

## The complaint

Mr A complains that Barclays Bank UK PLC ('Barclays') won't refund the money he lost to an investment scam.

He's represented by a Claims Management Company. For simplicity, I'll refer to Mr A throughout this decision.

## What happened

The background is known to both parties, so I won't repeat all the details.

In summary, Mr A says he was actively looking to invest. In October 2024, he received a message from an individual (a scammer) and was introduced to a 'fake' crypto-trading platform ('Q'). He carried out checks, was added to a 'members' group chat, and thinking that the opportunity was legitimate he sent payments for 'investment'. He was led to believe that, as a 'member', he'd receive *signals* for trades that could generate significant returns.

The payments from Mr A's Barclays account were sent to Q, through other accounts in his name, including with a legitimate crypto-exchange ('C'). Mr A says he realised he'd been scammed when he was unable to withdraw his money from Q. By that time, £31,300 had been sent from his Barclays account between 4-12 November 2024 and lost to the scam.

A complaint was made to Barclays in January 2025 and later referred to our Service. Our Investigator considered it and didn't uphold it. In brief, he wasn't persuaded the scam would have likely been prevented given that Mr A was reverting to the scammer for advice for his payments to go through and the way Mr A answered when Barclays did intervene. As the matter couldn't be resolved informally, it's 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.

Having done so, I've decided not to uphold it for similar reasons as the Investigator.

### *Authorisation*

It's not in dispute Mr A was scammed and I'm sorry about the impact the whole experience has had on him. It's also not in dispute he authorised all the payments from his Barclays account. So, although he didn't intend the money to go to a scammer, under the Payment Services Regulations 2017, he's presumed liable for his losses in the first instance.

### *Prevention*

There are some situations where I consider that a firm (like Barclays) taking into account relevant rules, codes and best practice, should reasonably have taken a closer look at the circumstances of a payment – if, for example, it's particularly suspicious.

In this case, I agree there was enough going on by Mr A's second payment to C (but not before) for Barclays to have stepped in on concerns that he might be at a heightened risk of financial harm from fraud – considering, for example, the increase in spending and the elevated scam risks associated with the type of payee. But I'm not persuaded that a timely and proportionate intervention would have likely made a difference to what happened.

As referred to by the Investigator, Barclays intervened on 9 November 2024 and spoke to Mr A to find out more about the circumstances. In that interaction, Mr A was told the questions were to protect him and if he'd been told to lie or what to say to the bank, that could signal a scam. Mr A was then asked where he was making the payment. He responded that it was going to his own account with C, which he'd held for years. When asked about the reason for the payment, Mr A said he *"trades"* and *"buys stocks"*. When asked if the money was to invest in anything in particular, he said *"I'll be thinking about it, I'm looking at different things, it might be Rolls Royce"*. And when asked if he used any type of broker, Mr A replied *"no"*. He said he wouldn't entertain contact from people offering certain returns on investments.

I'm satisfied Barclays' intervention was proportionate to the risks presented at the time and I can understand why the answers it received didn't lead to concerns of a scam taking place. I'm also not persuaded by Mr A's recent comments that he was *"completely honest"* with his answers, in the context of what was really going on, or that the scam would necessarily have been exposed even if I were to say Barclays should have probed/intervened more often than it did. As part of his initial submissions, Mr A told us he'd been instructed by the scammer to say the funds were *"being sent to C and not to another party"*. And I can't ignore that, at no time, was Barclays told anything to indicate the involvement of a third-party or Q as a trading platform. This is despite Mr A being also warned of scammers tricking customers into paying through their own legitimate crypto-account and to a 'made-up' platform.

I'll add that, at the end of the above call, Mr A referred to having just received warnings from C which he said included *"don't take advice from people you may not know"*. Also, while Mr A hasn't complained about a further payment he made to C on 19 November 2024 (and it's not material to my decision), I note that, in the scam chat, Mr A does refer to his bank again *"doing security checks"*. And, during a further intervention call by Barclays that same day, Mr A confirmed he'd not been given access to any online portals by anyone and wasn't part of any messaging group for new crypto-investments.

I recognise the importance of timely interventions. At the same time, I'm mindful that the call on 9 November 2024 was only days after the point at which I think Barclays ought to have intervened. For me, it's also significant that contact with the scammer had been ongoing for some time and Mr A was already reverting to them for advice on getting payments through successfully. On 16 October 2024, for example, Mr A asked the scammer which payment reason to select. On 30 October 2024, for a payment to a seller in the peer-to-peer market, he told his other payment services provider, he was sending funds to buy *"furniture"*.

Again, on 30 October 2024, this time with reference to a payment and account block by his other bank, Mr A messaged in the scam chat, about being on the phone *"for the last 2 hours answering tens of interrogatory questions"*. And, in November 2024, he told the scammer *"before investing [in Q], I did some research, and as you might be aware, feedback ...were very negative, warning that investors cannot withdraw money...and warned for scam"*

In my view, Mr A was significantly under the scam's 'spell' by the time of the payments in question and intent on making them, to the extent he moved past payment blocks, some relevant warnings, and the information he'd himself found about Q being a scam. On balance, like the Investigator, I'm not convinced he wouldn't have returned to the scammer for guidance, found a way around the truth, or another way to make payments if necessary. So, while I'm again sorry Mr A was scammed and I realise he was a victim in all this, I can't

hold Barclays liable for his losses where I think it's unlikely it could have prevented them.

### *Recovery*

In general, a firm is expected to attempt recovery of lost funds when a scam is reported. But I'm satisfied there was little that Barclays could have done here, given there's no dispute the payments went to Mr A's own accounts before the money was sent on to the scam. If any funds remained to be recovered, Mr A would have been able to access them himself.

### **My final decision**

For the reasons above, I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr A to accept or reject my decision before 3 February 2026.

Thomas Cardia  
**Ombudsman**