

The complaint

Ms Y complains that Barclays Bank UK PLC (“Barclays”) poor advice resulted in her not obtaining the cash withdrawal from a branch of Barclays that she wanted.

What happened

Ms Y contacted Barclays by online chat on 2 March 2023. Ms Y informed the chat agent she had imminent plans to move abroad and wanted to make arrangements to collect and withdraw £6,500 in cash. It was agreed this would be on 3 March at 10.30am from a branch of Barclays. In-line with this arrangement the chat agent sent the branch an email confirming Ms Y would be coming in so that her cash would be ready for collection in time and confirmed with Ms Y the counter opening times which showed it closed at 2pm.

Ms Y contacted Barclays the following day to change the time of the “appointment” to 12 noon but was told no appointment had been booked. This was because no appointment had been booked as it wasn’t possible to book an appointment to withdraw cash.

Unfortunately, this is where an error occurred on Barclays behalf – its agent wasn’t familiar with the cash collection process and didn’t understand it wasn’t possible to book an appointment to withdraw cash. So the agent booked Ms Y a new “appointment” for 10.30am on 4 March - a Saturday when its counters were closed.

Ms Y attended the branch but as the counter was closed, she wasn’t able to collect the cash and was only able to withdraw £2,000 in cash.

Ms Y complained to Barclays about this. Barclays agreed its service had been poor and offered her £100 compensation which was to also include cover for any future fees incurred for making a full and final transfer from her Barclays account. Barclays said that it doesn’t charge international transfer fees when done on its app and that it would refund any exchange fees incurred by Ms Y from transferring the funds providing she provides it with evidence of the fees incurred.

Ms Y was dis-satisfied with this and brought her complaint to this service. Ms Y says that the £100 offered doesn’t cover the stress and inconvenience she’s been put through and that due to the non-receipt of funds her family lost out on an investment opportunity.

One of our adjudicators looked into Ms Y's concerns and thought that we couldn't ask Barclays to compensate a customer for events (such as investments) that may occur in the future as these can't be reliably proven.

They reached the conclusion that Barclays had made an error in the advice it gave but thought that the offer of £100 plus any transfer fees was fair as they didn't think the impact of the mistake on Ms Y caused prolonged or significant distress.

Ms Y disagreed, and has asked 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.

It might help if I explain my role is to look at the problems Ms Y has experienced and see if Barclays has done anything wrong or treated them unfairly. If it has, I would seek – if possible - to put Ms Y back in the position she would've been in if the mistakes hadn't happened. And I may award compensation that I think is fair and reasonable.

In this case Barclays has accepted it made an error and as a result Ms Y wasn't able to withdraw the funds she wished. So what I need to decide is whether Barclays has done enough to put things right for Ms Y.

Ms Y says she understands that it is not the business' responsibility to compensate her for investments she said her family planned on making as this can't be proven reliably. But Ms Y says Barclays error has resulted in her not retrieving the cash in time to take overseas meaning she isn't able to utilise these funds.

I accept that due to Barclays error Ms Y was unable to retrieve all the funds in her account in cash prior to leaving the country. But I think Ms Y has to take some responsibility where she can in mitigating the problem. And in this case she has the option of retrieving the funds held in her account in another - and some might say more secure way – by transferring them to her account held overseas. And Barclays has already agreed to refund Ms Y on any exchange fees incurred from transferring her funds.

So Ms Y is perfectly able – should she choose to do so - to transfer the funds to her account held overseas. But she hasn't done this and over four months has passed – which suggests to me that she currently has no need for these funds.

I accept that there may be fees charged from an intermediary bank for an international transfer, but Ms Y would've likely incurred some type of fee for exchanging her cash into the foreign currency she wished to spend her money in. And the £100 compensation is to partly cover these fees. Ms Y says the £100 won't cover these intermediary fees and that she would make a loss. But has admitted she, nor Barclays know how much these intermediary banks fees might be. So I don't think it can be said that Ms Y has made a loss.

And I don't think it would be fair to expect Barclays to reimburse Ms Y for an unquantifiable amount at a point in the future when Ms Y decides to make the transfer.

So this being the case I think what Barclays has already offered to settle Ms Y's complaint is fair and reasonable in all the circumstances and I'm not going to ask it do any more.

My final decision

For the reasons I've explained, I think Barclays Bank UK PLC has done enough to settle Ms Y's complaint and I'm not going to ask it do anything more.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Ms Y to accept or reject my decision before 17 November 2023.

Caroline Davies
Ombudsman