

The complaint

A, a limited company, complains that Barclays Bank UK PLC won't refund the money it lost when it was the victim of a scam.

What happened

A is a limited company that organises and manages art fairs. In April 2025 it was arranging an exhibition and received an email which appeared to be from one of its suppliers, requesting payment of an invoice. The email included an invoice with updated bank details and, as A believed it to be genuine, it made a payment from its Barclays account to settle the invoice.

I've set out the payment A made below:

Date	Amount
28 April 2025	£30,501.75

Unfortunately, we now know the email A received had been intercepted by a fraudster and the bank details had been changed so the payment went to the fraudster, rather than to the genuine supplier. After this was discovered, A reported the payment to Barclays and asked it to refund the money it had lost.

Barclays investigated but said it couldn't have done any more to prevent this scam from happening, so it didn't agree to refund the money A had lost. A wasn't satisfied with Barclays' response, so referred a complaint to our service.

One of our investigators looked at the complaint. They didn't think Barclays should have been expected to prevent the payment being made, and thought Barclays had done all it could to recover the money. So they didn't think it should have to refund the money A had lost. A disagreed with our investigator, so the complaint has been passed to me.

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.

The regulatory landscape, along with good industry practice, sets out requirements for banks to protect their customers from fraud and financial harm. So, in line with this, I think Barclays should have been monitoring accounts, had systems in place to look out for unusual transactions and, in some circumstances, have carried out additional checks before processing payments.

But A's account was a business account, which tend to be used in a less predictable and less routine way than personal accounts and are more likely to see occasional large transactions. A had also made a number of payments for what I consider to be similarly large amounts in the months before this payment. It wasn't unusual for A to make international

payments, or payments in a foreign currency. And this payment didn't use up a particularly suspicious proportion of the available balance in A's account.

So I don't think it's unreasonable that Barclays didn't identify that A could be at heightened risk of financial harm from fraud as a result of this payment. And so I don't think it's unreasonable that it didn't take any further steps or carry out any additional checks before allowing the payment to go through.

We also expect banks to take reasonable steps to try to recover any money their customers have lost, once they are made aware of a scam. But, from what I've seen, I don't think anything I would have expected Barclays to have done here would have led to any of A's money being recovered.

Barclays contacted the bank the funds were sent to, to request that they be returned. But the bank the funds were sent to replied that there were no funds left to be recovered. And while it appears there was a delay before Barclays sent this request, following A's director failing a security check when initially trying to report the scam, this initial report was still done the day after the payment was made. And as scammers typically immediately move funds on from receiving accounts, and as this was an international payment which also means recovery is significantly less likely, I don't think it's likely that anything I would have expected Barclays to have done here would have led to any of A's money being recovered – even if there hadn't been a delay.

A has also questioned the fairness of international payments being excluded from the relevant scam reimbursement rules, and said it feels Barclays should have made it aware of this when it first reported the scam. But Barclays is correct that international payments are excluded from the relevant reimbursement rules, and I don't think it would be fair to say it had acted incorrectly by correctly interpreting these rules. I also wouldn't necessarily expect Barclays to have made A aware international payments weren't covered in this reporting call, as it is entitled to carry out an investigation before providing a response. And even if it had made A aware, I don't think this would have led to any of A's money being recovered because, as I explained above, I don't think anything I would have expected Barclays to have done here would have led to any of A's money being recovered.

I appreciate that A has been the victim of a cruel scam and has lost a significant amount of money. I sympathise with the position it and its director have found themselves in and I recognise that this scam has had a significant impact on A's cash flow and operations. But I can't investigate the person who carried out the scam and can only look at Barclays' responsibilities. And, for the reasons I've set out above, I don't think anything I would reasonably have expected Barclays to have done would have prevented the loss A suffered. And so I don't think it would be fair to require Barclays to refund the payment A has complained about here.

My final decision

I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask A to accept or reject my decision before 20 March 2026.

Alan Millward
Ombudsman