

The complaint

Mr H complains that Barclays Bank UK PLC trading as Barclaycard closed his credit card accounts after he'd paid down the outstanding balances.

What happened

Mr H held two credit card accounts with Barclaycard. Both cards were in persistent debt over a period of around three years. Mr H made repayments to clear the debt. The balance on account ending 9002 was cleared in April 2024 and the balance on account ending 4001 was cleared in June 2024.

In May 2024 Barclaycard wrote to Mr H regarding account ending 9002. It advised him that it was closing the account because Mr H had more than one Barclaycard and the combined credit limit could be too high. Barclaycard advised Mr H that it would lower the credit limit on the account to £250 on 10 May 2024 and close the account on 5 July 2024.

In July 2024 Barclaycard wrote to Mr H regarding account ending 4001. It advised him that he'd paid enough to get the account out of persistent debt and that he could use the card as normal. In September 2024 Barclaycard wrote to Mr H and advised him that it would be putting the account on hold on 12 September 2024 and closing the account on 8 November 2024.

Mr H complained to Barclaycard. He said the wording of the letter advising him that his account was going to be closed was insulting, and that taking the decision to close the account without discussing affordability with him was unfair.

Barclaycard didn't uphold the complaint. It said the decision to close the accounts had been made in accordance with its responsible lending policy.

Mr H remained unhappy and brought his complaint to this service.

Our investigator didn't uphold the complaint. He said the terms and conditions of the account allowed Barclaycard to close the account by giving sufficient notice and that there was no requirement to provide the reason for closure to the consumer.

Mr H didn't agree. He said his complaint wasn't about the closure of the accounts but about the manner in which Barclaycard had done so and the language used in its correspondence. Mr H said he'd found the language insulting and discriminatory. He also said he had concerns that the information held by Barclaycard about affordability and the data at credit reference agencies could be used against him in the future.

Because Mr H didn't agree I've been asked to review the complaint.

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.

I know it will disappoint Mr H, but I agree with the investigators opinion. I'll explain why.

I've read and considered the whole file, but I'll concentrate my comments on those points which are most relevant to my decision. If I don't comment on a specific point, it's not because I've failed to take it on board and think about it, but because I don't think I need to comment on it in order to reach what I think is the right outcome.

Mr H has said that his complaint isn't about the closure of the accounts, but about the language used in the correspondence from Barclaycard and the manner in which he's been treated. Mr H has also expressed concern about the information that Barclaycard holds about him and the reason behind the decision to close the accounts.

I'll address these points later in this decision. However, before I do that, and given that (initially) Mr H's complaint was about the closure of the accounts, I'll comment on whether I think Barclaycard made an error when it closed the accounts.

I've reviewed the terms and conditions of the account. These state (under the heading "Closing Your Account") that Barclaycard can close an account at any time by giving at least two months written notice. I can see that Barclaycard sent a letter to Mr H giving two months' notice of the account closure in respect of each account. Based on what I've seen, Barclaycard has acted in line with the terms and conditions of the account and I'm unable to say that it made an error.

Barclaycard isn't required to provide the reason for its decision to close the account. So, whilst I appreciate that Mr H has concerns about the information used by Barclaycard to reach the decision, I'm unable to require Barclaycard to disclose the specific reason to Mr H.

What I can do is look into whether Barclaycard reached the decision fairly. In doing so, I've had regard to the information provided by Barclaycard about the reason for the decision. Based on what I've seen, I'm satisfied that Barclaycard has followed its processes and reached the decision fairly.

I'll turn now to the main aspect of Mr H's complaint which is about the correspondence he received regarding the account closure. Mr H has said that he found the language in the letter insulting and discriminatory.

I've reviewed the account closure letters dated May 2024 and September 2024. Whilst I'm not in a position to disagree with Mr H regarding the way he has perceived the letters, having reviewed the letters I don't think the language used is inappropriate and I haven't found any evidence of discrimination.

In its letter dated 22 October 2024 Barclaycard has apologised if Mr H felt insulted and said it was not the intention to cause any upset. It explained that it made the decision to close the accounts using information it held about Mr H as well as data from the credit reference agencies.

I appreciate that Mr H has concerns about the information Barclaycard holds and the data it obtained from the credit reference agencies. In terms of the information held by Barclaycard, there are a number of sources from which lenders will gather information and a number of factors that a lender will take into consideration when reviewing accounts. Lenders will review this information and apply their own lending criteria and policies. This is the approach which Barclaycard takes when reviewing accounts and although I appreciate that Mr H feels that he's been discriminated against, as I said above, I haven't found any evidence that Mr H has been treated any differently to any other consumer whose account is subject to review.

In relation to the information obtained from credit reference agencies, Mr H can – if he wishes – obtain a copy of his credit file from any of the major credit reference companies. If there is any information on the report which he considers to be inaccurate or gives him cause for concern, he can query it directly with the credit reference agency.

Mr H has said that he feels that his good name has been called into question by Barclaycards actions. He's said that he's never missed a payment and has many long-standing accounts and a credit rating of 999. I'd like to reassure Mr H that none of this is in dispute. Barclaycard has acknowledged that Mr H never missed a payment and that he has repaid over £16,000 in the last three years.

I understand how strongly Mr H feels about this. However, having reviewed everything, I'm unable to say that Barclaycard made an error when it closed the accounts, and I haven't found any evidence to suggest that Barclaycard has treated Mr H unfairly or unreasonably. Nor have I found any evidence of discrimination.

For the reasons I've given, I'm unable to uphold the complaint.

My final decision

My final decision is that I don't uphold the complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr H to accept or reject my decision before 8 April 2025.

Emma Davy
Ombudsman