

## **complaint**

Mr R complains that Barclays Bank PLC returned a cheque he issued unpaid. He also complains that his online statements do not accurately reflect his account.

## **background**

On 15 October 2013, Mr R deposited a cheque in his current account and wrote a cheque for the same amount to another company. On 18 October, Mr R says he checked his account online and it showed the cheque he had deposited and the cheque he had written as cleared. However, later that day Mr R says his account showed the cheque he had written as being returned unpaid. Mr R says that he should have been contacted before his cheque was returned unpaid and that if that had happened he could have transferred money from another of his Barclays accounts. He also says that although he made a BACS transfer which appeared on 19 October the bank showed this as arriving on 21 October.

The bank says that because the money from the cheque Mr R had deposited did not clear until 21 October, there was not enough money in his account to cover the cheque he had issued. Because of this it says the cheque was returned.

The adjudicator did not uphold this complaint. She found that the cheque Mr R paid in had gone through the normal clearing cycle and because it had not cleared by the time the cheque he had issued was presented, the bank had not done anything wrong by returning the cheque. She also found that because the BACS payment was made on a Saturday this would not be credited until the next working day and so the bank was right to credit Mr R's account on 21 October.

Mr R did not accept this. He said that he had relied on his online statement which showed his cheque as being cleared but then later this was returned unpaid. He also said his BACS payment was made on Friday 18 October and that Barclays was being dishonest by showing this as being received on 21 October.

## **my findings**

I have considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what is fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

Mr R checked his online statement at midday on 18 October and it showed that his cheque to a third party had been paid. I understand that Mr R relied on this information and thought that the cheque must have been cleared because the bank had recognised he had sufficient money to pay this, even if these funds had not all cleared in his account. Later that day he checked his account again and found that the cheque had been returned unpaid. He visited his branch but was told that nothing could be done although the fee that would have been charged for this was waived.

In deciding whether the bank did anything wrong I have considered first whether it was right to return the cheque unpaid and second whether it was right to first show this cheque as being paid and then, later that day, to show it as being returned unpaid.

The bank's terms and conditions set out that it will take four days for a cheque to clear and the money to become available. Because the cheque Mr R had deposited did not clear until 21 October, which was in line with its normal cheque clearing process, there was not enough

money in Mr R's account to cover the cheque he had issued, and so I do not find that the bank did anything wrong by returning it unpaid. The bank's terms and conditions set out that when deciding if there is enough money in a customer's account to make a payment it will look at any cheques paid in which it is treating as available for use. Mr R says that because the cheque he paid in was from a reputable large insurance company this should have been treated as available. But I do not find that the bank had to treat this cheque as being available prior to completing the clearing cycle.

I understand that the cheque was shown as being paid from his account but then was later that day returned unpaid. I can see why this has upset Mr R and why he is concerned about the accuracy of his online statements. When a cheque is going through the clearing cycle it is possible for the bank's systems to update to show the cheque as going through even though this payment has not cleared. At this point, even though Mr R's statement had been updated to show the payment, because the cheque had not cleared it was still possible for the cheque to be returned if insufficient funds were in his account. In this case, there were not sufficient cleared funds and so the cheque was returned and Mr R's statement updated. I can see why this has annoyed Mr R but I do not find that the bank has done anything wrong.

Mr R is a long standing customer of Barclays and I understand why he thinks the bank should have contacted him before returning the cheque but I accept that it is not bank policy to do this. I also acknowledge that the bank waived the fee it could have charged for the returned cheque and I do not see this as an acceptance of fault but as a gesture of goodwill.

I do not have all the information about the BACS payment Mr R made from his building society account to his Barclays current account. I accept that Mr R has said this is not relevant to his complaint but provides further information about his concern about his online statements not providing accurate information. Because of this I have not looked further into this issue. I do accept Mr R's comments about needing to be able to rely on the information in his online statements and understand his comments about Barclays saying its statements are secure and the meaning of that word. However, based on the information set out above, I have not found that the bank has presented information inaccurately on Mr R's statements.

### **my final decision**

My final decision is that I do not uphold this complaint

Jane Archer  
**ombudsman**