

## **The complaint**

Mr M has complained that Barclays Bank UK PLC (“Barclays”) informed him that it was closing his account.

Mr M is unhappy with this as he has been a longstanding customer of the bank and had previously worked for Barclays. Mr M says that he needs to retain his sterling-based Barclays UK account due to a number of commitments.

## **What happened**

Barclays wrote to Mr M on 10 May 2023 to say that it was applying limitations on accounts registered to addresses outside of the UK. It said that as the address registered for Mr M’s accounts was a non-UK address, it had taken the decision to close his account. The letter explained that if Mr M was unable to provide a UK address, then it would close his account by 24 November 2023.

Unhappy with this, Mr M raised a complaint with Barclays. Barclays issued a final response letter in July 2023 and explained that Barclays Bank UK PLC’s products are designed for customers within the UK. And since the UK left the EU at the end of 2020, it said it was reviewing the services it offers to customers outside of the UK. Barclays explained that it was a business decision and encouraged Mr M to make alternative banking arrangements at his earliest convenience.

After Mr M referred his complaint to this service, one of our investigators assessed the complaint and they were unable to say that Barclays had done anything wrong. This was because, in summary, Barclays’ decision to close Mr M’s account was a commercial decision that it was entitled to make.

Mr M disagreed with the investigator’s assessment, so the matter was referred for an ombudsman’s decision.

## **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.

Having reviewed everything, I don’t uphold this complaint. I will explain why.

I can see that Mr M had a UK bank account with Barclays for many years, and previously, had worked for Barclays. I also understand that Mr M has a number of commitments that requires him to have a sterling-based bank account. So in the circumstances, I can appreciate why Mr M is unhappy with Barclays’ decision to close his account.

Barclays has explained that following the UK leaving the EU, it reviewed the services it offered to customers outside of the UK – this also included customers living outside of the EU. This resulted in a letter being sent to Mr M to inform him that, unless he could provide a UK address, his account would be closed.

As it was a policy decision by Barclays to limit certain services provided to customers living outside of the UK and Mr M was unfortunately affected by this, I cannot say Barclays did

anything wrong or treated him unfairly by notifying him of the account closure. I have looked at the closure letter sent, and this provided details of the timing of the closure and the need to take action. Mr M has since said that Barclays extended the amount of time he has before his account is closed, to May 2024.

Based on everything I have seen, I find that Barclays provided Mr M with adequate notice of the closure of his account, to enable him to take action to make alternative banking arrangements. As Mr M lives overseas, I recognise that it may take him some time to arrange an alternative bank account in the UK. So I think that Barclays' decision to extend the amount of time Mr M has before his account is closed seems reasonable in the circumstances.

Mr M has asked Barclays that his account be kept open, partly because he used to work for Barclays, but also because he has a number of commitments that requires him to have a UK bank account. I can understand why Mr M made this request, but given the account closure was part of a wider commercial decision and Mr M didn't meet the criteria for the account to remain open, I do not find I can say Barclays did anything wrong saying that it would be closing Mr M's account.

Finally, in December 2023, Mr M said that Barclays had sent him a text message saying that it won't close his account. We checked with Barclays to see whether it had changed its mind about closing Mr M's account. Barclays has responded and confirmed that it has not changed its mind about closing Mr M's account. It says that Mr M's account is still due to be closed in May 2024, once the six-month extension has expired.

So in summary, it is the case that Barclays' decision to no longer allow customers with a non-UK based address to have an account is a reasonable exercise of its commercial judgement. And so I don't think I can say that Barclays was being unfair or unreasonable for its decision to close Mr M's account. But I do think that providing Mr M with more time in which to make alternative banking arrangements is fair, as I appreciate it may take Mr M some time to do this, given that he lives outside of the UK.

### **My final decision**

Because of the reasons given above, I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr M to accept or reject my decision before 20 February 2024.

Thomas White  
**Ombudsman**