

The complaint

Mr V complained about the actions and service provided by Barclays Bank UK PLC after it blocked his account access while he was travelling overseas. He feels that £300 compensation is reasonable to reflect the stress and worry he was caused.

What happened

On 10 June 2025, Barclays' automated anti-fraud system declined a payment Mr V attempted and restricted his current account pending further checks. When he contacted Barclays on 27 June, the block was lifted.

When Mr V complained, Barclays explained that it has a fraud detection system in place to protect customers' accounts, which monitors transfers and flags potentially suspicious activity for further checks. It said on most occasions it would try and contact the customer when this happens – but it wasn't required to do this. Barclays said the account terms and conditions allowed it to take this action.

Mr V felt that Barclays hadn't addressed his wider concerns about a missed credit card repayment or advised him correctly in relation to his mobile banking access. This prompted him to complain to us.

Our investigator thought that Barclays hadn't done anything wrong when it applied the account restriction but that there had been shortcomings in the service provided when it had failed to clarify with Mr V how he could access his savings account (which hadn't been switched away from Barclays). For this our investigator recommended that Barclays should pay £100 compensation for distress and inconvenience.

Mr V felt this amount did not adequately reflect the severity of his situation and the inconvenience caused or the length of time he'd been blocked from using his Barclays banking app. Barclays said it had given Mr V the correct information and advice when he'd spoken to the fraud team on 27 June and there were other ways he could've checked his accounts.

I issued a provisional decision.

What I said in my provisional decision

'I can appreciate how frustrating and stressful Mr V found this whole experience, and I sympathise. He has a number of concerns about what happened after Barclays blocked his account and just to be clear, I'm only looking at Barclays' actions in relation to his bank accounts. What happened on his credit card account and the impact of Barclays' actions on Mr V in relation to that account will be dealt with separately. Here, it seems to me there are two main complaint issues that I need to address.

The account block

Barclays must meet its legal and regulatory obligations to protect customers and prevent fraud. This requires it to have systems in place to carry out security checks. Barclays has

explained its system flagged the payment on 10 June 2025 and a block was applied until checks could be completed.

The account terms and conditions allow Barclays to decline payment instructions and restrict account access while security checks are carried out. So I don't think Barclays acted unfairly when it placed the block on Mr V's card. And although it was difficult for Mr V to contact Barclays as he was in transit and travelling overseas at the time, the block was lifted straightaway when he made contact with Barclays. So I can't fairly say Barclays applied account restrictions for any longer than was fair and reasonable.

Barclays mobile banking app

I would still expect Barclays to treat Mr V fairly and reasonably overall. And in my view, especially knowing he was abroad and worried about accessing his money, Barclays could have given Mr V clearer and more complete information to help him understand the situation.

Our investigator asked Barclays whether it had told Mr V that he would need to download the Barclays app for his savings account and Barclays told us :'*...I cannot evidence that the customer had been advised to re-install the application again on their device.*'

Barclays knew Mr V relied on using the Barclays' mobile banking app he'd installed on his smartphone. And although Barclays did tell him on 27 June that he'd need to download a different app to be able to manage his credit card account using his smartphone, it failed to explain clearly enough to Mr V that he'd also lost access to Barclays mobile banking app. As I understand things, this happened because around this time he'd switched his current account away from Barclays. The app was linked to his current account so, when that closed during the switch process, the app was no longer registered to an active account and couldn't be used. I don't think this was ever clearly explained to Mr V which is why he thought his account was still blocked when he couldn't get into it via the app – although that wasn't the case.

So I've thought carefully about the question of fair redress, which is the main reason Mr V has requested an ombudsman referral.

I'm impartial and I must look at what happened from both sides. This includes thinking about what Mr V could've done differently to avoid or limit the impact of what happened.

I've taken into account how long it took for the account restrictions to be lifted (10 -27 June). But that was due to Mr V not getting in touch sooner. So whilst I completely understand why it wasn't straightforward for him to make contact, this doesn't warrant compensation.

I've also kept in mind that part of the confusion here was due to the account switch being underway when the block was applied. Whilst I'm not saying that Mr V was responsible for what happened, it's fair to say that timing the switch for when he was going to be overseas involved some risk element, as he wouldn't easily be able to take action if (as seems to have been the case here) everything didn't happen as he expected. I'm also mindful that there was only a small balance in the savings account and Mr V was always able to access the account via online banking. On the other hand, Barclays was aware that he hadn't used online banking for a long time and that Mr V mainly relied on managing his money using its mobile banking app via his smartphone.

So whilst I don't consider these service failings resulted in any financial detriment to Mr V, I think the below par customer service I've identified added to the overall stress and anxiety he experienced around this time. For this, I consider £100 is fair compensation for Mr V in his particular circumstances.'

What the parties said in response to my provisional decision

Barclays accepted what I'd said in my provisional decision. Mr V disagreed with me. He explained his reasons in detail and at length in both correspondence and during phone calls (which I've listened to) and his main objections can be broadly summarised as follows.

- I'd focussed only on the account block and failed to consider the inconvenience or the lengthy duration of what happened (June to October 2025).
- I'd disregarded information that he felt ought to have been considered (including other issues that had occurred in 2024) and felt offended by comments I'd made about the account switch – which Mr V said had nothing to do with the account being blocked.
- It didn't matter that there was only £1 in his savings account – the point is that he couldn't access this using the app.
- The compensation offered did not fairly reflect the prolonged impact this issue had on Mr V.
- He'd contacted Barclays multiple times during this period, giving the bank several opportunities to resolve the matter.
- He'd raised concerns about a response letter received from Barclays at the end of August, which he found misleading, contradictory and dismissive, which further added to Mr V's frustration during an already lengthy and difficult situation.
- He couldn't reasonably have done anything differently, but Barclays could and should have done more to reach out and help him.
- £100 compensation isn't enough but £300 is reasonable.

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 the time and trouble Mr V has taken to share his thoughts on this matter. I've listened to the call recordings and thought carefully about everything he's sent me and what he's said. If I have not referred to each point he's raised it's because I have nothing further I can usefully add to what I've said already in my provisional decision.

I've looked at the complaint issues Barclays responded to in its final response letters sent in July and August 2025. I have to restrict myself to just those issues because the rules I'm bound by say that Barclays must have had the opportunity to address any issues itself and issue a final response before we can consider them. So I can't attach any weight to what Mr V says about what happened in 2024 which is why I haven't referred to this in my decision.

I'm sorry if Mr V feels offended by anything I've said. I accept that he sees things differently to me and my intention was simply to explain my reasoning to help him better understand how I'd reached my decision, even if he disagrees with it.

To sum up, I am satisfied that Barclays:

- acted fairly and reasonably when it blocked his account, and
- removed the block at the first opportunity and without unreasonable delay.
- Barclays didn't do enough to help Mr V understand that he'd need to re-install the banking app to be able to access his savings account. But whilst this was understandably frustrating for Mr V, this poor service didn't impact on him in money terms as the account balance was minimal and his main banking was now carried out with another bank.

For the reasons set out more fully in my provisional decision, I remain satisfied that £100 is fair compensation to reflect the shortcomings I've identified in the service Barclays provided. It's in line with awards made by this service in comparable circumstances and it's what I'd have told Barclays to pay even if it hadn't already been recommended by the investigator.

It follows that I don't consider any further action or additional compensation is warranted in these circumstances.

Putting things right

Barclays should pay Mr V £100 compensation (if it hasn't already).

My final decision

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint in part and Barclays Bank UK PLC should take the steps set out above to put things right.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr V to accept or reject my decision before 9 March 2026.

Susan Webb
Ombudsman