

The complaint

Mr R complains that Barclays Bank UK PLC will not reimburse the funds he lost to a scam.

Mr R is professionally represented, but for ease I have only referred to Mr R in this decision.

What happened

The background to this complaint is well known to both parties so I will not repeat it in detail here.

Mr R was added to a group chat on a messaging service and encouraged to invest with a firm I'll refer to as V. And between August 2024 and September 2024 he made faster payments to a cryptocurrency platform before sending the funds to the scam investment. When Mr R attempted to make a withdrawal from the investment, the scammers told him he needed to make further payments for commission and various fees. It was at this point he realised it had been a scam. He reported the matter to Barclays and it accepted that it could have done more to identify the scam. However it thought both parties had a share in the blame, so it reimbursed 50% of the outstanding loss plus interest, and paid Mr R £100 in compensation for the distress caused. Mr R didn't think the offer was fair.

Our Investigator did not think the complaint should be upheld. She thought the offer was fair and agreed that Barclays and Mr R should share equal responsibility for the losses.

Mr R doesn't think he should be held responsible for the funds he lost and asked for an ombudsman's final decision. As such, the 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.

I recognise that I have summarised this complaint in much less detail than has been provided. I want to reassure both parties that I have taken their detailed submissions into considerations. If there's anything I haven't addressed it isn't because I've ignored it, I haven't. Rather, I've focused on setting out what is key to the decision I have made.

Firstly I am sorry to hear that Mr R was the victim of such a cruel and sophisticated scam. I want to thank him for sharing openly about the challenges he has faced. From his submissions its clear the impact of the scam has been significant and I sympathise with him. However I must put aside my feelings of sympathy and consider his complaint impartially. Having done so, I agree with the outcome reached by the Investigator and for similar reasons. I know this will be disappointing to Mr R, but I'll explain why I have come to this decision.

It is not in dispute that Barclays made errors and it should have done more to protect Mr R from the first payment he made towards the scam. It has reimbursed half of the outstanding loss he incurred as a result of the scam. So what I must decide is whether it has done

enough to compensate Mr R.

When considering a complaint I must look at the actions of both parties, therefore I have thought about whether Mr R acted negligently and should also bear some responsibility for the losses he experienced. I appreciate that there were aspects of the scam that would have appeared genuine and I do not take away from the fact that Mr R has been the victim of a scam. However I'm not persuaded he acted reasonably.

I accept Barclays has greater knowledge of scams and it has a duty to protect its customers from financial harm resulting from fraud or a scam, but I would also expect Mr R to take reasonable care to mitigate against losses.

Mr R was contacted unexpectedly and added to a group chat by someone he does not know, and I think this should have raised suspicions. I appreciate that businesses make use of social media to advertise but it is unusual for a legitimate business to add a potential client to a group chat without prior discussion or consent. Mr R says he thought someone he knew must have put him forward to join the group, but at the very least I would expect that he would have asked the friends and family he thinks may have been responsible for doing so before continuing.

The scammer said they would turn an investment of 3,000USDT to 30,000USDT in three days. Although I accept there is the potential of high returns from cryptocurrency, I find the return he was promised was unrealistic and ought to have caused Mr R to pause and investigate the matter further.

Mr R says he conducted research before proceeding with the investment. He was sent a link to relating to a genuine firm which the scammer claimed they were a part of. However, having reviewed the firm's website and the information provided, I did not find any information that might suggest there was a link between the scam firm and the legitimate business. I think this should have appeared suspicious to Mr R.

I have also reviewed the communication between Mr R and the scammers and I find at times this was unprofessional and should have caused him to question their legitimacy. For instance, when Mr R said he did not want to take part in the investment, the scammer says "are you poor" which I would not expect of a professional investment firm.

Mr R said he had no previous experience in investments. Considering he was investing such large sums and borrowing large amounts of funds from friends and family, I think Mr R ought reasonably to have conducted research into the investment and the firm. Had he done so, on balance, I think it is more likely than not he would have been concerned enough not to make the payments to the scammer. This is because, I have conducted an online search via a commonly used search engine and I find there was information readily available that indicated that the investment firm was fraudulent.

Ultimately, while I accept Mr R was vulnerable at the time the scam took place, I still think he could, and should have been concerned about the overall circumstances of the scam, particularly the way in which he was introduced to it, as well as the scammer's lack of professionalism. Taking all this into consideration, I find Mr R acted negligently and I think its fair and reasonable to hold him equally responsible for his losses.

Barclays deducted the £853.41 that was credited to Mr R account and reimbursed 50% of the outstanding loss, plus 8% simple interest per annum from the date of loss to the date of settlement and I think that's fair in the circumstances. Additionally, it paid £100 in compensation and that's more than I would have asked it to do. As such, I do not require Barclays to do anything more.

My final decision

My final decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr R to accept or reject my decision before 14 January 2026.

Oluwatobi Balogun
Ombudsman