

The complaint

Miss C complains Barclays Bank UK PLC (“Barclays”) declined to refund a payment taken from her account. She’s also unhappy about the service she received when reporting what had happened.

Miss C wants Barclays to reimburse her the money that was taken from her account and provide her with appropriate compensation for distress and inconvenience caused.

What happened

As both parties are familiar with the circumstances of this complaint, I’ve summarised them only briefly below.

Miss C sold an item on an auction website (“E”) and shipped it internationally. The shipping company tried to deliver the item but the delivery ultimately failed and the buyer raised a payment dispute with E. E upheld the buyers dispute and because of this, it took the money paid for the item, amounting to £58.99, from Miss C’s Barclays account and returned the money to the buyer.

Miss C was unhappy with this. She said she had sent the item to the buyer as agreed and had done nothing wrong. She disputed the charge with E and she contacted Barclays too. Miss C said she didn’t think Barclays should’ve allowed E to take the money out of her account as she had not consented to it doing so and Barclays had not sought to check this with her beforehand.

Miss C had two separate telephone conversations with Barclays. During the first, Miss C said it was difficult to hear Barclays’ advisor as the call centre they were working from was too loud and there was too much background noise. The advisor then terminated the call after a short time. Miss C says the second call she had with Barclays went on for too long; the advisor didn’t know the correct procedures for raising a complaint and she was placed on hold numerous times.

Barclays looked into Miss C’s complaint. It said it didn’t think it had done anything wrong in allowing E to remove the disputed funds from her account. It said Miss C likely had pre-arranged agreement with E that allowed for this and therefore the transaction would not be considered fraudulent. However, it upheld Miss C’s complaint in relation to the customer service she had received during the telephone calls she had with its advisors. Barclays admitted it didn’t do as well as it should’ve done on these calls and offered Miss C £50 in compensation as an apology.

Unhappy with Barclays’ response, Miss C brought her complaint to this service where one of our investigators looked into things.

The investigator didn’t recommend the complaint be upheld. They said they didn’t think Barclays had done anything wrong in allowing E to remove funds from Miss C’s account and

they thought the £50 compensation already put forward by Barclays was reasonable given the poor service experienced by Miss C.

Miss C didn't agree with the investigators view. She said she wanted compensation amounting to £450. As an agreement could not be reached, 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.

In deciding what's fair and reasonable in all the circumstances of a complaint, I'm required to take into account relevant: law and regulations; regulators' rules, guidance and standards; codes of practice; and, where appropriate, what I consider having been good industry practice at the time.

When deciding this case, my role is to assess whether Barclays did anything wrong in allowing E to remove funds from Miss C's account and whether the compensation it has offered her is fair and reasonable given its admitted service failings. Having reviewed everything provided to me, I think Barclays has acted reasonably. So, whilst I'm sorry to disappoint Miss C, I won't be recommending Barclays refund the amount E deducted from her account and I won't be recommending it increase its offer of compensation. This is because I'm not persuaded Barclays has acted unreasonably when answering Miss C's complaint. I'll explain why in more detail below.

The funds removed from Miss C's account

Firstly, I want to say how sorry I am to hear about what happened to Miss C. I understand why she is so upset about these funds being removed from her Barclays account – especially as, based on what she's told us, she appears to have conducted the sale as agreed with the buyer.

The above being said, I don't think Barclays should be liable to refund these funds now. I say this because when a customer agrees to open and use an account with E, they also agree to be bound by E's terms and conditions. And where there is a dispute between a buyer and seller, the terms and conditions usually allow E to remove funds from a sellers account in order to be returned to the buyer. This appears to be what has happened her. If Miss C is unhappy with this, the correct course of action is for Miss C to raise a complaint with E, if her dispute is not concluded to her satisfaction. As it appears there was some form of prior agreement with E, it is not possible for Barclays to raise a dispute in regard to the removal of the funds or treat the transaction as fraudulent.

Overall, I don't think it was unreasonable for Barclays to treat this transaction as authorised. I think it's likely Miss C authorised E to remove funds for her account when she accepted its terms and conditions. I can't reasonably ask Barclays to refund Miss C in circumstances where I don't think it did anything wrong.

Distress and inconvenience caused

Barclays has already admitted that it could've provided Miss C with better service during the telephone calls it had with her. So, the only thing left for me to decide is whether Barclays' offer of £50 compensation is fair and reasonable in light of its service failings. I have listened

to recordings of the two telephone conversations Miss C had with Barclays in full. And I'm satisfied the offer of compensation already put forward is reasonable. I'll explain why in more detail below.

The first call is around three and a half minutes long. It's clear that the line is poor and there is a lot of background noise which is being made worse by the poor connection. Miss C and Barclays' advisor cannot hear each other and the call is ultimately terminated. I have no doubt that this was most likely frustrating for Miss C when she wanted to speak with someone at Barclays but I'm not persuaded that it warrants any particular award for distress and inconvenience. Sometimes telephone lines aren't particularly clear and connections are poor. I think this is what happened here. If Barclays' advisor did terminate the call, which I can't tell from the recording, I don't think that was unreasonable given that neither party could hear each other properly.

The second call is much longer. Again, I've listened to it in full. I agree with both Barclays and Miss C that the call was likely too long. I agree that Barclays should've been clearer from the outset in terms of what it could and couldn't do for Miss C in the circumstances. I also acknowledge that Miss C was placed on hold a number of times for an extended period.

The above being said, I'm also satisfied that Barclays advisor was trying to do what he could to help Miss C. When she asked a question he didn't immediately know the answer to, he placed her on hold to try and find out the answer from his supervisor. Lots of questions are being asked back and forth and new complaint points are being raised and the conversation does start to go round in circles - which is why it goes on for so long.

I understand that Miss C is unhappy that Barclays' advisor didn't immediately know the procedures for sending out a final response letter after a complaint has been raised but I agree with the investigator that this is likely because they didn't work in the complaints department, where this letter would ultimately be sent from, after a 15 day investigation period. So, I don't think it's unreasonable that he didn't immediately know this.

Overall, I agree that the call could've been handled better and I do think Miss C was kept on the line for longer than she should have been. However, at the same time, I also think Barclays' advisor was doing their best to help Miss C. Overall, I think the £50 already offered to Miss C is reasonable to compensate her for this and I won't be asking Barclays to increase its offer of compensation now.

My final decision

As Barclays has already made an offer that I think is reasonable, I won't be asking it to do anything further.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss C to accept or reject my decision before 7 January 2026.

Emly Hanley Hayes
Ombudsman