

## **The complaint**

Mr K complains about the service received from Barclays Bank UK PLC (“Barclays”) when trying to locate a historical account that he believed he held with it. Mr K doesn’t believe Barclays have done enough in its efforts to locate the account. Mr K wants Barclays to locate his account, reopen it and confirm the balance held.

## **What happened**

Mr K says he opened an account with Barclays in 1978 when he started his studies in the UK. Mr K says he completed his studies and left the UK in 1985.

Mr K completed a dormant account application and along with a bank account statement from 1985 and sent this and other supporting documents by post from abroad to Barclays in October 2024. But as he didn’t receive a response Mr K raised a complaint.

Mr K also completed a document online known as ‘mylostaccount’ and received a response stating that Barclays was unable to find Mr K’s account on its dormant database.

Barclays completed searches using all the details Mr K provided about himself and his account on its active and archived systems to try and locate his account. But Barclays were unable to trace any record of the account being active or archived and informed Mr K of this.

Barclays didn’t uphold Mr K’s complaint as it was unable to locate his account due to the lack of information. Barclays also explained that it was unable to reopen an account for him if he doesn’t hold a UK address.

Mr K was dissatisfied with this and so one of our investigators looked into his concerns. They were satisfied given the time that had passed and lack of evidence that Barclays had done all that we’d expect it to do to trace the account on the information it had which hadn’t yielded any results. This being the case they didn’t think Barclays needed to do anything more.

Mr K disagreed, he believes Barclays would’ve used a manual system to record accounts and wants Barclays to investigate further. Mr K wants Barclays to pay the balance as shown on his last statement plus backdated interest to 1985.

Mr K has asked for an ombudsman’s decision on the matter.

## **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.

I hope that Mr K won’t take it as a discourtesy that I’ve described and condensed this complaint in the way that I have. Ours is an informal dispute resolution service, and I’ve concentrated on what I consider to be the crux of the complaint. Our rules allow me to do

that. And the crux of this complaint is about the service provided by Barclays in tracing his account. Mr K doesn't believe Barclays have done enough to assist in the matter.

The FCA handbook requires a firm to make appropriate arrangements to enable a banking customer, so far as is possible, to trace and, if appropriate, to have access to a deposit held (or formerly held). So the question I have to ask is has Barclays done enough to assist Mr K in the tracing of his account.

And having considered everything – and I know this will come as a disappointment - I think Barclays has.

In-line with regulatory obligations Barclays are expected to keep a record of any closed accounts for up to seven years after the relationship ended or six years after the account was no longer active. This means that the oldest record or information we'd expect it to hold on Mr K's account would be from 2018. And despite searching its databases Barclays haven't been able to find any record of Mr K's account.

I appreciate Mr K says that Barclays historically would've used a manual system to record accounts. But I don't think it would be fair to expect it to hold manual records or otherwise indefinitely. And as at least seven years have passed since the account was active or closed, in-line with regulatory obligations I wouldn't expect Barclays to still have a record of the account.

My understanding is that the only information Barclays were provided with regarding this account is a statement from 1985 showing Mr K's name, address and account number and a balance of around £1,700.

I appreciate Mr K believes this is enough to prove the current existence of the account. But I disagree, all this shows me is that at a point in time there was an account held with Barclays in Mr K's name that had some money in it. If the account was still in existence or had been closed in the past 7 years, I think it would've shown up on Barclays systems.

I also think that if the account was still in existence Mr K would've likely been notified about the status of the account and any unclaimed proceeds – rather than it just being left dormant for over 40 years. And I would've thought Mr K to have received certificates of interest, indeed, for tax purposes these would've been required to be issued.

Mr K says he completed his studies and left the UK in 1985. As this coincides with the date on the last statement, I think the account was likely closed around this time as I find it unlikely that someone would leave an account balance - of not an insignificant amount at the time - sitting there untouched.

And so I think Barclays has done all it can reasonably be expected to do to locate Mr K's account, and based on the evidence available, I can't fairly conclude the account is still in existence and it follows I don't uphold Mr K's complaint.

### **My final decision**

For the reasons I've explained I've decided Barclays Bank UK PLC have done enough to settle Mr K's complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr K to accept or reject my decision before 2 January 2026.

Caroline Davies

**Ombudsman**