

The complaint

Mr S complains Barclays Bank UK PLC's IT outage meant his card didn't work and then he received poor service in a phone call.

What happened

Mr S tried to use his card in a shop on 31 January 2025, and it was declined four times.

Mr S called Barclays and spoke to someone about what had happened, but he didn't find the call very productive, and called a second time.

On the second call Mr S got better service and was paid £75 in compensation and a complaint was logged.

Barclays responded to Mr S' complaint and paid a further £50 as an apology for the poor service he'd received. Unhappy with this response, Mr S brought his complaint to this service.

An investigator looked into things, but didn't think Mr S' complaint should be upheld. The investigator agreed Mr S' card had been declined, and he'd been given poor service, but felt the £125 Barclays had already paid was fair.

Mr S disagreed, so the investigator tried to mediate the complaint, but Barclays wouldn't increase its compensation and Mr S said he wanted £5,000 to resolve things.

Unable to reach any agreement, Mr S' complaint was passed to me to decide.

My provisional decision

I felt Barclays hadn't compensated Mr S fairly, so I issued a provisional decision, and in it I said:

I don't think there's any dispute Mr S' card was declined, four times, because of Barclays' IT outage. Mr S had money in his account, had used his card earlier in the day and was able to make payments with his card later in the day.

And I don't think there's much dispute the first call was poorly handled.

Mr S called Barclays and spoke to someone about what had happened with his card not working, but the person he spoke to couldn't find any declined payments.

The person at Barclays said they could give an apology and log an expression of dissatisfaction but then they'd close it down, so nothing would be investigated.

Mr S was then told the declines might not have been because of the IT outage, because he was able to his card later in the same day.

Unhappy with this first call, Mr S called back later and the next person he spoke to was able to find the declined card payments very quickly. They asked Mr S if he'd logged a complaint, and he said he'd tried but not been able to.

The person at Barclays messaged the first person Mr S spoke to, and it seems their response was lots of people want to log complaints.

Mr S was then told perhaps the first call handler didn't want to work that day, or perhaps they didn't want to work for Barclays at all. While this might be right, I don't think it's the most professional thing to say to a consumer.

Mr S had already explained the decline of his card was embarrassing, and I think it would have been.

Mr S says he had shopping picked out and a queue of people, and then he couldn't buy what he wanted because his card didn't work. I think this would have been embarrassing.

And then I think this distress and inconvenience was compounded by the first person saying Mr S hadn't used his card and hadn't had a payment declined.

Barclays feels it's already fairly compensated Mr S, but I think £125 would be fair for just the IT outage and the card declines. The IT outage was Barclays' fault, and the card declines caused Mr S distress.

Barclays also says Mr S accepted its initial £75 offer, but contacted it later to say he didn't feel the compensation was fair because of the way his calls were handled.

And Barclays feels comments about the first call handler didn't have an impact on Mr S.

But I think those comments would have had an impact, it added to the overall experience Mr S had with Barclays and at a time where he'd already had a poor experience.

Mr S says the IT outage, and the way his complaint was handled impacted his depression and because of this a payment of £5,000 is fair, but I can't agree this would be fair.

I think Mr S was caused distress and inconvenience by Barclays' IT outage, and I think he left the first call thinking, quite reasonably, Barclays didn't believe him, and he'd been stopped from logging a complaint.

This impact was, I think, fairly short lived as the second person Mr S spoke quickly found the declined payments. And Mr S was able to log a complaint.

But I can also understand Mr S continuing to feel unhappy because of the attitude of the first call handler, and I think the poor call had a longer lasting impact on Mr S.

I think Mr S was likely to dwell on how the call went, and I think his disappointment lasted longer despite the partial resolution the second call brought.

Because of this, I think a compensation payment, in total, of £250 is fair in the circumstances of Mr S' complaint.

Responses to my provisional decision

Mr S didn't respond.

Barclays responded to say it thought the increase in compensation wasn't fair, asked for my reasoning and sent this service several assessments from other complaints where less compensation had been paid.

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 explained my reasoning for the increase in compensation in my provisional decision.

The IT outage Barclays had was its fault, and it caused Mr S inconvenience because his card didn't work.

This inconvenience was further compounded by very poor service on the phone, a refusal or unwillingness to log a complaint and then some unhelpful comments in a follow up call.

And I think this compounded poor experience for Mr S played on his mind, from Mr S' submissions to this service it's clear he still had a good recollection of the call, it must have had an impact on him.

Previous assessments issued by this service don't set a precedent, every complaint is assessed or decided on its individual merits considering all the specific circumstances.

And this is what I've done, decided Mr S' complaint on its individual merits. Having done this, and considered what Barclays has said, I don't intend to depart from my provisional decision.

My final decision

My final decision is I uphold this complaint and Barclays Bank UK PLC should pay Mr S a further £125 in compensation.

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

Chris Russ
Ombudsman