

The complaint

Mr M complains that he is unable to pay his bills due to the restrictions Barclays Bank UK PLC ("Barclays") placed on transfers made through its telephony team of over £500 and that Barclays unfairly closed his account. Mr M believes he's been discriminated against due to his vulnerabilities.

What happened

Mr M opened an account with Barclays on 6 March 2025. Mr M's statements show that he often used telephone banking to make transfers to external accounts he held. But following changing phone numbers and not updating Barclays with his details when he visited branch he found he wasn't able to make payments higher than £500 this as these needed to go through a higher level of security involving the receipt of one-time passcodes.

Mr M was repeatedly advised that he could update his mobile number or download Barclays banking app to enable transfers over £500 but Mr M didn't do this. Mr M was also advised that the payments could be made online, but Mr M hadn't registered for this.

Mr M raised a complaint with Barclays about this on 4 July. During the call Mr M requested Barclays close his account and displayed what Barclays deemed inappropriate behaviour and so Barclays took the decision to close his account and Mr M's account was closed on 28 July 2025.

Barclays didn't uphold Mr M's complaint as it says it followed its policy correctly when it refused to process payments over the phone for more than £500 as it was only able to verify Mr M using a lower level of security and so a limit applied. Barclays explained that this limit is part of its security processes and is designed to protect its customers' accounts and can't be changed.

Furthermore, Barclays didn't uphold Mr M's complaint point regarding the closure of his account as this was done as per his request and following his inappropriate behaviour to its staff in-line with section 5 of its terms and conditions where it states that:

"We may also end this agreement immediately or on less notice (and stop providing services and close your account) if we reasonably believe you have seriously or persistently broken any terms of the agreement."

Mr M was unhappy with this and so brought his complaint to this service. Mr M says he is unable to pay his bills with this lower limit. Mr M wants Barclays to re-open his account and complete further training of its telephony colleagues and pay compensation for the distress caused.

One of our investigators looked into Mr M's concerns and didn't think Barclays had done anything wrong as it had acted in line with its security procedures when restricting the amount Mr M could transfer over the phone as it was only able to verify Mr M's identity using lower-level security checks.

They thought Barclays had tried to assist Mr M with alternative ways to make higher value payments, but as Mr M had failed to engage in this or disclose any vulnerabilities or needs, it wouldn't be fair to expect Barclays to provide any additional support.

And as Mr M made repeated requests to close his account and Barclays did so following Mr M's inappropriate behaviour during calls with it and in-line with its terms and conditions, they didn't think Barclays had done anything wrong.

Mr M disagreed, he believes that Barclays have discriminated against him by not taking his mental health into consideration. But Barclays system has no record of any vulnerabilities for Mr M and Barclays says that he should've made it aware of them when he opened his account. So as Barclays weren't made aware of Mr M's mental health issues prior to raising his complaint they didn't think Barclays had acted unfairly or unreasonably.

Mr M remained dissatisfied and as his complaint couldn't be resolved it was progressed for an ombudsman's decision.

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.

It might be helpful to explain here I don't have the power to tell Barclays how it needs to run its business and I can't make Barclays change its systems or policies – such as how or when it requires a higher level of security for customer verification when authorising payments out of its customers' accounts. These are commercial decisions and not something for me to get involved with. Nor can I explain why a business takes the actions it does or what policies a business needs to have in place or what regulations it needs to follow – that is the role of the regulator in this case the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).

My role rather is to look at problems that Mr M has experienced and see if Barclays has made a mistake or done something wrong. And if it has, decide what it needs to do to put things right for Mr M. And while I do take relevant law and regulation into account when arriving at a decision, my remit is focused on whether I feel a fair and reasonable outcome has occurred. Only a court could make a finding as to whether a business breached its duty under the Equalities Act or acted unlawfully as Mr M has submitted here.

So the first question I have to ask here is was it reasonable for Barclays to refuse to process payments over £500 for Mr M when it was only able to verify his identity using lower-level security checks.

And having considered everything, I'm in agreement with our investigator and I don't think Barclays actions were unreasonable. As I've already explained above it's not for me to tell Barclays how to run its business, but I would expect it to have policies and processes in place to protect it and its customers against fraud – and I think most would agree and understand that.

And so when Barclays wasn't able to verify Mr M to the level it required as per its policy for larger payments, I don't think it did anything wrong in refusing the transactions it did over the phone.

Furthermore, as there is no evidence Mr M made Barclays aware of any additional needs or vulnerabilities he had prior to raising this issue, based on the information it had I don't think the options Barclays gave to Mr M to make higher value payments were unreasonable.

Barclays were able to assist him in making higher value payments by splitting them over multiple transactions and advised Mr M he could make higher value payments if he updated his mobile phone number or downloaded its app which he could've done and got assistance with when visiting a branch, but didn't do so.

And nor do I think Barclays treated Mr M unfairly when it closed his account as it did this following his request and in-line with its terms and conditions following Mr M's behaviour which I agree was inappropriate using offensive language and at times threatening. I accept Mr M may've requested the closure of his account due to frustration, but that is no excuse for the behaviour displayed towards Barclays staff which it has a duty to protect them from.

And as Barclays weren't aware of any vulnerabilities Mr M suffers with prior to raising this complaint, I don't agree Barclays have discriminated against him in the actions it has taken. In any case as mentioned above only a court could make a finding as to whether a business has acted unlawfully.

And so it follows as I don't think Barclays has done anything wrong or treated Mr M unfairly, I don't uphold this complaint.

My final decision

For the reasons I've explained, I do not uphold Mr M's complaint against Barclays Bank UK PLC.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr M to accept or reject my decision before 25 December 2025.

Caroline Davies
Ombudsman