

The complaint

Ms B complains that Barclays Bank UK PLC deleted her identity profile resulting in her not having access to her accounts through her mobile banking application. She was then required to visit a branch with her identification documents to resolve the issue.

What happened

Ms B says that at end February 2023, she successfully applied for a Barclaycard and after a month it wasn't appearing in her Barclays mobile banking app. She called Barclays to resolve the issue and says that in the process of merging her two profiles Barclays deleted her identity profile. This resulted in her losing access to her accounts through her mobile app. She called Barclays and was told she would need to visit a branch with two pieces of identification. Ms B says her nearest branch was a long drive away and she had to rely on a neighbour to take her there.

Ms B says this issue has caused her stress as her mobile app is how she manages her accounts and while Barclays said she could use online banking she didn't know her login details and didn't have a pin sentry device. She also says that although Barclays said it offered her the option of video banking this wasn't the case. Ms B says this issue meant she missed out on work, and she had to disclose her vulnerability which she hadn't wished to do.

Barclays issued a final response letter dated 31 March 2023. It confirmed that the only way for Ms B's identification records to be updated was for Ms B to visit a branch. It agreed that the merger of records appeared to cause the issue Ms B experienced with the mobile banking app. It said that Ms B's identification status was updated on 30 March and so she should have access to her mobile banking app.

Barclays issued a further final response letter dated 4 April 2023. It upheld her complaint and apologised for the distress and inconvenience Ms B had been caused by its error. It noted Ms B's comment about needing to have a neighbour drive her to the branch and the wait she then experienced. It acknowledged that it was its mistake that meant Ms B's records needed to be updated and that Ms B had done everything she could to make this happen. Because of this it offered to increase the compensation of £25 it paid in March 2023 to £125. It noted Ms B had rejected this offer and asked for the £25 paid in March to be reversed. It apologised that it wasn't able to reverse the payment of £25 but said this wouldn't affect her rights to refer her complaint to this service.

Following this Barclays sent further letters confirming its previous findings. It suggested that Ms B was given the option of using video banking rather than visiting a branch but then in its following letter said this option wasn't given with any certainty and even if she had tried this she would still have needed to visit a branch with her identification. Based on this it increased its total compensation offer to £150 (including the £25 already paid).

Ms B didn't accept Barclays offer and referred her complaint to this service. She said that she wanted a full review to ensure that others didn't experience this issue. She also wanted a higher amount of compensation than Barclays had offered. She said that the issue was only resolved because of her actions and not by Barclays.

Our investigator upheld this complaint but thought the £150 compensation offered by Barclays was reasonable.

Ms B didn't agree with our investigator's view. She said that reasonable adjustments weren't made to accommodate her vulnerability and that had her neighbour not taken her to the branch she would have faced financial discrimination as she wouldn't have been able to access her financial products.

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 can understand why Ms B is upset given the service she has received from Barclays. It appears that in an attempt to merge her Barclaycard and Barclays profiles Ms B lost access to her accounts through her mobile banking app. Barclays has accepted this was its error.

Our role isn't to punish the bank but when a mistake is made, we would expect the bank to put the customer back in the position they would have been had the mistake not been made and, where appropriate, to pay compensation. Ms B's mobile banking app was restored on 30 March putting her back in the position she was before this incident occurred. But this only happened because she took time out of work to visit a branch and provide copies of her identification documents. Therefore, I agree that Ms B should be compensated for the trouble and upset this issue has caused her.

Barclays has explained that the only way that the mobile banking app access could be reinstated was for Ms B to provide copies of her identification documents in branch. It did at one point suggest it had provided the option of video banking, but it then accepted this was only suggested as 'worth a try' and it confirmed that it wouldn't have been able to update her identification status through a video banking appointment and she would still have needed to visit a branch. Ms B has said her vulnerability wasn't taken into account and reasonable adjustments not made.

The only reason why Ms B needed to visit a branch was because of the error made by Barclays. Ms B explained to Barclays that she had a medical condition that meant making the journey to the branch was difficult (and noted the distance to the nearest branch). However, as the only option was for the documents to be provided in branch, I cannot say that Barclays was wrong to state this. But I have taken into account in my consideration of compensation that visiting a branch was particularly difficult for Ms B due to her vulnerability (and I have also considered the upset she experienced by needing to explain her vulnerability when she hadn't wished to).

Ms B has explained that she had to rely on a neighbour to drive her to a branch and her travel costs were £30. She also had to take time out of work. I also note that while online banking was still available to Ms B she didn't use this channel, and that given when the issue arose (towards the end of the month) she was particularly concerned to be able to monitor the movements through her accounts, and not being able to do so caused her unnecessary stress.

But I have also considered that Ms B's mobile banking was restored after four days, and that Barclays responded to the issues Ms B raised in a timely way. It initially offered Ms B a low amount of compensation but then reassessed this after considering the specific challenges Ms B experienced and the upset these had caused her. Because of this it increased its compensation offer. It also provided a further amount of compensation in response to the misinformation about video banking. Given this, I find that Barclays did try to resolve the

issues Ms B experienced and provide her compensation for the upset and inconvenience she had been caused as a vulnerable customer.

Taking everything into account, I find that the offer made by Barclays to pay Ms B £150 compensation is reasonable.

Putting things right

Barclays should pay Ms B a total of £150 compensation as it has offered (£25 has already been paid).

My final decision

My final decision is that Barclays Bank UK PLC should take the action set out above in resolution of this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Ms B to accept or reject my decision before 10 January 2024.

Jane Archer
Ombudsman