

## The complaint

Mr B complains Barclays Bank UK PLC (Barclays) unfairly refused a payment he made using an old cheque book.

## What happened

Mr B says in June 2024 he issued a cheque for a rights issue for the sum of £2,225.25 and was informed by the beneficiary the cheque hadn't been honoured by his bank and the "rights" had been sold to the market. Mr B says when he contacted Barclays no one seemed to know what had happened to the cheque he had issued. Mr B says he was then told the cheque had been returned unpaid because it had the incorrect sort code on the cheque, which differed to what he was told previously.

Mr B says he was never informed by Barclays why the cheque was returned unpaid, and it never wrote to him to explain he could no longer use his old cheque book, even though he had received a new cheque book in April 2019. Mr B says although Barclays claim he was informed in 2017 he couldn't use his old cheque book after 36 months, Barclays honoured a cheque he'd issued in March 2021 using his old cheque book.

Mr B says he has lost out on the rights issue he wanted to invest in, and this has cost him over £1,300 based on the current share price and he wants Barclays to put him back into the position he would have been, if it had honoured the cheque.

Barclays says it wrote to Mr B on three occasions in July 2017, October 2017 and November 2017 informing him of the sort code change and in the last two letters that after 36 months he would no longer be able to use his old cheque book and provided him with a new cheque book in April 2019. Barclays says it agrees Mr B was given conflicting information regarding the cheque he had issued in June 2024 and paid him £200 for the inconvenience caused.

Mr B wasn't happy with Barclays' response and referred the matter to this service.

The investigator looked at all the available information but didn't uphold the complaint. The investigator felt Barclays acted reasonably here as it had written to Mr B on three separate occasions in 2017, explaining the sort code change and that he would need to use his new cheque book thereafter. The investigator says he couldn't hold Barclays responsible if those letters hadn't been received by Mr B.

The investigator pointed out that a cheque using his old cheque book was subject to internal intervention and manually processed in March 2021, and he was happy with Barclay's explanation that some customers sort code changes were completed in tranches allowing this to happen.

Mr B didn't agree with the investigator's view and asked for the matter to be referred to an ombudsman for a final 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.

Having done so, I won't be upholding this complaint and I will explain how I have come to my decision.

I can understand it would have been upsetting for Mr B to have missed out on a rights issue because a cheque he had issued had been returned unpaid. When looking at this complaint I will consider if Barclays acted unreasonably when it returned the cheque Mr B had issued for the rights issue.

Mr B's complaint centres around the fact Barclays returned a cheque he had issued for a rights issue in June 2024, as it was written using a cheque on an old cheque book he had. Mr B maintains he was never informed he couldn't continue using the old cheque book and he was given conflicting information about why the cheque wasn't paid, when he complained about the matter.

While I understand the points Mr B makes here I'm not fully persuaded by his argument. I say this because from the information I have seen, three letters were issued to Mr B by Barclays in July 2017, October 2017 and November 2017 explaining the changes to his sort code and what that meant to him. In the latter two letters, it explains Mr B wouldn't be able to use his old cheque book after 36 months and that a new cheque book would be sent to him.

I can see a new cheque book was issued to Mr B in April 2019 which Mr B acknowledged he had received. So, while Mr B says he never received any communications from Barclays regarding the changes in his bank account details, I have seen copies of the letters correctly addressed to him, so I can't hold Barclays responsible for why these weren't delivered as Mr B suggests.

What I would say here is it's not clear why Mr B, when he received his new cheque book with different details, didn't contact Barclays to enquire if he could still use his old cheque book that had different account details, if he wasn't sure.

I understand Mr B has mentioned Barclays honoured a cheque he'd issued in March 2021 using his old cheque book which would have been four months after the 36 months deadline. As the investigator has explained, Barclays have informed this service that not all customers accounts were migrated to the new sort code immediately and some were done in tranches and at that time it was able to manually intervene and process the cheque.

Here however, the cheque Mr B issued was over six years from the original notification his sort code was changed and over three years from the deadline date he had been informed of. So given the huge number of cheques Barclays process each day and the length of time that had passed, it would be unreasonable to expect Barclays to continue with manual interventions like this indefinitely.

I can see Barclays have accepted it could have been clearer about the reasons why the cheque was returned when Mr B complained, and it has paid him £200 for that and on balance I'm satisfied that is fair and reasonable here.

While Mr B may not agree, for the reasons I've already stated I can't say Barclays have made an error here, and while that will disappoint Mr B I won't be asking any more of Barclays here.

**My final decision**

My final decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr B to accept or reject my decision before 3 February 2025.

Barry White  
**Ombudsman**