

The complaint

Miss C is unhappy that Barclays Bank UK PLC, trading as Barclaycard, allowed her to transfer funds from her credit-card account to her Barclays current account, which she then used for gambling, and she feels Barclaycard should have done more to prevent this and support her.

What happened

Miss C held a Barclaycard credit-card account and a Barclays current account. In September 2023, she used a promotional “money transfer” offer on her Barclaycard to transfer £4,120 from her Barclaycard credit account to her Barclays current account. Miss C then spent those funds on gambling.

Miss C has explained that she had a serious gambling addiction at the time, and she feels Barclaycard should never have allowed her to make the transfer because her Barclays current account already showed significant gambling activity. She believes Barclaycard should have recognised this, intervened, and prevented the transfer. Miss C also feels that both Barclaycard and Barclays should have offered her support sooner, and that their failure to do so contributed to her financial difficulties and affected her mental health.

Miss C raised complaints with both Barclaycard and Barclays. Barclaycard responded with a single final response letter covering what they believed to be the whole complaint. In that letter, they upheld her complaint in part and offered to refund 50% of the transferred amount and associated fees (£2,060) on what they described as a “shared responsibility” basis. However, Barclaycard later explained to this service that they felt that the complaint handler had used an incorrect framework, and that in their view they had no obligation to stop the transfer, although they confirmed that the offer made in their complaint response letter still stands.

Miss C wasn't satisfied with Barclaycard's response and felt that they should reimburse the full transferred amount and pay her additional compensation. So, she referred her complaint to this service where it was considered by one of our investigators. But our investigator didn't feel that Barclaycard should fairly be instructed to do more than the offer they had already made to Miss C in their complaint response letter. Miss C disagreed, so the matter was escalated to 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 want to start by acknowledging why Miss C feels confused about the distinction this service makes between Barclaycard and Barclays. From Miss C's perspective, she was dealing with a single banking group, and the responses she received from the business also appeared to treat her concerns as one overall complaint. As such, I understand why she expected this service to look at everything together.

However, Barclaycard and Barclays are legally separate businesses responsible for different products, and as per the rules that govern this service, I must treat them as separate entities. Those rules also mean that Miss C's complaint could be brought to this service against Barclaycard or Barclays, but not both combined. Importantly, this doesn't prevent Barclaycard and Barclays considering the complaint jointly themselves. It only constrains how this service can consider the complaint.

In this instance, this complaint has been brought against Barclaycard, which means I can only consider whether Barclaycard's actions, in relation to Miss C's credit-card account, were fair and reasonable. Conversely, I can't make any findings about how Barclays Bank managed Miss C's current account or the gambling transactions on that account as part of this complaint, because Barclays Bank are not a party to this complaint. My decision in this case therefore focuses solely on Barclaycard's actions.

Turning to what Barclaycard did, Miss C says they acted unfairly by allowing her to transfer money from her credit-card account to her current account at a time when she was gambling heavily. I have considered this carefully, but I don't think Barclaycard acted unfairly in allowing the transfer. A transfer of available credit to a customer's bank account is a normal and permitted feature of many credit-card products, including Barclaycard's, and Barclaycard were entitled to process the transfer when Miss C requested it.

Miss C has emphasised that credit-card gambling is prohibited, and she feels Barclaycard enabled her to gamble using credit by approving the transfer. I am very mindful of the difficulties Miss C was experiencing at the time, and I've taken full account of the vulnerability she has described. But the key point is that Barclaycard did not process any gambling transactions on Miss C's credit-card account. Instead, they processed a money transfer which moved funds into Miss C's current account. And it was from the current account, not the credit card, that Miss C then made gambling payments.

Because of this, I'm satisfied that Barclaycard did not allow prohibited credit-card gambling transactions to take place. And as explained, Barclaycard weren't required to block a legitimate money transfer simply because the customer might later choose to use their own funds for gambling when those funds were received into a different account.

Taking everything together, I don't think Barclaycard acted unfairly in allowing the transfer. However, Barclaycard previously offered to refund 50% of the transferred amount (and associated fees) on what they described as a shared-responsibility basis. Although Barclaycard have since explained that this offer was made because the complaint handler used an incorrect framework, they have confirmed to this service that the offer still stands. In my view, that offer is generous and exceeds what this service would usually require in a case of this kind.

For that reason, while I am not upholding this complaint on the basis that Barclaycard acted unfairly, I am upholding it to instruct Barclaycard to make the payment to Miss C they have already offered. But I am not directing them to do anything more, because I do not feel it would be fair or reasonable to do so. I hope that Miss C will understand, given what I've explained, why I've made the final decision that I have.

Putting things right

Barclaycard must reimburse £2,060 to Miss C's Barclaycard credit account.

My final decision

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint against Barclays Bank UK PLC, trading as

Barclaycard, on the basis explained above.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss C to accept or reject my decision before 8 April 2026.

Paul Cooper
Ombudsman