

The complaint

Mr B is unhappy that Barclays Bank UK PLC (Barclays) won't refund payments he made because of a cryptocurrency based, investment scam.

What happened

In 2024, Mr B was a victim of a cryptocurrency based, investment scam which involved 4 payments relating to Barclays. Overall, after transferring some money back into his Barclays account, he made losses to the scam relating to his Barclays account, for £99,105.43 in total. He made the payments by transfer over around 3 weeks to two other accounts in his name held with third-party cryptocurrency exchange companies. Mr B's first payment made with Barclays on 22 November 2024 was for £900, followed by 2 much larger payments of £24,100 on 26 November 2024 and £75,000 on 9 December 2024. He then received a credit on 10 December 2024 for £32,894.57, and then shortly after this transferred a further £32,000.

Mr B saw on a social media platform, an opportunity to make trading profits from investing in cryptocurrency. The premise was that he would need to transfer money to an exchange then transfer cryptocurrency to the company's wallet, in return for lucrative returns. He set up an account with the company and could log in and see his investments and how much he was making.

Unfortunately, Mr B was in contact with scammers and their website displayed fake information about investments that were not real. Mr B realised what was going on after he had made the 4 disputed payments with Barclays.

Mr B, through his representatives, complained about what happened to Barclays and said it failed to protect him from the scam. Barclays replied in January 2025 and said Mr B hadn't reported the payments as being part of a scam up to that point but said it hadn't done anything wrong.

Unhappy, Mr B brought his concerns to our service to investigate. The investigator said she could see Barclays did try to intervene from the first payment. She said Barclays called Mr B on the first, third and fourth payments, and asked him to go into a branch regarding the second one. She said she could see it asked a series of questions including whether there was a third party or broker involved, and Mr B said no.

The investigator said Mr B provided answers that were not accurate with what was happening, and so Barclays carried out the payments based on this. She said she wouldn't have expected Barclays to have intervened further than it did. She concluded she was not persuaded any intervention by Barclays would've prevented Mr B's losses.

Mr B and his representatives were not happy with the investigators outcome. They said further and a more thorough intervention would have prevented Mr B's losses. They thought this was justified given the account was a new one with Barclays. They asked that Mr B's complaint be reviewed by an ombudsman, so his complaint has been passed to me to look into again.

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 reached the same outcome as our investigator for these reasons:

- The starting position in law is that Mr B is responsible for the payments he made. And Barclays has a duty to make the payments he tells them to.
- But, as supported by the terms of the account, that doesn't preclude Barclays from making fraud checks before making payment. And, considering regulatory expectations and good industry practice, I'm satisfied that they should fairly and reasonably do this in some circumstances.
- From 7 October 2024, Barclays has been subject to the Payment System Regulator's mandatory reimbursement rules. However, these only apply to payments made to another person. As Mr B transferred funds to an account in his own name with a cryptocurrency exchange, the rules here don't apply. But as I've already concluded I still need to consider whether Barclays has acted fairly considering its obligations towards him, in detecting and preventing the scam.
- I've taken into consideration the point Mr B and his representatives have made that this was a new account, and each payment made, then drained the balance, after Mr B transferred money from another account. I think Barclays ought to have had an intervention with Mr B to ask more questions about the purpose of his payment, from the second one, which was significantly more in value than the first, and was to a cryptocurrency provider.
- By the time Mr B made the second payment, Barclays would have been aware of how cryptocurrency scams work, following warnings given by the Financial Conduct Authority and Action Fraud. Mr B making this payment for such a large amount, and in the circumstances, would have presented, I think, as being of heightened financial risk to him.
- That said, Barclays decided to intervene with all 4 payments. It called Mr B and made a human intervention for payments 1, 3 and 4. And it discussed payment 2 with Mr B face to face in branch. I have listened to all the calls relating to the 4 disputed payments as Barclays has provided call recordings. I have also read notes on its system that were put there by staff that discussed the payments with Mr B and met with him in branch. By doing this, I have gained an understanding about what was said between the parties, the questions that were asked and what Mr B's answers were.
- I am satisfied after looking through what was said by the parties during the first call on 22 November 2024 and reading that Mr B was going to make all 4 of the payments regardless of whether Barclays asked more questions or provided further warnings.
- I say that because I can hear clearly that Barclays did ask relevant cryptocurrency scam-related questions and in particular asked Mr B whether he was using a third party. He said he did his own research, there was no third party involved and he had some experience of cryptocurrency investment.

- This wasn't reflective of what was going on here though as there was a third party involved, and Mr B was looking to move the money to them. Mr B gave answers though, that suggested otherwise. I can't see, based on Mr B's answers, that Barclays ought to have done anything more on this occasion. I have also heard the same or similar conversations being had between Mr B and Barclays during the other phone calls and the notes from the branch visit tell a similar story. I am not persuaded Barclays could have obtained any other information about what was really going on from Mr B or made further attempts to break the spell of the scam, for this first or any of the other 3 payments.

I do appreciate how disappointing this will be for Mr B. It is clear after reading the messages between him and the scammer, that he has been scammed and I am aware that he has passed money to them from third party accounts too. He is a victim of a crime here and I am sorry this has happened to him. But for the reasons I've explained, I don't think his losses can be attributed to something Barclays did wrong. So, I don't uphold his complaint.

My final decision

My final decision is that I do not uphold Mr B's complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr B to accept or reject my decision before 24 November 2025.

Mark Richardson
Ombudsman