

The complaint

Mr H complains that Barclays Bank UK PLC (Barclays) is refusing to refund him the amount he lost as the result of a scam.

Mr H has previously been represented by a third party. To keep things simple, I will refer to Mr H throughout my decision.

What happened

The background of this complaint is well known to all parties, so I won't repeat what happened in detail.

In summary, Mr H received a message via a well-known messaging application from an individual I will call "X". X explained that they worked in the "trading industry" and conducted trades daily. X offered Mr H an investment opportunity that promised high returns.

Mr H says he visited the trading website X had discussed with him which appeared to be professional and legitimate. Mr H also carried out an online search on X and the trading platform and didn't see anything that caused him to have concerns.

After providing necessary documents Mr H was provided with login details to the trading platform and was required to download screensharing software so that X could guide him through the process of setting up accounts and transferring funds.

The process included sending funds to purchase cryptocurrency that was then forwarded to the trading platform.

Mr H has confirmed in his complaint to this service that he was coached by X to tell the banks that he was transferring funds to friends and family should any questions arise.

The trading platform showed that Mr H's investments were doing well and making a profit, and each time Mr H invested more his profit increased.

Mr H then received a message from X stating that the connection to the trading platform's server had been severed. Mr H tried to withdraw his funds but was unable to. Mr H continued to try withdrawing funds from the trading platform without success.

Mr H contacted X but received no response and realised he had fallen victim to a scam.

Mr H has disputed the following payments made from his Barclays account:

<u>Payment</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Payee</u>	<u>Payment Method</u>	<u>Amount</u>
1	12 October 2023	Mr H	Transfer	£2,000.00
2	12 October 2023	Mr H	Transfer	£5,000.00
3	6 November 2023	Mr H	Transfer	£4,500.00
4	7 November 2023	Mr H	Transfer	£100.00
5	11 November 2023	Paybis	Debit Card	£2,750.00

6	11 November 2023	Paybis	Debit Card	£2,750.00
7	17 November 2023	Paybis	Debit Card	£2,200.00
8	17 November 2023	Paybis	Debit Card	£2,500.00
9	17 November 2023	Paybis	Debit Card	£2,500.00
10	17 November 2023	Paybis	Debit Card	£2,500.00
11	17 November 2023	Paybis	Debit Card	£3,000.00
12	17 November 2023	Paybis	Debit Card	£10.00
13	17 November 2023	Paybis	Debit Card	£2,000.00
14	8 April 2024	Mr H	Transfer	£500.00
15	9 April 2024	Mr H	Transfer	£1,700.00

Our Investigator considered Mr H's complaint and didn't think it should be upheld. Mr H disagreed, so this complaint has been 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.

It has not been disputed that Mr H has fallen victim to a cruel scam. The evidence provided by both Mr H and Barclays sets out what happened. What is in dispute is whether Barclays should refund the money Mr H lost due to the scam.

Recovering the payments Mr H made

Mr H made payments into the scam via transfer and debit card. When payments are made by transfer Barclays has limited options available to it to seek recovery.

The payments Mr H made by debit card were not made directly to X, instead they were made to a legitimate cryptocurrency exchange in exchange for cryptocurrency. As there is no dispute that cryptocurrency was provided in exchange of the payments and it took further steps for those funds to end up in the hands of the scammer, any attempts to recover these payments would have no prospects of success.

The transfers Mr H has disputed were made to other accounts in his own name. If any funds remained in these payee accounts, they would remain within Mr H's control, So, it would not be necessary to recover those payments.

With the above in mind, I don't think Barclays had any other reasonable options available to it to seek recovery of the payments Mr H has disputed.

Should Barclays have reasonably prevented the payments Mr H made?

It has been accepted that Mr H authorised the payments that were made from his account with Barclays, albeit on X's instruction. So, the starting point here is that Mr H is responsible.

However, banks and other Payment Services Providers (PSPs) do have a duty to protect against the risk of financial loss due to fraud and/or to undertake due diligence on large transactions to guard against money laundering.

The question here is whether Barclays should have been aware of the scam and intervened when Mr H was making the payments. And if it had intervened, would it have been able to prevent the scam taking place.

Although some of the payments Mr H made in relation to the scam were made to accounts in

his own name, so the risk associated with them was not so significant. Mr H did make multiple payments on the same day to a cryptocurrency exchange. I think these payments should have caused Barclays to have concerns and it should have intervened. But I don't think it would have made a difference if Barclays had intervened. I will explain why.

Mr H attempted to make a payment in relation to the scam from an account he held elsewhere. This prompted the other account provider to intervene and a call between Mr H and that provider took place.

Mr H wasn't honest during this call when he was asked questions about the payment. Mr H said he was sending money to a friend he had met online, that he had known for six months. The money was for his own use as he was due to travel to Hong Kong with another friend shortly. He trusted the person he was sending the funds to.

This payment wasn't processed, and Mr H was warned that the payment looked suspicious. Despite this warning Mr H continued to make payments and transferred funds through his other accounts in relation to the scam.

It is also clear that when Mr H made payments in relation to the scam from other accounts in his own name held at other providers, he gave incorrect answers when he was required to provide the reasons for the payments

The evidence shows that Mr H trusted X enough to follow its instruction to mislead his account providers to have the payments in relation to the scam processed. Because of this I don't have enough to say that Mr H would have provided any more honest information had Barclays intervened further than it did.

Providing incorrect information when making payments would have made it very difficult for any of Mr H's account providers to uncover the scam that was taking place. With this in mind I don't think Barclays missed an opportunity to uncover the scam, and it is not responsible for Mr H's loss.

I can see that Barclays did feel it could have done more and, on that basis, refunded a portion of Mr H's lost funds. As I don't think Barclays is responsible for Mr H's loss, I won't be asking it to do any more.

My final decision

I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr H to accept or reject my decision before 9 October 2025.

Terry Woodham
Ombudsman