

The complaint

Mr S complains that Barclays Bank UK PLC trading as Barclaycard declined a transaction.

What happened

Mr S holds a credit card account with Barclaycard. He's unhappy that transactions over £1000 are frequently blocked. The most recent instance was when Mr S attempted to make a purchase in the Apple Store for £1518 in October 2024.

Mr S contacted Barclaycard twice when the transaction was declined, once on 10 October 2024 and again on 11 October 2024. On 10 October 2024 Mr S had to wait for 20 minutes before he was able to speak to anyone. When he got through to an agent, he was told that the block would be lifted within 10 minutes, but this didn't happen. The Apple Store then closed for the day and Mr S had to return to the store the following day to complete his purchase.

Mr S complained to Barclaycard. He said the repeated blocking of his card was not just a source of frustration but had also caused embarrassment and inconvenience.

Barclaycard didn't uphold the complaint. It issued a final response on 26 October 2024 in which it explained that to protect customers from fraud, a temporary block was placed on any transactions which looked out of the ordinary and not in line with a general spending pattern.

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

Following the referral of the complaint to this service, Barclaycard acknowledged that the full context of Mr S having to visit the Apple Store again the next day hadn't been picked up as part of its investigation of his complaint. It offered compensation of £75.00 for the inconvenience caused to Mr S.

Our investigator thought the offer of compensation was fair. He said he hadn't seen any evidence that Barclaycard had made an error when it blocked the transaction because it was blocked in line with its spending threshold as part of its fraud protection policies.

Mr S didn't agree. He said he wanted Barclaycard to implement a more efficient verification process for his account which allowed high value transactions to proceed with real time verification. He said he also wanted an apology from the case handler who dealt with his complaint as there were inaccuracies in the final response.

Because Mr S 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 S, but I agree with the investigators opinion. I'll explain why.

I've set out the circumstances of the complaint above. Initially Barclaycard rejected the complaint and explained that it had blocked the transaction in line with its fraud protection processes. Subsequently, Barclaycard has acknowledged that it failed to take into account the inconvenience caused to Mr S at having to return to the Apple Store the next day to complete the transaction. It has offered compensation of £75.

I've taken into account what both parties have said. I appreciate that from Mr S's perspective this isn't the first time that a high value transaction has been blocked on his account. He's expressed his frustration at the authentication procedure and has asked for Barclaycard to implement a more efficient process.

Barclaycard has explained that there is a spending threshold which is designed to protect customers from potential fraud. This means that where a customer attempts a transactions which is out of line with their general spending pattern, or above the threshold, a temporary block is applied, and the customer is asked to authorise the transaction.

All banks and providers of credit are required to have fraud protection measures in place and the regulator expects these processes to be followed. Because of this, I'm unable to say that it was unreasonable for Barclaycard to follow its process and block the transaction in relation to the Apple Store transaction, or in relation to the other high value transactions that Mr S has mentioned.

I appreciate that Mr S wants Barclaycard to implement a more efficient authentication process. This service isn't able to require a finance provider to change its policies and processes. Only the regulator can do that. What this service can do is check to see whether the finance provider has followed its processes correctly. And in this case, I'm satisfied that Barclaycard acted in line with its policy.

Mr S has also raised some issues regarding inaccuracies in the final response letter. This service isn't able to investigate a complaint about complaints handling, because complaint handling isn't a regulated activity. However, having read the final response letter, I'm not persuaded that any of the inaccuracies referred to by Mr S have affected the overall outcome here.

For the reasons I've explained, I think the offer of compensation of £75 from Barclaycard is fair. I won't be asking it to do anything further.

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 S to accept or reject my decision before 23 April 2025.

Emma Davy
Ombudsman