between £100 and £300 might be fair where there have been repeated small errors, requiring a reasonable effort to sort out. I think that applies in this case. Together with the fact that it was Barclays' mistake which in the first place had led Mr W to complain, and then took some effort to sort out, I think that the Investigator's proposal to increase the compensation to £150 is fair and reasonable.

Putting things right

Barclays should pay a further £75 compensation.

My final decision

I uphold the complaint and require Barclays Bank UK PLC to provide the remedies set out under “Putting things right” above.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I’m required to ask Mr W to accept or reject my decision before 12 July 2024.

Ray Lawley
Ombudsman