

The complaint

Mr H has complained Barclays Bank UK PLC changed the personal details on his account on the say-so of a fraudster and then provided inadequate compensation.

What happened

On 13 September 2022, someone called Barclays pretending they were Mr H. They were able to change details on the account. In line with Barclays procedures, they sent a text to Mr H to confirm this. He was immediately able to change personal details and dilute the threat of fraud.

However Barclays subsequently told Mr H they'd confirmed Mr H's personal email address to the fraudster and offered him £240 in compensation.

Mr H remained upset with what had happened as he believed he'd set up a unique code with Barclays which could ensure this wouldn't happen. He'd spent a considerable time talking to Barclays to sort things out including whilst he was on holiday. He brought his complaint to the ombudsman service. He also wanted to ensure Barclays changed their processes so this breach couldn't take place in the future.

Our investigator believed that £300 compensation was fair and reasonable and asked Barclays to pay an additional £60. They accepted this outcome, but Mr H remained unhappy.

Mr H's complaint has been referred to an ombudsman for decision.

I completed a provisional decision on 22 January 2024. I asked Barclays to pay more compensation to total £500.

Mr H accepted this outcome. I received no further response from Barclays.

I now have all I need to complete my 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've come to the same outcome as I did in my provisional decision. I'll explain why.

Where there is a dispute about what happened, I have based my decision on the balance of probabilities. In other words, on what I consider is most likely to have happened in the light of the evidence.

When considering what is fair and reasonable, I'm required to take into account: relevant law and regulations; regulators' rules, guidance and standards; codes of practice; and, where appropriate, what I consider to have been good industry practice at the relevant time.

Some of the details of this complaint are not in dispute, so I don't intend to go through these further. But it's worth restating some basic aspects:

- Barclays' personnel when being called by a fraudster allowed themselves to be socially engineered into providing Mr H's email address. It seems to me that this is information that the fraudster didn't have at this stage as otherwise they'd have been willing to share this with Barclays upfront.
- Barclays didn't initially confirm to Mr H that they'd provided his email address to a fraudster. It took them a further month to confirm this.
- At the time of telling him this, they did suggest he should consider changing his email address.

And when I consider this aspect, I believe that this could cause a considerable amount of distress and worry, as well as requiring reasonably complicated personal organisation. There seems to have been no suggestion by Barclays that they should pay for Mr H's costs in sorting this out.

I'm aware there's still some dispute about the time Mr H spent both on the phone and in branch. There is limited clear evidence. However I don't believe this is the aspect which I believe has the most impact here. We don't generally award compensation based purely on the time spent.

I'm aware that Mr H is annoyed that he'd set up a unique code and feel that should have stopped this from happening. Again, the evidence on this aspect is slightly contradictory.

But I have been looking at the impact of what happened on Mr H. Barclays breached Mr H's personal data and whilst the ombudsman service is not the regulator for this aspect, I can consider its impact.

Putting things right

Overall I believe that a total of £500 compensation is fair and reasonable as I consider what happened to be sufficiently serious. This means that Barclays needs to pay Mr H a further £260 if they have already paid Mr H £240 (although Mr H has suggested he's not received any payment from Barclays yet).

Mr H is already aware that our service is unable to tell Barclays to change their internal processes as that's not our role.

My final decision

For the reasons given, my final decision is to instruct Barclays Bank UK PLC to pay a total of £500 compensation to Mr H.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr H to accept or reject my decision before 7 March 2024.

Sandra Quinn
Ombudsman