

## **The complaint**

Mr F complains Barclays Bank UK PLC (Barclays) reduced his overdraft limit without his knowledge resulting in his mortgage direct debit being returned unpaid.

## **What happened**

Mr F says he is an international student currently residing overseas, the details of which he says he informed Barclays of by telephone before leaving the UK. Mr F says while overseas he got a notification from his mortgage provider that he had missed a monthly mortgage payment and on investigation it transpired this was because Barclays had reduced his overdraft limit, causing the mortgage payment to be returned unpaid.

Mr F says Barclays had written to his UK address informing him of this, knowing he wasn't at that address. Mr F says he regularly checks his banking app but there was nothing to clearly show his overdraft limit had changed, if he had been aware of this he could have transferred funds he held elsewhere to cover the payment. Mr F says Barclays actions have left a mark on his credit file which will affect him financially going forward and create difficulties for him when seeking employment.

Mr F wants Barclays to advise the credit agencies to remove the adverse entry on his credit file.

Barclays says it wrote to Mr F in July 2022 advising him that it was reducing his overdraft limit with effect from September 2022. Barclays says as well as writing to Mr F's UK address it held on file, it also communicated this via Mr F's online banking app. Barclays says Mr F would have also been sent a text message to say a notification had been sent to his online banking app for him to read. Barclays says it has no records to show Mr F had telephoned them regarding his move overseas for an extended period. Barclays says it has made no error here.

Mr F wasn't happy with Barclays' response and referred the matter to this service.

The investigator looked at all the available information but didn't uphold the complaint. The investigator says he was satisfied Barclays had met its obligations by writing to Mr F advising it was reducing his overdraft facility and it had no record of him ever formally changing his address details. The investigator says this information was also provided to Mr F in his banking app, which he checked regularly, so the information was there to be read and the investigator couldn't hold Barclays responsible for the fact he never checked his online mailbox.

With that in mind the investigator didn't feel Barclays had made a mistake here and couldn't ask it to contact the credit agencies over this matter.

Mr F didn't agree with the investigator's view and asked for the matter to be referred to an ombudsman for a final 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 done so, I won't be upholding this complaint and I will explain how I have come to my decision.

I can understand it would have been upsetting for Mr F to learn his mortgage payment had been returned unpaid when he believed he had funds available within his overdraft facility with Barclays. When looking at this complaint I will consider if Barclays correctly communicated the change to Mr F's overdraft limit, which caused his mortgage direct debt payment to be returned unpaid.

Mr F's complaint centres around the fact Barclays were informed of his move overseas before he left, but it still sent communications to his UK address, which is why he never received the letter advising him his overdraft limit was being reduced – he makes the point he had funds in other bank accounts, so if he had known he would have paid funds into the account. Mr F says although Barclays have told him the details of this letter was also sent to his online banking app, it wasn't immediately apparent to see where this communication could be found in the app.

I understand the points Mr F makes here but I'm not fully persuaded by his argument. I say this because although Mr F says he rang Barclays before he moved overseas, Barclays have checked its call logs and have no record of this call. Additionally, Mr F hasn't been able to provide any evidence to show he provided Barclays at that time, with a formal change of address details that would have been necessary for Barclays to stop future correspondence going to the UK address it held on file. So, without this it's not possible for me to know what Mr F discussed with Barclays at this time and whether or not he was simply asking if he could continue his banking account while overseas, or if a specific instruction to change his address was given.

I have been provided with details from Barclays to show that in addition to the formal letter being posted to Mr F's UK address, it also uploaded this letter to Mr F's online banking mailbox on 24 July 2022. This letter confirmed Mr F's overdraft limit was being reduced with effect from 9 September 2022. In addition to this Barclays explained as part of its process, a text message would have been sent to Mr F informing him a communication had been sent to his banking app mailbox for him to look at. Mr F says although he regularly logs on to his banking app, he doesn't look at his online mailbox and in any event it's not immediately clear where this could be found within the app.

While I understand the point Mr F makes about the app, it's reasonable to say it would be his responsibility to become familiar with the features of the banking app and this would be even more relevant while overseas, given in all likelihood Mr F would be more reliant on it for his day-to-day banking with Barclays.

Although I do have some sympathy for Mr F here as it's clear Mr F may have been in a position to fund his Barclays bank account at the time his mortgage payment was presented, I can't hold Barclays responsible for the fact Mr F hadn't read the communications he'd been sent for the reasons I have already explained. So, with that in mind it would be unfair of me to say Barclays have made a mistake here and tell it that it must now send a note to the credit agencies.

While Mr F will be disappointed with my decision, I won't be asking anymore of Barclays here.

**My final decision**

My final decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr F to accept or reject my decision before 22 August 2023.

Barry White  
**Ombudsman**