

## **The complaint**

Miss A complains that Barclays Bank UK PLC blocked and closed her accounts with it and then delayed releasing funds to her.

## **What happened**

Miss A held a current account and a savings account with Barclays. She also held a joint savings account with a family member; that account is the subject of a separate complaint.

On or about 22 January 2024 Barclays decided to close Miss A's accounts with immediate effect. On 29 January 2024 it gave Miss A written notice to that effect. Its letter said that it would not provide the reasons behind its decision.

Miss A tried to obtain the funds which had been held to the credit of her accounts, but Barclays would not release them without further information about their source and proof of Miss A's entitlement to them. It was not until late July 2024 that Barclays agreed to release the funds – over £6,000; Miss A was able to collect a cheque for the funds in early August.

By that time, Miss A had referred the matter to this service. She referred to the number of times she had had to contact the bank without receiving any meaningful updates about its investigation. She explained too that she had been made redundant in December 2023 and so needed to access her savings account until she obtained a new job in February 2024. In addition, her house needed some maintenance work, and again that was to be funded from savings. Not having access to her funds was having a significant impact on her.

One of our investigators considered what had happened and issued a preliminary assessment recommending that the complaint be upheld and that Barclays pay interest on the funds for the time they were unavailable and a further sum in recognition of the distress Miss A had suffered and the inconvenience to which she had been put. That conclusion was reached largely because Barclays had not, at that point, made any submissions in response to the complaint, even though it had been given more than one opportunity to do so.

Miss A did not in any event accept the first investigator's view. She thought that more compensation would be appropriate.

Barclays then submitted further evidence and arguments, asking that much of it be kept confidential. The case was passed to a different investigator, who reviewed it and issued a second opinion. Having considered all the evidence and arguments, including that which Barclays had provided since the first view, he did not recommend that the complaint be upheld. Miss A did not accept the second view and asked that an ombudsman review the case.

## **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.

As I have indicated, the bank has asked that much of the evidence and arguments which it has submitted be kept confidential and not be disclosed to Miss A. This service can accept evidence in confidence where it considers it appropriate to do so (DISP3.5.9(2)R). Having considered carefully the nature of the evidence in this case, I am satisfied that it is appropriate to accept some of it in confidence.

It is generally for banks to decide whether to provide, or to continue to provide, account services to any particular customer. They can exercise their commercial discretion in such matters and, as long as that discretion is exercised legitimately, this service won't usually intervene. I have considered that issue here, and am satisfied that Barclays' decision to block and then to close Miss A's accounts was a legitimate one. Barclays did not have to tell Miss A exactly why it had decided to close her accounts.

Banks should however give reasonable notice before closing an account. What is reasonable depends on the circumstances, but we generally take the view that two months' notice is reasonable for a personal account. There may however be circumstances where a different notice period is reasonable. That period may be less or more than two months, and in some cases immediate closure may be appropriate. In this case, I agree with the investigator that it was reasonable of the bank to close Miss A's accounts with immediate effect.

Barclays has also explained – again, with a request that its evidence be kept confidential – why it took several months to release funds to Miss A. In the circumstances which it has explained, I am satisfied that there were no undue delays in releasing funds to Miss A. I believe the bank acted in line with its legal and statutory obligations and that it has not treated Miss A unfairly.

### **My final decision**

For these reasons, my final decision is that I do not uphold Miss A's complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss A to accept or reject my decision before 27 January 2025.

Mike Ingram  
**Ombudsman**