

## **The complaint**

Miss S complains about the cost of using her Barclays Bank UK PLC travel wallet through her Barclays app, and the information she received from staff.

## **What happened**

Miss S said she contacted Barclays to find out how she could use her debit card abroad without incurring a 2.99% charge on each transaction. She said she was advised to create a travel wallet linked to her current account, but says she wasn't told about any of the other associated costs.

Miss S later saw she'd been charged for using the travel wallet and that she'd received less money back into her current account than she'd expected after reversing some of the currency she'd exchanged, so she queried this with Barclays. Barclays explained how the travel wallet's charges worked – that a fee was applied when buying currency, but not on individual transactions, and not when reversing currency back into Great British Pounds (GBP). Miss S told us she visited a branch for clarification on the terms, but said branch staff couldn't find the relevant sections in the terms and conditions.

Miss S complained to Barclays. In its response, it pointed her to the terms of the travel wallet, stating it had worked the way it was meant to. It explained that each time Miss S bought or sold currency, she was provided with a breakdown which included the fee Barclays applied and the exchange rate. It said it had been unable to find any calls where she'd been given the wrong information, or any notes relating to a branch visit.

Miss S wasn't satisfied and brought her complaint to our service. She said she hadn't been made aware of the charges involved in buying or selling currency, either in person or in the terms and conditions. Our Investigator looked into things but didn't uphold the complaint. She found that the terms and conditions had been available for review and explained the costs associated with using the travel wallet. Barclays had shown the Investigator the process for buying and selling currency, and so, using that information, she said she was satisfied the costs had been clearly explained in the app ahead of each transaction.

Miss S didn't agree with the Investigator's assessment and so the case was passed to me to decide.

## **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, whilst I'm aware this will be very disappointing for Miss S, I won't be upholding this complaint. I've explained why below.

I would first like to explain that my role here is to think about the individual circumstances of this complaint and whether Barclays did something wrong which caused Miss S to lose out as a result. If I think Barclays did something wrong, I can then think about what – if anything

– it should do to set matters right. If I don't think Barclays acted in a way which was unfair to Miss S, it follows that I can't then decide to award her compensation.

To help me with this, I've taken into account Miss S' submissions regarding the circumstances of her complaint. But if there's something I've not mentioned, it isn't because I've ignored it – I haven't. I'm satisfied I don't need to comment on every individual point or argument to be able to reach what I think is the right outcome. Our rules allow me to do this. This simply reflects the informal nature of our service as a free alternative to the courts.

Miss S says not all of the costs of using the travel wallet were explained to her during her initial call. I can't know to what extent the costs were discussed during that call as Barclays have no recording or notes relating to it, so I've thought about what was most likely to have happened based on the information I have. Miss S has been consistent in her explanation that she asked Barclays how to avoid a 2.99% transaction fee for using her debit card abroad and that she was told the travel wallet would do this. Having thought about the terms of the wallet, I don't think she was given the wrong information here – whilst a fee does apply, it is less than 2.99% and isn't applied when making purchases with her debit card. Further, as there is a formal opening process for the travel wallet, I wouldn't necessarily have expected all information to have been relayed about its costs or function during a general enquiry.

I've gone on to think about how – or if – the other important information about the travel wallet was relayed to Miss S. Having seen the process for creating a travel wallet, I'm satisfied Miss S was presented with its full terms to read and accept. The app also required her to tick a box to confirm she agreed with the terms and that she wished to proceed with creating a wallet. Because of this, I'm satisfied Miss S had an opportunity to review the terms and understand how the wallet functioned prior to using it.

I've reviewed the applicable terms. They explain that customers exchanging GBP for other currencies using the travel wallet are charged in the form of a margin. The terms go on to explain Barclays doesn't apply a charge for the reversal of the currency back into GBP. The section containing this information is one of the first sections of the terms. I consider it to be easily accessible and clearly explained.

Later in the terms, it's explained that whilst no margin is added when reversing the exchanged currency back into GBP, an exchange rate applies and that it is shown to the customer before the exchange is completed. As with the section mentioned above, I don't consider these terms difficult to find or poorly explained.

I've seen the process that customers are taken through when making an exchange. I'm satisfied Miss S was presented with a breakdown of the costs which included the exchange rate and, separately, where applicable, the percentage and amount charged via the margin. I'm persuaded this information was shown to Miss S prior to her completing each exchange, giving her an opportunity to decline had she not wished to proceed. It's generally accepted that some form of exchange rate applies when exchanging currency and I don't think Barclays was unfair to do so in Miss S' case, provided it clearly and accurately displayed the costs – including any applicable margin. Given what I've said above, I'm satisfied it did.

As the terms were presented prior to setting up the wallet and the costs were clearly displayed when exchanging currency, I can't agree with Miss S that Barclays didn't do enough to make her aware of how the travel wallet worked, or that it unfairly charged her. And so, whilst my decision in no way seeks to diminish what Miss S has told our service about her difficult circumstances, I must arrive at what I consider to be the fairest outcome based on the information available to me. As a result, I don't think Barclays has acted unfairly in the matters covered in this decision and so I won't be upholding this complaint.

**My final decision**

My final decision is I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss S to accept or reject my decision before 9 May 2025.

James Akehurst  
**Ombudsman**