

## **The complaint**

Miss C complains that Barclays Bank UK PLC (“Barclays”) sent a payment to the wrong person and hasn’t refunded it.

## **What happened**

Miss C holds an account with Barclays. In September 2022, she used the Barclays app to make an international transfer to a relative. But her relative didn’t receive the money. Miss C contacted Barclays and discovered that the money had been sent to the wrong account. She asked Barclays to recall the funds.

Barclays contacted the beneficiary bank, but they didn’t have authorisation from the beneficiary to return the funds. So, Miss C didn’t get her money back. Barclays said it couldn’t do any more, but Miss C wasn’t happy about this and raised a complaint.

Barclays said it’s the responsibility of the customer to check the details when making payments through the app. Barclays said it isn’t responsible if the details are entered incorrectly. It said it had tried to help Miss C by contacting the beneficiary bank, but there wasn’t anything else it could do. It didn’t uphold the complaint.

Miss C wasn’t happy with Barclays’ response and brought the complaint to this service. She said she had entered the payment details correctly. But she said there was a technical error with Barclays’ app which meant the money was sent to a different account. Our Investigator didn’t think Barclays had done anything wrong. But Miss C didn’t agree and asked for the complaint to be reviewed by an Ombudsman.

## **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.

Looking first at the attempt to recover the funds, I find that Barclays contacted the beneficiary bank and asked for the funds to be returned on the same day this was requested by Miss C. I’ve seen the message which the beneficiary bank sent back. It said they couldn’t obtain authorisation to return the funds. The beneficiary’s consent is needed before funds can be returned, even if they received the money by mistake. As consent wasn’t given here, the funds couldn’t be removed from the beneficiary’s account.

Barclays’ options in this situation are quite limited, but I’d expect it to take reasonable steps to recover the funds. I think it fulfilled this requirement by contacting the beneficiary bank promptly. But, as the beneficiary didn’t agree to return the funds, I don’t think there was any more that Barclays could do at that stage.

So, I’ve looked at whether Barclays should have done anything differently earlier on, to prevent the funds reaching the wrong beneficiary. I don’t think it should – I’ll explain why.

Miss C entered the payment details herself through the app, so the onus was on her to ensure the details were correct. Miss C says she entered the account number correctly but there was a technical issue with Barclays' app. I haven't seen anything to suggest there was a problem with the app at the time.

I've seen a screenshot from Miss C's mobile which shows an error message, saying that Barclays couldn't find bank details for the account number Miss C had entered. I understand that Miss C's relative had recently changed her account details. I'm satisfied that, in this screenshot, Miss C had entered the account number correctly. But I don't think the fact that Barclays didn't recognise it necessarily means there was a technical problem with the app.

Miss C says that, afterwards, the app accepted the transaction and the money was sent. She has provided another screenshot which shows the name of the proposed recipient, how much money they will get, the exchange rate and which account the money will be paid from. This screenshot doesn't show the account number which the money will be sent to. So, I can't conclude that the correct account number had been entered on this attempt.

The screen includes the name of the payee. I understand that the name shown is the name of the person who Miss C wanted to pay. But, as this was an international payment, Confirmation of Payee didn't apply. So, Barclays didn't have to check that the account name matched the account number which had been entered.

The person who received the funds is someone Miss C has sent money to in the past. So, I think it's likely that their account details were saved on her account as a payee and were selected for this transaction by mistake. I haven't seen anything to suggest that Barclays was responsible for this mistake. Miss C says she has tried to get the money back from this person, but they haven't returned it.

I sympathise with Miss C and I'm sorry to disappoint her. But I haven't seen anything which suggests Barclays made a mistake here and I don't think there's any more it can do to help her. So, I'm not going to ask it to do anything here.

### **My final decision**

For the reasons above, I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss C to accept or reject my decision before 13 November 2023.

Katy Kidd  
**Ombudsman**