

The complaint

Mr W complains that Barclays Bank UK PLC delayed his payment and put a block on his account. Mr W said this caused financial loss and distress and he would like compensation.

What happened

Mr W opened an account with another finance provider, 'R'. He transferred £10,000 to his Barclays' account on 19 August 2024 and on the same day attempted to transfer the same amount to his new account with R. The payment was picked up by Barclays' fraud team and when they couldn't reach Mr W it was cancelled, and a block was put on Mr W's account.

Mr W called Barclays' fraud team on 22 August 2024 and was unhappy with the length of the call and uncertainty about whether the block would be removed. Barclays said it lifted the block immediately. Mr W complained to Barclays about this unwarranted intervention and said it caused him the loss of a bonus and better rate of interest with R, as well as distress. Barclays said they acted in line with their internal process when they blocked the payment. Mr W wasn't satisfied with Barclays' response and referred his complaint to our service.

Our investigator didn't recommend the complaint be upheld. She said Barclays is required to have measures in place to verify transactions and is entitled to ask customers for more information. She said Barclays followed its internal procedures and treated Mr W fairly with no undue delays or errors and his payment was successfully processed on 22 August 2024.

Mr W wasn't happy with this outcome and requested an ombudsman review his complaint. He said Barclays claimed it called him twice, but these didn't register on his phones and there was no text message. He said 'a bad actor' may have logged into his account as it was blocked three times after the investigator's enquiries - each with an error code and using a different login method and browser.

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.

Mr W is unhappy with Barclays' actions and felt the service was poor and delaying tactics were used on his call. He said he should be compensated for missed bonuses and a higher interest rate. Mr W wants our service to see if Barclays acted fairly and followed its process. I was sorry to learn that what should have been a straightforward payment transaction process has turned into a prolonged and frustrating experience for Mr W. My role is to determine whether what took place was reasonable and whether Barclays followed the process correctly. I think it did, and I will explain why.

When Mr W tried to transfer £10,000 from his Barclays' account to a new account in his name with R, on 19 August 2024, Barclays' anti-fraud system blocked it. I have seen that Barclays security process is to cancel a payment and restrict an account for a payment that isn't verified on the same day. This is in common with other banks in their operation of fraud prevention measures where a payment has been flagged for further checks.

In Mr W's case, the payment was flagged by Barclays' automated fraud system, and this appears to have been due to its size and that it was to a new payee. I can see that Barclays tried to call Mr W but was unable to reach him or to leave a message. Had this been successful, I am confident the payment would have been processed at the time.

When Mr W emailed Barclays about the account block on 22 August 2024 he was directed to the bank's fraud team. Mr W was dissatisfied with this call, but the transcripts of the calls don't indicate unfair treatment or delaying tactics by Barclays' staff. Mr W completed the security checks successfully and the block was lifted during the call. Barclays' staff advised Mr W that he could make the payment again, which he did successfully.

I've reviewed how Barclays' checks were applied in Mr W's case and can confirm they were consistent with the bank's procedures. It's not for our service to interfere with a bank's internal processes. That is a matter for the bank's regulator, the Financial Conduct Authority.

All financial institutions holding customer funds are required by the Financial Conduct Authority, to put in place systems that reduce and interdict transactions that may be carried out for the benefit of fraudsters. I don't know how many times this approach by Barclays and the other financial institutions will have prevented fraudsters from benefitting from customer accounts, but I'm sure that millions of pounds have been diverted from the alarming range of fraudulent enterprises by the approach that Barclays takes.

And so, I do not agree that the checks were excessive and inappropriate. Having said this, Mr W is a genuine customer making genuine transactions and so I sympathise with him for the inconvenience and loss he has been caused in dealing with his legitimate transaction. However, I have seen that Barclays has followed its established anti-fraud process and acted within the terms and conditions of the account. I think Barclays treated Mr W fairly and reasonably and so it follows that I can't uphold his complaint.

The login issues that Mr W has raised with us recently do not appear to be related to the issues of the present complaint. If these problem continue, it is open to Mr W to bring a new complaint to Barclays so the bank can consider this separately.

My final decision

For the reasons I have given it is my final decision that the complaint is not upheld.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask X to accept or reject my decision before 5 January 2026.

Andrew Fraser

Ombudsman