

The complaint

Mr M complains that Barclays Bank UK PLC unfairly blocked an attempted payment.

What happened

Mr M says he tried to transfer money in early January 2024, but the payment was blocked. He says he spoke to Barclays after passing its security and the payment was authorised. Mr M says he then tried to make a second payment but that again was blocked. He says Barclays unfairly required him to attend a branch which caused inconvenience. Mr M says he has been caused distress by Barclays actions and would like compensation.

Barclays says it's entitled to block a payment where it has security concerns. It says the payment was for £40,000 and when asked about it, Mr M said it was for someone he just met on the street. Barclays says it's paid £50 for any inconvenience.

Mr M brought his complaint to us, and our investigator didn't uphold the complaint. The investigator thought Barclays was entitled to block a payment where it had security concerns in line with account terms and conditions. The investigator thought the two transactions were separate and that Mr M did not assist with Barclays questions.

Mr M doesn't accept that view and in summary questions why he should answer questions for a second time. He says there was no justification for Barclays actions.

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 have come to the overall view that I don't uphold this complaint.

Banks and building societies must have security measures in place to protect its and its customers money from fraud, which is of course a major problem. I accept on occasions such security measure can cause inconvenience and frustration but that doesn't mean as here Barclays acted unfairly by blocking both attempted transactions.

I have looked carefully at Barclays account terms and conditions which I think Mr M would have agreed to when the account was opened. Those terms and conditions make clear that Barclays may not carry out a transaction where it has security concerns. So, I don't think Barclays made a mistake or acted unfairly by blocking the first of Mr M's payments which was for £30,000 or the second payment for £40,000. I'm satisfied that on both occasions Barclays had security concerns and so acted in line with those agreed account terms and conditions by blocking them both.

I appreciate that Mr M attempted the second payment very shortly after the first payment was authorised and would have answered security questions. But that doesn't mean that any subsequent payments are immune from further checks. I have looked carefully at Barclays records and can see that the second payment triggered security checks.

I have listened to the telephone call between the parties following the attempted second payment. I'm satisfied that Mr M made clear he didn't want to answer questions again and he said the money was for someone he had just met on the street. I'm also satisfied Mr M maintained that explanation and that Barclays had no real choice but to restrict Mr M's account as well as the payment as a result of his answers. I appreciate Mr M's frustrations, but I think had he provided answers to Barclays questions, as inconvenient as that may have been, his payment would have been authorised without the necessity to attend a branch.

I accept that during the call Mr M told Barclays the money was for his wife, but I'm satisfied by that point Barclays had correctly made the decision to require Mr M to attend a branch with identification. I don't think Barclays made a mistake or acted unfairly by doing so and find it was as a direct result of Mr M's explanation for the purpose of the money.

Overall, I'm satisfied Barclays is entitled to block a payment or account in line with agreed account terms and conditions which is what took place here. I can see Barclays has paid compensation for the inconvenience Mr M was caused which I think is fair and reasonable in circumstances where it's not clear that it needed to do so.

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.

David Singh
Ombudsman