

The complaint

Mrs M complains that Barclays Bank UK PLC ('Barclays') should pay her more compensation than it has offered, after admitting poor service in connection with an online banking issue.

What happened

Mrs M makes regular payments to an employee via online banking. A technical issue resulted in that payee's details being deleted from Barclays' system, so Mrs M was unable to send the payment due to her employee. Mrs M complained to Barclays. She also mentioned being unhappy about a recent local branch closure, the limited access available to Barclays' business managers and receiving incorrectly addressed stationery from Barclays.

Barclays said sorry to Mrs M for the issues that she'd faced. It said it couldn't uphold her complaints about its current operating processes although it appreciated how these impacted on her. But it acknowledged the technical issue she'd faced and agreed it could have raised the matter more promptly with its IT team. Barclays also agreed it had made an error sending her stationery in the wrong name. Barclays offered to pay Mrs M £150 compensation by way of an apology.

Mrs M didn't feel this went far enough to resolve things and she brought her complaint to us.

Our investigator thought that Barclays' offer was fair in all the circumstances. Briefly, she said that it took 24 hours for Barclays to resolve the issue after Mrs M complained and Barclays' offer to pay Mrs M £150 for the distress and inconvenience it had caused felt fair. If it happened again, Mrs M had solutions to the problem so she wouldn't have to spend as much time trying to resolve it. And this sort of thing could happen when carrying out banking activities. So, she didn't recommend that Barclays needed to do anything more.

Mrs M disagreed with our investigator, mainly saying that Barclays' explanation for what happened didn't make sense and wasn't credible. Mrs M put things this way: '...I just do not believe that we have got to the bottom of the issue and got all of the facts straight yet.' She said she'd had to spend a lot of time trying to sort this out with Barclays at some cost to her business. She was concerned that what happened could impact very significantly on her (and other people's) business, and it wasn't acceptable that an issue that other customers had also been reporting for some years still wasn't resolved.

Our investigator wasn't persuaded to change her view. As the complaint hasn't been resolved, it has come to me for a decision.

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.

The background facts giving rise to this complaint are not in dispute. And Mrs M hasn't disagreed with what the investigator said about branch closure and the limited business

hours Barclays' business managers are available. So, save for confirming that I agree with what the investigator said, there's nothing further I can usefully say about those complaint issues.

As far as I can see, Mrs M's complaint is mainly that she feels '...fobbed off' and she doesn't accept that Barclays has adequately explained what happened when an online banking payee was deleted from the system. She's worried about the ramifications if this happens again – either to herself or someone else. And she wants Barclays to pay her redress that better reflects the time and effort she's had to spend on this matter.

Whilst I appreciate Mrs M's wider concerns, our approach to redress is to aim to look at what's fair and reasonable in the particular circumstances of a complaint. We don't consider hypothetical scenarios. We provide an informal complaint handling service. My role is to consider the evidence presented by the parties and reach an independent, fair, and reasonable decision based on the facts of the case and the evidence provided by both sides. I may not address every single point or question raised – but it just means I haven't needed to in order to reach a decision in this case. It doesn't mean I haven't considered the evidence and what's been said here.

Barclays explained that the technical issue Mrs M faced is part of a planned business process. Payee details disappear after 13 months unless there are no changes made to the payment, when the payee information will stay on the account longer.

I appreciate that Mrs M doesn't accept Barclays' explanation. She says this hasn't happened to other saved payees and this issue has been widely reported by other people. But I must be impartial. I make findings on a balance of probabilities, in other words, what is more likely than not, based on the evidence that has been provided by the parties. I can't fairly conclude, on the information I've seen, that Barclays made an error when it says it was simply applying its operating process. Or that this doesn't explain what happened here in relation to this particular payee. And how businesses choose to operate and the services they offer are matters that come under the oversight of the regulator - the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). So, I don't uphold this part of her complaint.

But I can see that Mrs M was caused some inconvenience when she had to spend time contacting Barclays about poor service issues. And Barclays agreed that in some respects the service it provided fell below the standard she was reasonably entitled to expect. I've thought about the impact this had on Mrs M to decide if Barclays has fairly resolved the complaint, or if it should do more to put things right.

I've been provided with no evidence, such as cancelled appointments, for example, that show Mrs M lost business leaving her worse off financially as a direct result of Barclays' admitted poor service. So, I haven't identified any specific financial loss. In these circumstances, I can't fairly say that Barclays should pay her redress in line with the hourly rate she has worked out.

But fair compensation isn't just about monetary loss – it needs to reflect the wider impact on Mrs M of Barclays' service failings. I don't doubt that Barclays' admitted poor service would've been frustrating and inconvenient for Mrs M and likely to have impacted to some degree at least on her ability to carry on her business.

I've also considered that Mrs M had access to the information she needed to sort out the missing payee details herself and the payment wasn't seriously delayed. Barclays has also explained how Mrs M can see the account details via online banking on a mobile phone simply by going to Barclays website and logging-in. I hope this is useful to know even if she can't do this using Barclays' mobile banking app. Mrs M objects to any suggestion that it's up

to her to carry around private and confidential information relating to other people just in case she needs to supply this again to Barclays. But it's fair to say that we expect consumers to take reasonable steps themselves to limit the impact of things going wrong. And I think it's reasonable to expect that sometimes online banking can throw up issues that are inconvenient. It doesn't automatically mean that a large financial payment is due as compensation.

Overall, I think the £150 compensation offered by Barclays is fair and reasonable in all the circumstances. It reflects the distress and inconvenience Mrs M was caused and covers the possibility that there could have been some impact on her being able to carry on her business – even if this isn't quantifiable. Beyond this, I don't agree that Mrs M's experience warrants further compensation. I am satisfied that £150 matches the level of award I would make in these circumstances had it not already been proposed. It is in line with the amount this service would award in similar cases, and it is fair compensation for Mrs M in her particular situation.

I have set out below the steps I require Barclays to take.

Putting things right

Barclays should pay Mrs M £150 compensation, as it has already offered to do, to reflect the impact on her of its admitted poor service.

My final decision

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint and direct Barclays Bank UK PLC to take the steps set out to put things right for Mrs M.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs M to accept or reject my decision before 4 September 2024.

Susan Webb
Ombudsman