

The complaint

Mr J complains that he was unable to log in to his on-line banking account with Barclays Bank UK PLC and had to visit a branch to provide identification and proof of address.

What happened

Mr J had been using his Barclays on-line banking account for a number of years, but when he attempted to use the service in late 2022, he received a message saying Barclays didn't hold enough information to register the account. After several attempts to resolve the matter on the telephone, Barclays told Mr J that he must attend a branch in person and bring with him two forms of identification and proof of his address. Mr J complained to Barclays about being unable to access on-line banking and that he hadn't been told why he'd only now been asked to provide the information requested.

Barclays said it believed his identification and address had been removed from the system but couldn't explain how this had happened. Barclays accepted responsibility for the error and apologised. Barclays also apologised that it hadn't returned Mr J's calls when he initially reported the problems he was experiencing. Barclays offered Mr J £100 for the inconvenience it's poor service had caused him.

Mr J brought his complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service and one of our Investigators looked into things. The Investigator acknowledged that Mr J now had access to his on-line banking but thought Barclays offer of £100 and an apology was a fair and reasonable resolution to the complaint. Mr J thought that Barclays should pay a higher amount than £100 and asked that an Ombudsman decides 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.

I understand that Mr J will be disappointed but for very much the same reasons provided by the Investigator I've decided that the offer Barclays has already made to Mr J is a fair and reasonable one. I will now explain why.

There's no dispute that Mr J was unable to access his on-line banking and that Barclays failed to call Mr J back when it should reasonably have done so. Barclays accepts it's likely a system error caused Mr J to lose access to his on-line banking account. So, I don't need to consider whether Barclays has done anything wrong here – I only need to consider whether the remedy Barclays offered is a fair and reasonable one in the circumstances of this case.

Mr J says the explanation provided by Barclays suggests that it doesn't know what caused the error. Mr J says that he's seen a number of similar issue have affected Barclays customers over recent year and suggests that this is an ongoing issue. I acknowledge Mr J's strong views in this regard, but I'm only considering Mr J's complaint and the circumstances surrounding it and, in this case, Barclays accepts it made a mistake and has apologised. The notes I've seen show that Barclays investigated what happened in Mr J's case and

concluded it was likely a business system error that caused Mr J to lose access to his on-line banking account. I appreciate Mr J may not accept this, but I find it's a reasonable explanation and I won't be asking Barclays to do anything else in this regard.

Barclays apologised for the poor service it provided and offered to pay Mr J £100 for the inconvenience he'd suffered. In Mr J's case, Barclays didn't return calls to Mr J and Mr J had to go into a branch to provide new identification and proof of address documents. Mr J says he had to take a days holiday to enable him to attend the branch and he had parking charges. That may be the case, but I don't think the overall impact on Mr J was significant.

Using financial services won't always be totally hassle free and we wouldn't award for things that aren't more serious than the normal nuisances of everyday life. So just because there's been a mistake it doesn't necessarily follow that we would always award compensation – especially when the impact is minimal. In this case, Mr J still had access to telephone banking to help him manage his affairs and he visited a local branch that was a reasonable distance from his home to provide the documents Barclays required. I'm satisfied Mr J was inconvenienced by Barclays poor service and that a financial remedy, along with an apology, is appropriate. However, in this case, I think Barclays offer of £100 is a fair and reasonable one.

My final decision

Barclays Bank UK PLC has already made an offer to pay £100 to settle the complaint and I think this offer is fair in all the circumstances. So, my decision is that Barclays Bank UK PLC should pay Mr J £100.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr J to accept or reject my decision before 30 August 2023.

Paul Lawton
Ombudsman