

The complaint

Mr and Mrs A complain that Barclays Bank UK PLC declined to offer them a buy to let mortgage and wasted their time in the process. Mr A sent an invoice to Barclays for £600 for his time. Mr A has dealt with the complaint.

What happened

Mr A contacted Barclays on 1 December 2022 about taking out a buy to let mortgage. Barclays said Mr and Mrs A didn't meet its minimum income threshold and there was no point in them starting an application. Mr A disagreed and Barclays agreed they could meet with a mortgage adviser, to see what help and support it could offer. The mortgage adviser reviewed Mr and Mrs A's income on 5 December 2022 and said they didn't meet the minimum income threshold and the application couldn't proceed.

Mr A says they were misled by Barclays that it was "desperate to release a mortgage" and this resulted in them wasting five days. He says during this time they missed out on opportunities with other lenders before rates increased.

Our investigator said Barclays hadn't treated Mr and Mrs A unfairly.

Mr A didn't agree and asked that an ombudsman re-consider the complaint.

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.

We offer an informal dispute resolution service. While I'm required to explain why I reach my decision I don't have to comment on each point made by Mr A.

Mr A contacted Barclays on 1 December 2022 about taking out a buy to let mortgage. Barclays asked for information to check Mr and Mrs A met its basic criteria. Mr and Mrs A didn't meet its minimum income threshold. Barclays said there was no point in them proceeding with an appointment with a mortgage adviser. It told Mr A the minimum income threshold for a buy to let mortgage was an inflexible criteria that couldn't be changed.

Mr A wasn't happy with this. He said this was unacceptable, given their long-standing relationship with Barclays, equity in their residential property and their solid financial position. Mr A continued with the call, as he wanted to discuss what mortgage products were available. The call handler said they'd contact the premier banking team on behalf of Mr A.

Mr A spoke to Barclays' premier banking team on 2 and 3 December 2022. He said he didn't agree with the minimum income threshold and wanted to know how Barclays could help them proceed. Barclays again explained the minimum income criteria, but said Mr and Mrs A could have an appointment with a mortgage adviser to review their income to see if it could help and support them. It said they had to upload information about their income before the appointment. Mr A said he wanted to proceed and an appointment was made for 6

December 2022.

On 5 December 2022 Barclays mortgage adviser called Mr A to remind him to upload the documents. She said she needed to check his income etc to check that the application was do-able. She said that if it was do-able Mr A might be speaking to a colleague. This was because they all needed to have appointments observed and her colleague was desperate for a buy to let customer.

Mr A says he was told Barclays was desperate to offer them a buy to let mortgage and he was left in no doubt that Barclays would confirm a mortgage offer later that day. I've listened carefully to a recording of the call and I don't agree that Mr A was told this or that this was a reasonable inference from the conversation.

Barclays' mortgage adviser called Mr A later that day and said Barclays couldn't proceed with their application as they didn't meet its minimum income threshold for a buy to let mortgage. The mortgage adviser said she'd checked with colleagues and the minimum income threshold had never been overturned. She said all she could do for Mr A was raise a complaint.

I don't think Barclays treated Mr and Mrs A unfairly.

Barclays made it clear from the first call that Mr and Mrs A didn't meet its minimum income threshold. It also made it clear this was a hard and fast rule and wasn't flexible.

Given Mr A's strong disagreement with what he was told on 1 December 2022, I think it was fair for Barclays to agree that a mortgage adviser would review Mr and Mrs A's income to see what help and support it could offer. It made Mr A aware it would need income information and he'd have to attend an appointment, so he knew this would take up some of his time. Barclays gave no guarantees it would offer Mr and Mrs A a mortgage – in fact it told Mr A several times they didn't meet its minimum income threshold. It was Mr A's choice to proceed despite this.

Mr A contacted Barclays on 1 December 2022 and was told the application couldn't proceed on 5 December 2022 (two working days later). I don't think it's fair to say that there were any unnecessary delays by Barclays in dealing with this matter.

I don't think it's fair and reasonable to require Barclays to pay compensation to Mr and Mrs A for their time.

Mr A said all other re-mortgage opportunities with other lenders were lost between 1 and 6 December 2022 due to an interest rate rise. The evidence Mr A provided didn't demonstrate that they had opportunities that were lost during this period. Even if Mr A had provided such evidence, it's unlikely I'd have found it fair and reasonable to require Barclays to pay compensation. As I said, I don't think Barclays treated Mr and Mrs A unfairly. And it was Mr A's own choice to continue with Barclays instead of pursuing the opportunities he says he had with other lenders.

Complaint handling isn't a regulated activity, which means it isn't something we can look into. We can sometimes look into how a complaint was dealt with – for instance if this caused difficulties with the underlying problem being sorted out. That wasn't the case here. Barclays had told Mr A the buy to let mortgage application couldn't proceed before the complaint was raised. So while Mr A is unhappy with the way Barclays dealt with the complaint, that's not something that I can consider here.

My final decision

My decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr A and Mrs A to accept or reject my decision before 22 January 2024.

Ruth Stevenson
Ombudsman