

The complaint

Miss M is complaining that Barclays Bank UK PLC hasn't reimbursed payments she made to a scam.

The complaint is brought on her behalf by a professional representative, but I'll mainly refer to Miss M here.

What happened

Both parties are familiar with the circumstances so I'll only set out the key points here.

Miss M became involved in an investment scheme which is now recognised to have likely been a scam.

She made 22 payments to the scam, through a cryptocurrency exchange, between February 2021 and March 2023. The payments ranged in value from £10 to £5,000.

Miss M complained to Barclays, and subsequently to the Financial Ombudsman Service, about what had happened. But our Investigator didn't think her complaint should be upheld, because she didn't consider that Barclays should have found the payments suspicious and intervened to warn Miss M about making them.

Miss M didn't agree so her complaint's been passed to me for review and 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.

Having done so I'm not upholding Miss M's complaint for the same reasons as the Investigator.

Having taken into account longstanding regulatory expectations and requirements, and what I consider to be good industry practice, Barclays ought to have been on the look-out for the possibility of fraud and made additional checks before processing payments in some circumstances.

I have reviewed the payments Miss M made to the scam. Having considered when they were made, their value and who they were made to, I'm not persuaded Barclays ought to have found any of the payments suspicious, such that it ought to have made enquires of Miss M before processing them.

The payments were made to a cryptocurrency provider, but that doesn't mean payments should automatically be treated as suspicious, particularly when there are no other concerning factors about the payments.

Most of the payments were low in value and they were spread out over two years, so they didn't escalate rapidly in value or frequency in the way which sometimes indicates a scam is

taking place. The highest value payment Miss M made was for £5,000 on 30 April 2021, but taking into account all the circumstances here along with what I'd have expected of Barclays at this time, I don't consider that this payment would have looked out of character or suspicious to Barclays to the point it should have intervened. Miss M had held her account with Barclays for some time and she had made payments of similar or higher value from this account before.

The payment information would have shown that these payments were going to a legitimate cryptocurrency provider and to an account which was held in Miss M's name. Barclays wouldn't have known where Miss M intended to send the payments after they arrived in her cryptocurrency account.

Although some of Miss M's transactions to and from third parties had a reference added which referred to the name of the investment scheme, I wouldn't have expected Barclays to have picked up on this unless it had a reason to be concerned that Miss M was making payments to a scam and as such had been prompted to actively review her account more closely – which wasn't the case here.

Miss M's payments weren't covered under the Contingent Reimbursement Model (CRM) Code because they were sent to accounts held in her name. And as the money was sent to an account in Miss M's name then moved on, it wouldn't have been possible for Barclays to have recovered them.

Whilst Miss M has undoubtedly been the victim of a cruel scam, I don't find there were any failings on Barclays' part that would lead me to uphold this complaint.

My final decision

My final decision is that I'm not upholding Miss M's complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss M to accept or reject my decision before 13 October 2025.

Helen Sutcliffe
Ombudsman