

The complaint

Miss W complains about problems she experienced when trying to make a payment abroad from her Barclays Bank UK PLC current account.

What happened

Miss W had booked a holiday abroad, and on 9 July 2025 she contacted Barclays to ask how to pay for an excursion during the holiday using an international bank transfer. She wanted to make the payment in US dollars. Barclays explained that she could make the payment using online banking (but not its app) and told her how to do it.

Miss W went online to make the payment. Barclays' systems blocked the payment. Barclays called Miss W – it was unable to speak to her but left a voicemail. Miss W then called Barclays. It explained the payment had been stopped as part of automated fraud checks, and if the payment was genuine Miss W would need to pay it again. Although she was by then travelling, Miss W made a further online payment.

Unfortunately there was an error in the receiving account number, and so the second payment did not reach its intended destination. Miss W was able to pay for the excursion using money she'd saved for another purpose. The wrongly directed payment was successfully recalled and returned to Miss W on 1 August 2025.

Miss W complained. She said that she'd had to spend considerable time – when she should have been enjoying herself on holiday – contacting Barclays to find out what had happened, and also in making alternative arrangements to pay for the excursion.

Barclays accepted it had provided poor service. It offered £350 compensation for the distress and inconvenience caused, as well as £220 compensation for the cost of international calls Miss W had had to make. Miss W wasn't happy with that and brought her complaint to us. She said it should pay her £2,500 – the cost of the excursion she wasn't able to enjoy because of what had gone wrong

Our investigator said it wasn't unreasonable that the first payment had been stopped. Barclays had an obligation to protect customers from fraud, and making a payment abroad in US dollars was an unusual transaction for Miss W. He thought Barclays' offer of compensation for the customer service problems Miss W experienced while she was away, and the delay in requesting a recall of the payment, was fair in all the circumstances. Miss W didn't agree and asked for an ombudsman to review the complaint.

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'm sure it was very frustrating for Miss W when she made a payment online for it to be stopped by Barclays. However, I don't uphold this part of her complaint. It's important that banks take steps to protect their customers from fraud. It's not possible to manually check

every transaction on every account, so – like all banks – Barclays has automated systems to help guard against fraud. One of the things the system looks out for is large and unusual transactions. This was an international transfer of \$3,400, which was unusual for Miss W.

Fraud detection systems can't be 100% accurate. Sometimes legitimate transactions get stopped. That's what happened here. But I don't think that was unfair or unreasonable. It's better that banks err on the side of caution, than take a higher risk of fraudulent transactions slipping through. Where an unusual transaction is flagged and stopped, I'd expect Barclays to contact Miss W to tell her what had happened, check whether the payment was genuine or fraudulent, and if it was genuine to help her make it again. That's what Barclays did in this case.

This was difficult for Miss W, because she made the payment at the last minute before departure, and was already travelling when she spoke to Barclays. But I don't think that makes what happened unfair. Barclays didn't know that, and in any case it wouldn't be a reason to stop protecting her account.

However, I would expect Barclays – once it was in contact with her – to take note of Miss W's circumstances at the time and do what it could to help her send the payment through again. I'm satisfied it did that too.

Unfortunately when she made the second payment, Miss W made a one digit error in the account number she was sending the money to. As a result, the money didn't arrive. Miss W was under pressure to pay for the excursion. She made the payment a third time, this time using money saved up for an impending house move. And she asked Barclays to try and recover the second payment which had been mis-directed.

I'm satisfied that Barclays wasn't to blame for this. It was Miss W who entered the destination account number. She was under pressure at the time – but that was because of pressure to make the payment before the excursion, not because Barclays put her under pressure. I've already said that while it was unfortunate that the first attempt was blocked by the anti-fraud system, it wasn't unfair or unreasonable.

Once Miss W realised that the second payment had been sent to the wrong account, she got back in touch with Barclays. And I think it was at this point that Barclays could have done more. It didn't start the recall process for around three days. A recall isn't immediate. It always takes time, because Barclays has to contact the recipient bank, ask it to return the funds, and wait for a reply.

Sometimes a recall is successful, sometimes it isn't – if the funds have been moved on and are no longer in the recipient account, for example, they might not be available to be recalled. So at this point it couldn't be known whether or not Barclays could get the funds back, and Miss W would therefore always have had the uncertainty of not knowing whether she'd get a refund hanging over her holiday. That wasn't Barclays' fault. But it could have given her the reassurance that it had started the process at least, and it didn't do that. It also accepts that it was more difficult for Miss W to contact it from overseas than it ought to have been.

For that reason, I do think that Barclays caused Miss W additional stress and upset, and it should take steps to put things right. It wasn't unreasonable to have stopped the first payment. And Barclays wasn't responsible for the second payment going astray. But it could have done more to help Miss W resolve the problems that resulted from that.

With that in mind, I've thought about whether Barclays has made a fair offer. It's offered £570 in total, including £350 for the distress and inconvenience caused, and £220 as a

gesture towards the cost of international calls.

I've not seen any evidence of the extra costs Miss W incurred. I've no doubt that she did have to spend money on international calls. Though she would always have had to spend some of that, because of the problem with entering the second payment destination incorrectly. But if Barclays had provided better service around the recall, some of those calls could have been avoided.

I also note that the refund was for slightly less than Miss W paid out. This was because of changes in exchange rate between the payment date and the recall date – \$3,400 was worth less in sterling at the time of the recall than at the time of the payment. It wasn't Barclays' fault that the payment was sent wrongly. But had it been recalled sooner, there might (or might not) have been less difference in exchange rates.

In any case, I think Barclays' offer of £220 is likely to cover both the cost of the international calls and the small difference in exchange rates.

That leaves the offer of £350 compensation for distress and inconvenience. I've borne in mind that these issues happened not just during a holiday, but during a special once in a lifetime holiday. When she ought to have been enjoying the holiday, Miss W had to spend time contacting Barclays to work out what had happened to the payment and trying to get it recalled. This had more impact because she was overseas, making calling Barclays more difficult and expensive.

As well as the inconvenience, Miss W had the worry of what had happened to what was for her a significant sum of money hanging over her – as well as the stress of having to find the money to make the payment a second time when it didn't arrive. This was part of the funds set aside for an upcoming house move, so Miss W was worried that if the missing payment couldn't be recalled, she might jeopardise her move. She had to make the difficult choice between risking legal problems abroad having taken but not paid for an excursion; or paying for it and then risking her move if the other payment couldn't be recalled.

However, I don't think Barclays is wholly to blame for the distress and inconvenience (including the reduced enjoyment of her holiday) that Miss W experienced. Miss W didn't try to make the first payment until just before travelling, rather than doing so in advance leaving time to deal with any problems before she left. As I've said, it was reasonable to have flagged the first payment to check if it was legitimate. And I don't think I can safely say that it was Barclays' fault that the second payment didn't reach the right account either. But when things did go wrong it could have done more to help, and it should have started the recall of the second payment sooner.

Barclays offered £570 compensation – recognising both the impact of this on Miss W, and the costs of international calls. While this is more than I might award in other cases based on a problem that did cause upset but was resolved within a couple of weeks, I think the fact that this occurred during a holiday of a lifetime means it had a particular impact on Miss W.

In all the circumstances of this case, I think the offer of £570 compensation is fair. This reflects the distress and inconvenience caused, the cost of international calls, and the small difference between the sum paid and the sum refunded (which was due to variations in the exchange rate). I don't think it would be fair to require it to refund the whole cost of the excursion – because Miss W did go on it, and this issue did not take up all her time, and because Barclays was not wholly at fault for the issues she faced.

In conclusion, then, I'm satisfied that Barclays has made a fair and reasonable offer to settle this complaint. It made that offer in its final response, but as I understand it no payment has

yet been made. Barclays should therefore make payment now.

My final decision

My final decision is that Barclays Bank UK PLC should pay Miss W £570 compensation, if it hasn't already done so.

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

Simon Pugh
Ombudsman