

## **The complaint**

The complaint has been brought by X and Ms C in their capacities as trustees of four trusts administered by Barclays Bank Plc. It concerns an extended delay by Barclays in distributing the trusts' assets to the beneficiaries. The trustees have been represented in bringing the complaint by one of the beneficiaries, who'll I'll refer to as Mrs C1.

## **What happened**

The background to the complaint will be well known to all the parties, so I won't go back over it in detail.

In short, Barclays was first contacted by the trustees in September 2022 with a request that the trusts be closed, and the investment assets held in them distributed to the relevant beneficiaries. The process of carrying out the distributions involved the creation of several new accounts for the beneficiaries for holding purposes. This in turn created complications that led to the monies not becoming available to the beneficiaries until around October 2024.

Throughout this extended process Barclays acknowledged the distributions were taking too long and it confirmed its intention to investigate once the matter was concluded and compensate all the beneficiaries accordingly. A complaint about the matter was referred to this service in June 2023 but because of Barclays' ongoing work the situation was monitored rather than investigated at that point.

Barclays' investigation outcomes began to be communicated to the beneficiaries in early 2025, including one to Mrs C1. Barclays concluded that the cash eventually received by Mrs C1 in October 2024 should've been received by her much earlier, in March 2023, if the administration of the process had been handled better.

Barclays carried out a calculation to determine if Mrs C1 had incurred a loss due to the delay. Comparing the values at the relevant dates and applying interest at 8% simple to the period during which Mrs C1 had been deprived of the money (in line with this service's usual approach) showed she hadn't incurred a financial loss. However, Barclays also went on to acknowledge the considerable degree of inconvenience and distress the matter, and the delay in responding to it, had caused to Mrs C1 and offered her a total of £1,500 in compensation.

The investigator to whom the complaint had been referred and who had been monitoring the ongoing situation considered Barclays' offer. He acknowledged that the formal complainants were X and Ms C as trustees rather than Mrs C1 as a beneficiary, but nevertheless went on to explain that he felt Barclays' overall approach to putting things right, and specifically the offer made to Mrs C1, was fair in the circumstances.

Mrs C1 responded to say that she accepted the situation in respect of financial loss – that one hadn't been incurred. And she also appreciated the apology offered by Barclays and the overall upholding of the complaint. But she felt the offer didn't go far enough to reflect Barclays' inefficiency or, in particular, the time she'd spent in managing the matter for herself and on behalf of the other beneficiaries. She suggested that she would accept an increased

sum of £5,000 as a fairer reflection of the time, effort, investigation, diplomacy, and stress involved.

As no agreement was reached, the matter's been referred to me to review.

### **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 investigator, in giving his view of Barclays' offer, alluded briefly to the fact that this complaint had been brought by the trustees. And while their involvement had clearly created a degree of work for them, the key issues of the complaint – the potential loss caused by the delay in distributing the trust assets and the associated distress and inconvenience – relate to the beneficiaries, rather than the trustees or the trusts themselves. And in the case of this complaint, more specifically to Mrs C1.

I would say first, in general terms, that I think the approach Barclays has taken in dealing with the matter – which was, as it's readily acknowledged, clearly unacceptable – appears to be broadly fair and reasonable and consistent with this service's approach to this type of issue.

In respect of the specifics of Mrs C1's situation, she's accepted that, while clearly very frustrating, the delay in distribution has not caused her a financial loss. Her remaining concern is that she doesn't feel that Barclays' offer to reflect the distress and inconvenience caused and time lost due to the matter is sufficient.

On this specific issue, while I appreciate the points Mrs C1 has made about the need to liaise with the trustees and the necessity of overseeing the ongoing process, I nevertheless feel that the amount offered by Barclays is fair and reasonable in the circumstances. I'm satisfied it's consistent with the level of award that would usually be made by this service in similar circumstances.

I understand this has clearly been a time-consuming matter for Mrs C1, but we wouldn't normally consider awarding compensation in respect of, for example, hourly rates. Instead, we take a more general approach considering the impact of the issue on those involved. And in that context, I think £1,500 is a fair a sum.

### **Putting things right**

As I've noted above, the complainants in this case are formally X and Ms C as the trustees, and it's they who'll be asked to accept or reject my decision. But given the circumstances as I've explained, it's clear they haven't been impacted in the same way or to the same degree as Mrs C1 and the other beneficiaries because of the delays.

Barclays has accepted that things went wrong and made an offer to put things right. Had it not already done so, or if I had felt it needed to do more, I don't think it would be reasonable for me to direct any compensation be paid to the trustees. But with the offer made, I consider payment of it to be a fair and pragmatic way of resolving the matter, so I'm of the view that Barclays should make payment of £1,500 to Mrs C1, in accordance with the offer made in its letter to her of 7 February 2025.

### **My final decision**

For the reasons given, my final decision is that the offer made by Barclays Bank Plc is fair

and reasonable in all the circumstances.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask X and Ms C to accept or reject my decision before 23 May 2025.

James Harris  
**Ombudsman**