

The complaint

Miss I complains about Barclays Bank UK PLC.

She says that she fell victim to a scam and would like Barclays to refund her the £280 she has lost.

What happened

In March 2024, Miss I was trying to purchase a handbag on a reselling site. The person she was purchasing the item from told Miss I to make the payment outside of the selling platform, using 'C' which is a group payment app.

However, Miss I never received the item, and realised she had been scammed. She made a complaint to Barclays about what had happened, but it didn't uphold her complaint, so she brought it to this Service.

Our Investigator looked into things, but didn't think that Barclays had done anything wrong. They explained that Barclays didn't need to intervene when Miss I made the payment, and that Barclays had tried to raise a chargeback claim with C, this was ultimately unsuccessful.

Miss I asked for an Ombudsman to make a final decision, so the complaint has been passed to me.

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 decided not to uphold this complaint. I know this will be disappointing for Miss I, so I'll explain why.

It isn't in dispute here that Miss I has been the victim of a scam and has lost money as a result. However, even when it is clear that a scam has taken place, and an individual has been tricked out of their money, it doesn't necessarily follow that a business will need to refund the money that has been lost.

In broad terms, the starting position at law is that banks and other payment service providers such as Barclays is expected to process payments and withdrawals that a customer authorises it to make, in accordance with the Payment Services Regulations (in this case the 2017 regulations) and the terms and conditions of the customer's account.

But, taking into account relevant law, regulators rules and guidance, relevant codes of practice and what I consider having been good industry practice at the time, I consider it fair and reasonable in March 2024 that Barclays should:

- Have been monitoring accounts and any payments made or received to counter various risks, including preventing fraud and scams;

- Have had systems in place to look out for unusual transactions or other signs that might indicate that its customers were at risk of fraud (among other things). This is particularly so given the increase in sophisticated fraud and scams in recent years, which firms are generally more familiar with than the average customer;
- In some circumstances, irrespective of the payment channel used, have taken additional steps, or made additional checks, or provided additional warnings, before processing a payment;
- Have been mindful of – among other things – common scam scenarios, how the fraudulent practices are evolving (including for example the common use of multi-stage fraud by scammers, including the use of payments to cryptocurrency accounts as a step to defraud consumers) and the different risks these can present to consumers, when deciding whether to intervene.

Looking at the payment Miss I made as part of the scam, I don't think that there was any reason for Barclays to have had concerns about what she was doing. The payment was small, and made to a genuine payment app, so I don't think that Barclays should have had any concerns that Miss I may have been at risk of financial harm, and businesses can't be expected to intervene in every transaction.

I am aware that when Miss I told Barclays about what had happened, it attempted to raise a chargeback on Miss I's behalf, but this was successfully defended by C, as the money had already been withdrawn by the scammer. There is no guarantee that a chargeback request will be successful, and as C fulfilled the service which was required of it, which was the handling of the transaction itself, not providing the goods that Miss I was trying to purchase, I don't think that the chargeback had any likelihood of success.

I am very sorry that Miss I has lost money to this scam – but as I don't think that Barclays has done anything wrong, I won't be asking it to refund the money she has lost.

My final decision

I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss I to accept or reject my decision before 10 September 2025.

Claire Pugh
Ombudsman