

complaint

Mrs N complains that Barclays Bank PLC lost her cheque and hasn't compensated her adequately for all the upset and trouble she experienced as a result.

background

In October 2014 Mrs N wrote a Barclays' cheque to deposit a five figure sum in a savings account she held with another bank. She checked and the money was credited to that account, but a month later it disappeared. And Mrs N found out her cheque had been lost in the system. Mrs N was concerned about her savings. So she went into her local Barclays' branch and withdrew the money in cash to deposit it manually at the third party bank. She says this was upsetting and inconvenient - and Barclays was slow to deal with her complaint so it should pay more compensation.

Barclays accepts mistakes were made. It apologised and paid Mrs N £100 for delay and poor complaint handling in January 2015. At the same time, it offered Mrs N £125 for her distress, inconvenience and expenses associated with what happened – as well as another £105.31 for any interest she might have lost.

Our adjudicator doesn't recommend the complaint should be upheld. He notes Barclays calculated interest at the rate of 8% - and says that's much higher than he would have expected. And he's satisfied the total compensation is fair and reasonable.

Mrs N disagrees. She says

- it was very upsetting to have money disappear from her account without a proper explanation;
- Barclays neglected to take care of her money - and she had to sort the matter out for herself by transferring the cash;
- Barclays admitted this has never happened before – so she's worried her cheque was tampered with and Barclays is trying to play down the significance; and
- Barclays ignored her complaint for a long time and it should pay more compensation to reflect all of the time, effort, inconvenience and money she expended as a result of what happened.

my findings

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint. I have reached the same conclusions as our adjudicator for broadly the same reasons.

Mrs N has explained that she suffers from a painful condition that's made worse by stress. And I can see that this incident occurred at a particularly difficult time for her. I have no doubt that thinking a substantial sum was missing must have been very upsetting – and Mrs N had to go to some trouble herself to put matters right. So I understand why she's frustrated and disappointed with the service she received from Barclays.

Barclays admits it got things wrong. It has apologised and paid £100 compensation already - and offered to pay another £230.31. Mrs N feels that doesn't adequately reflect all she went through. So it remains for me to decide whether the amount of compensation is fair and reasonable, in all of the circumstances.

Mrs N discovered her cheque was lost last November and complained to Barclays. I appreciate she was understandably concerned about what happened and wanted an explanation. And I realise she feels let down by Barclays' response - and it didn't deal with the matter as quickly as Mrs N would have liked.

Regrettably it's not always possible for a financial business to explain exactly what went wrong with its processes. But I'm satisfied Barclays investigated and told Mrs N what it thinks happened. Barclays sent its final response in January 2015 - and paid Mrs N £100 for delay. And I don't think I can fairly find that's unreasonable

It might be helpful to say here that this service offers informal dispute resolution. We are not a regulator. And it's not within my remit to tell a bank how to run its business on a day to day basis – or punish a bank or an individual employee when mistakes are made. Instead my role is to look at Mrs N's individual complaint.

I have no doubt that what happened caused Mrs N a great deal of worry and stress. I take into account the time and inconvenience associated with the phone calls and branch visits she made to arrange for this money to be moved between bank accounts. And I note Mrs N is worried that her cheque might have been tampered with deliberately. But I have seen no evidence that's the case - or that Mrs N was ever in jeopardy of losing her money.

I do understand that what happened was most unsettling. But the total amount of compensation here is just over £330. I think that probably covers Mrs N's expenses. And I'm satisfied it's fair and reasonable compensation overall for the trouble Mrs N was put to and the upset caused.

So, having considered everything that happened here, I agree with our adjudicator that the total redress offered by Barclays is a fair and reasonable response to Mrs N's complaint. I realise this decision is likely to come as a disappointment to Mrs N, but I'm not persuaded I can reasonably require Barclays to do more.

my final decision

My decision is that Barclays Bank PLC should pay Mrs N £230.31 in full and final settlement of her complaint. Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs N to accept or reject my decision before 23 December 2015.

Claire Jackson
ombudsman