

The complaint

Mr K and Mrs K are unhappy Barclays Bank UK PLC has closed their account and says the poor service provided delayed the reclaim process.

What happened

The facts of the complaint are well known to both parties, so I will only provide a summary of the key points.

Mr K and Mrs K held Barclays accounts. Barclays reviewed its accounts following the UK's departure from the European Economic Area (EEA) and made the decision to apply some limitations on who it would provide accounts to. This meant it would not provide accounts to those with an address outside the UK.

Barclays wrote to Mr K and Mrs K on 10 November 2022 explaining its decision and the steps they would need to take. This involved them checking their addresses were correct, and if they resided outside the UK the accounts would need to be brought down to a zero balance as they would close. Mr K and Mrs K were given until 27 May 2023 to carry out these actions. The letter made clear that the accounts would close on or shortly after 4 June 2023. If accounts closed with a balance the funds would be moved to a central account where it would earn interest and Mr K and Mrs K would need to complete a reclaim process.

Barclays issued reminder letters to Mr K and Mrs K on 13 February 2023 and 10 May 2023 reiterating the steps they needed to take. As no action was taken the accounts closed with the balances transferred to a central account on 6 June 2023.

In June 2023 Mr K says he contacted Barclays on the phone and was told he would receive a call back about next steps, but no follow up call was received. Mr K and Mrs K say they sent numerous emails to Barclays which were not responded to. Mr K and Mrs K contacted Barclays to initiate the reclaim process and this was then followed by a branch visit in February 2025. Mr K and Mrs K says this visit was lengthy but they made some progress with matters. Barclays issued a reclaim questions letter on 11 February 2025, asking Mr K and Mrs K to provide details so their funds could be released.

In July 2025 Mr K and Mrs K logged a formal complaint with Barclays about the handling of their accounts and the service they had received during the reclaim process. Mr K and Mrs K explained they had contacted Barclays multiples times to try and reclaim their funds, and they were given incorrect or consistent information. They said letters were not responded to and they were not provided with the assistance they needed to reclaim their money. Mr K and Mrs K said they incurred significant costs coming to the UK to try and resolve the matter, and the branch staff were unable to resolve the issues.

Barclays reviewed their concerns and issued a final response letter on 5 August 2025. Barclays accepted the service provided wasn't always up to reasonable standards and they could've provided further assistance. Although Mr K and Mrs K provided documents, they needed to be certified.

Mr K and Mrs K remained unhappy and referred his complaint to our service. They reiterated their concerns and stated they didn't know their accounts would close. In order to put things right they asked that Barclays compensate them for the loss of investment opportunity as they didn't have access to their funds, and for the costs they incurred trying to resolve the issues. This included flight costs to the UK.

Whilst the complaint was awaiting review, Barclays confirmed the reclaim process was successful and Mr K and Mrs K received their funds on 30 October 2025. Their funds were in a central account and continued to accrue the relevant interest.

An Investigator reviewed the complaint and in summary, made the following recommendations:

- Barclays acted fairly in closing the accounts – it is able to decide who it offers accounts to and what the criteria should be.
- The documents needed to be certified to prevent fraud and are part of Barclays' money laundering duties and legal requirements.
- There were service failings – with Mr K and Mrs K not provided with call backs or responses, and they weren't given the information they needed in a timely manner.
- Barclays should pay Mr K and Mrs K £250 in recognition of the distress and inconvenience caused to them by Barclays' failings.

Barclays accepted this recommendation. Mr K and Mrs K remained unhappy – they explained the compensation set out was inadequate and they had incurred significant losses and costs. This included the investment earnings they say they had lost and two trips to London to try and resolve matters. They believed £50,000 to be fair compensation.

As no agreement could be reached, the complaint has been passed to me – an ombudsman – for a final 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.

I appreciate Mr K and Mrs K were disappointed by the Investigator's opinion. I'd like to reassure Mr K and Mrs K that I've considered the whole file and what they have provided. But I'll concentrate my comments on what I think is relevant. If I don't mention any specific point, it's not because I failed to take it on board and think about it, but because I don't think I need to comment on it to reach what I think is a fair and reasonable outcome. No discourtesy is intended by me in taking this approach. Our rules allow me to take this approach. It simply reflects the informal nature of our service as a free alternative to the courts.

Barclays has explained that following the UK leaving the EU it reviewed the services it offered to customers. A policy decision was made Barclays to limit certain services provided to customers living outside the UK. I understand Mr K and Mrs K are long standing Barclays customers – since 1986. However, this is a commercial decision that Barclays is entitled to make. So, I cannot say Barclays did anything wrong by making this decision, and it provided Mr K and Mrs K the opportunity to transfer funds out before the accounts closed.

I must also highlight that Barclays can close an account at any time as long as it gives the appropriate notice as laid out in its terms. Barclays' terms and conditions say it will give 60 days' notice, and it first wrote to Mr K and Mrs K in November 2022. Barclays told Mr K and Mrs K it would be closing the account in June 2023. So, I'm satisfied Barclays gave the right

amount of notice and provided a longer timeframe so Mr K and Mrs K could transfer their funds out.

Mr K and Mrs K didn't take action with their account balances. I've reviewed Barclays' notes and I am satisfied the relevant notices about the changes were correctly sent to Mr K and Mrs K. I can see they say they are UK residents, but I can't see that they reached out to Barclays with the information required as set out in the initial letter sent to them about the upcoming changes. I realise the closure of the accounts was inconvenient for Mr K and Mrs K, especially as they aren't permanently in the UK. The timeline of events shows they were provided with the information and time they needed to manage their accounts and make arrangements. So I don't consider there to be failings here on Barclays' part.

The crux of Mr K and Mrs K's complaint is that they contacted Barclays numerous times to reclaim their funds and the service they received was poor, which led to delays, distress and financial loss. I am sorry to learn of the challenges Mr K and Mrs K faced in accessing their funds. I've thought carefully about the timeline of events. I can see Mr K and Mrs K say they sent emails and made phone calls – Barclays' internal notes do show some contact from Mr K and Mrs K – but this was all after the accounts had closed and the reclaim process needed to be followed.

I can also see that Mr K and Mrs K emailed and contacted by phone the branch they used directly – I understand they felt this was appropriate as they use this branch and didn't feel like they were making progress elsewhere. But the letters issued to Mr K and Mrs K provided details of the relevant team to contact by telephone. I am also mindful that the branch staff would not have been able to answer questions about the process in the detail Mr K and Mrs K may have needed. I am pleased to see that when they did attend branch, they were able to make progress with the reclaim process and received assistance from staff.

This leads to me to Mr K and Mrs K's point about having to return to the UK to resolve this issue. I do understand their frustration with the service received from Barclays, but I don't consider it fair or reasonable for Barclays to cover the costs of these trips. Barclays has explained that the reclaim process can be completed without the need to attend branch, and telephone banking would have been able to assist them with the reclaim form. Mr K and Mrs K also had the option of completing the form online and providing the necessary information. I also can't see that Barclays advised Mr K and Mrs K to come to the UK to resolve the issue – this was a decision they made themselves. For these reasons I won't be asking Barclays to cover these costs.

Mr K and Mrs K provided documents to Barclays, but these were not all certified in the necessary way. This included the letter to confirm Mrs K's address not being certified. While I appreciate obtaining the necessary certification requires additional steps and made the process challenging, I find it to be an essential requirement. The certification ensures Barclays is releasing funds to the correct individual and will form part of its risk policy and regulatory obligations. I am also satisfied the process was clearly laid out, and there were different options for Mr K and Mrs K to use

However, this doesn't detract from the fact this process wasn't smooth and its not in dispute the service from Barclays was fractured and unhelpful at times. Mr K and Mrs K say they missed out on the chance to invest their funds elsewhere and Barclays should compensate them for this. I can't see there was any contact with Barclays before the letters of 2022 and 2023 were sent to suggest they intended to move their funds elsewhere and invest them. Although the reclaim process was lengthy the funds still received the relevant interest that was applicable to their Barclays accounts. And Mr K and Mrs K haven't provided compelling or firm evidence to show they had investments planned and they missed out on these. It therefore follows that I don't consider compensation for this loss to be fair or necessary.

I do accept that some compensation is due to Mr K and Mrs K for the poor journey they experienced with Barclays. Reaching an award for distress and inconvenience is seldom straightforward. The issues involved are subjective by their very nature and the impact on the consumer can be difficult to determine. Our awards are not intended to be punitive for businesses, and their fundamental aim is to recognise the impact on a consumer where there have been shortcomings. Having considered the timeline of events and the details provided I think the compensation recommended of £250 is reasonable and in keeping with our service's approach to compensation for distress and inconvenience.

I know this amount is significantly lower than what Mr K and Mrs K have asked for. Our awards are modest, and the level of compensation Mr K and Mrs K are seeking is not on the scale our service considers.

I'm sorry this isn't the outcome Mr K and Mrs K hoped for, and they will be disappointed with the decision I've reached. But I hope my decision provides some clarity around why I consider the compensation outlined below to be fair.

Putting things right

Barclays Bank UK PLC should pay Mr K and Mrs K £250 in compensation for the distress and inconvenience caused to them due to the poor service provided.

My final decision

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs K and Mr K to accept or reject my decision before 27 March 2026.

Chandni Green
Ombudsman