

The complaint and background

Mr M complains that Barclays Bank UK PLC (“Barclays”) won’t reimburse almost £6,000 he lost when he fell victim to an investment scam.

Our investigator didn’t uphold the complaint. Although she found Barclays ought to have enquired about one of the payments, she wasn’t persuaded that would have prevented Mr M’s loss. That was because it had intervened with an earlier payment and Mr M had provided inaccurate answers. He was being coached by the scammer on how to answer Barclays’ questions. So she didn’t think the later intervention would have prevented the loss.

Mr M asked for the matter to be referred to an ombudsman. In summary, he felt that Barclays had failed to recognise the signs of scam activity within the telephone conversation they’d had.

So, 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.

Having taken into account longstanding regulatory expectations and requirements, and what I consider to be good industry practice, I agree Barclays ought to have been on the look-out for the possibility of fraud and made additional checks before processing payments in some circumstances.

As the investigator noted, it did find one of Mr M’s payments suspicious, as it paused the payment to make some further enquiries about it. Like all of the disputed payments, this was being made to a cryptocurrency exchange. Within the telephone conversation that followed, I note that Barclays made it clear that it was important for Mr M to let it know if anyone had told him what to say, and why. Mr M told Barclays that he was in control of the recipient account, which he’d had for a long time, and that he’d carried out his own research outside of the investment group he was a part of. I’m persuaded by the tone of the call that Mr M was trying to reassure Barclays of the legitimacy of the investment he was making, and that it responded with appropriate and proportionate warnings based on the answers he gave.

I agree with the investigator that Barclays should have enquired about a later payment, which was for £3,380. But I’m not persuaded that would have prevented his loss. I say this because, within Mr M’s testimony, he stated that the scammer “*was guiding me through all the transfers and telling me what to say to the bank if I was asked.*” He told us the scammer had explained that the bank was aware of the token he was investing in and was trying to discourage people from investing in them. And he explained that the scammer, posing as members of a group of investors, used false confidence to “*convince unsuspecting individuals that the traditional banking system is rigged against them*”. So Mr M was persuaded to give inaccurate answers to his bank to ensure payments were processed for what he believed at the time to be a legitimate investment.

I'm satisfied that Mr M had been subject to social engineering and was being coached by the scammer. Had there been further questioning, I think it more likely than not that Mr M would have continued answering questions in such a way as to avoid alerting Barclays as to what was really happening, reverting to the scammer if needed. I haven't been provided with persuasive evidence that Mr M would have provided substantially different answers if he'd been questioned proportionately about this later payment which was just over two weeks later.

Whilst Mr M has been the victim of a cruel scam, I can only uphold his complaint if I'm satisfied Barclays' failings made a material difference to what happened. For the reasons given, I'm not persuaded they did.

My final decision

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

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr M to accept or reject my decision before 9 February 2026.

Melanie van der Waals
Ombudsman