

The complaint

Mr M has complained that Barclays Bank UK PLC ("Barclays") incorrectly changed his registered address on his accounts.

Mr M says he became aware of this in October 2022, but it took Barclays until January 2023 to rectify the matter.

What happened

Mr M says that he applied for £5,000 interest free credit from a high street store, but this was declined. Mr M says that this was caused by Barclays incorrectly changing his address.

Mr M says that his credit card statements were sent to the incorrect address, which put his credit card account at risk.

Mr M also says that this matter led to him having to delay re-mortgaging his property leading to him obtaining a higher interest rate than what he could've achieved had the address been changed when he first flagged it with Barclays. Mr M also says that he missed out on buying two buy-to-let investment properties, due to the incorrect address issue.

Barclays upheld Mr M's complaint and paid him £470 compensation. This award was to reflect the distress and inconvenience caused by Barclays incorrectly changing the address it had registered for Mr M.

One of our investigators assessed the complaint and they concluded that Mr M's credit card account had been impacted by letters being sent to the wrong address. But they were unable to say that Mr M's financing had been impacted by Barclays' error. They did however agree that Mr M's credit file was still showing that Mr M was linked to the incorrect address, and so asked Barclays to remove this information. They also said that Barclays should pay a further £100 compensation, for the distress and inconvenience caused to Mr M by Barclays' error.

Mr M disagreed with the investigator's assessment. In addition to missing out on a lower rate of interest on his mortgage and missing out on the investment properties, Mr M says the matter has caused him a significant amount of stress resulting in him paying for counselling sessions.

As Mr M disagreed with the investigators assessment, 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 agree with the outcome reached by the investigator, for broadly the same reasons. Although I think it may help to explain that where evidence is incomplete and matters are in dispute, as is the case here, I need to decide matters on a balance of probabilities, based on everything that *is* available.

Credit card account

I note that Mr M was, understandably, concerned when he discovered that letters about his credit card account - which had a sizeable credit limit - were sent to an incorrect address in late 2022. However, although I understand why Mr M was concerned about this, I've not seen anything to suggest (fortunately) that Mr M suffered any loss because of this. For example, there's nothing to suggest that Mr M's card details were used to make fraudulent transactions.

So, while I can appreciate Mr M's worry and concern here, there isn't an impact on Mr M that I can fairly ask Barclays to compensate him for – beyond what it's already offered.

Declined 0% interest credit and subsequent delay in refinancing

Mr M says that he applied for £5,000 of interest free credit at a store, but says the application was declined. Mr M says that, as he has a perfect credit score, the only reason why this was declined must've been due to Barclays recording him living at a different address on his credit file. I understand it was this belief that led Mr M to delay refinancing his mortgage a while later and is why Mr M has been so distressed by this matter.

Having considered this point, firstly, I can't locate a declined application for credit in Mr M's credit file that correlates with this application. So from the outset, I hope Mr M can understand why it's very difficult for me to reach the same conclusion that he has, with the evidence that has been provided.

But, even if this did occur (but was reported to a different credit reference agency than the one he has obtained his credit report from), as Mr M has said, it is very difficult to determine why exactly a business has declined an application for credit. And it is the case that, although Mr M blames Barclays' error for this, there may well be other reasons why it was declined.

For example, it may've been declined because incorrect information may've been entered during the credit application. Alternatively, I can see that Mr M has products registered to an address in a different region of the UK (compared to his current address). There was also a gap in the address recorded for Mr M under the electoral register. He was registered at one address between October 2011 to December 2018. But, from what I have seen, he wasn't registered at any address on the electoral register until June 2022 – which I note predates the events that he has complained about by only a few months. So again, I can't rule out the possibility that either of these points, or indeed other factors, may've played a role in his application for credit being declined.

So from what I have seen, there is a lack of evidence of the declined credit application that prompted Mr M to worry about whether he could get further credit. And, even if that did happen, there is insufficient evidence to say it was declined because Barclays had the incorrect address registered for Mr M since October 2022. Indeed, the application for credit may well have been declined due to an unrelated matter, resulting in Mr M assuming his ability to obtain further credit could be affected by Barclays' error, when it might not have been.

As such, I don't think I can reasonably conclude that Barclays should be held responsible for the consequences of Mr M choosing to delay refinancing the mortgage on his primary residency or deciding not to invest in the buy-to-let properties. This means that I can't reasonably say that Barclays should reimburse Mr M's increased borrowing costs. This also means I can't reasonably say that Barclays can be held responsible for the impact the declined credit application (and the ensuing consequences) had on his mental health - which I understand had resulted in him receiving counselling.

Removal of the incorrect information

Having said the above, it took a fair amount of effort from Mr M to get Barclays to correct the address it had recorded for him. I can see that Barclays was still linking Mr M to the incorrect

address in his credit file, even after it had corrected his address and the investigator had instructed Barclays to remove this information as well.

Since the complaint was referred for an ombudsman's decision, the investigator contacted Barclays and asked (again) that it remove the incorrect address i.e. from the 'linked addresses' part of Mr M's credit file. Barclays has confirmed that it has contacted the credit reference agencies to remove that address, and this should now be reflected in Mr M's credit file.

In the circumstances, I appreciate that this added delay will have been greatly frustrating for Mr M. So I think what the investigator recommended is reasonable – that being Barclays should pay Mr M a further £100 compensation, so as to bring the total amount of compensation to be paid to £570. I think the additional £100 here reflects the added impact this matter has had on Mr M – which occurred at a time when Mr M was clearly already experiencing a great deal of distress and concern.

Putting things right

To put matters right, I require Barclays to:

- Pay Mr M an extra £100 compensation, for the distress and inconvenienced caused to Mr M by this matter.

Barclays has confirmed that it has removed the incorrect address from the 'linked addresses' section of Mr M's credit file. But if, for whatever reason, Mr M is still being linked to the incorrect address in his credit file, I direct Barclays to remove this information from Mr M's credit file again.

My final decision

Because of the reasons given above, I uphold this complaint and require Barclays Bank UK PLC to do what I have outlined above, in full and final settlement of this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr M to accept or reject my decision before 15 December 2023.

Thomas White
Ombudsman