

The complaint

Mr S is unhappy that Barclays Bank UK PLC didn't convert his BarclayPlus account ("BPA") to a Barclays Young Persons account ("YPA").

What happened

Mr S held a BPA and was of the belief that when he turned 16, the account would automatically be upgraded by Barclays to a YPA. However, when Mr S turned 16 his BPA wasn't automatically upgraded as he was expecting. Mr S asked Barclays to upgrade his account to YPA, but this didn't happen. This led Mr S to visit a Barclays branch with his father and again ask for his account to be upgraded, but again, following this, his account wasn't upgraded. Mr S wasn't happy about this, so he raised a complaint.

Barclays responded to Mr S and explained that account upgrades don't automatically occur immediately after a person's 16th birthday. Barclays also confirmed that they had upgraded Mr S's account to a YPA and they accepted that they should have done this when Mr S first asked them to. Barclays apologised to Mr S for this and paid £100 to him as compensation for any trouble or upset this may have incurred. Mr S wasn't satisfied with Barclays response, so he referred his complaint to this service.

One of our investigators looked at this complaint. They noted Mr S's comments that he was a young athlete representing Great Britain at international level and that he was unable to access sponsorship money that had been paid to him so that he could compete during the time that his account wasn't upgraded.

Because of this, our investigator felt that Barclay's failure to upgrade the account when they should have caused Mr S a degree of worry and inconvenience that wasn't fairly accounted for in Barclays payment of £100 compensation. And they recommended that Barclays should pay a further £200 compensation to Mr S as a result.

Barclays didn't agree with the recommendation put forward by our investigator and noted that the BPA was an instant access account that Mr S was free to withdraw money from at any time. So, the matter was escalated 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.

I issued a provisional decision on this complaint on 23 October 2024 as follows:

Mr S has been assisted in this complaint by his father, who has helped Mr S in his attempts to have his account upgraded and who is himself unhappy at the trouble and frustration that he's incurred while helping his son.

However, it's important to note that I won't be able to consider the impact of what's happened here on Mr S's father, but only the impact that Mr S himself has incurred. This is

because the rules by which this service must abide – which can be found in the Dispute Resolution (“DISP”) section of the Financial Conduct Authority (“FCA”) Handbook – include that this service can only consider a complaint brought to us by an eligible complainant. And one of the conditions to being an eligible complainant is that the complaint must arise from the accounts of the eligible complainant.

In this instance, this complaint arises from the accounts of Mr S, and not from any accounts held in the name of Mr S’s father. This means that the eligible complainant here is Mr S, and not his father. And this means that I won’t be able to consider any costs or losses that Mr S’s father feels he may have incurred, or any frustration or trouble that he’s experienced while trying to assist his son.

I’ve reviewed the terms and conditions for the BPA, and having done so I can appreciate why Mr S would have been under the impression that his account would be upgraded to a YPA shortly after he turned 16. This is because the terms of the BPA include the following:

“Once you’re 16, we’ll upgrade you to a Young Person’s account.”

Barclays have explained that while they do upgrade BPAs to YPAs, they only do so on a set date, once per year, at which time they upgrade all eligible BPAs – account holders who have turned 16 since the last upgrade date the previous year. This makes sense to me, from a process efficiency perspective. And while this service doesn’t have the remit or authority to instruct a business to change the wording of their terms and conditions, I do feel that Barclays terms and conditions could be clearer on this point.

However, Barclays have also explained that if a BPA account holder, having turned 16, wants their account upgraded to a YPA sooner than Barclays would automatically upgrade it, then the account holder can ask Barclays to do so. This is what Mr S did here, and Barclays have accepted that they didn’t upgrade Mr S’s account to a YPA when he first asked them to, as they should have done.

In their response to Mr S’s complaint, Barclays apologised to Mr S for this and paid £100 to him as compensation for any trouble or upset he may have incurred as a result. In his correspondence with this service, Mr S has explained that he doesn’t feel that this £100 compensation fairly accounts for the trouble and upset that he’s incurred because of the delay in upgrading the account. And Mr S noted that he was unable to access sponsorship money that he needed access to while his account remained as a BPA.

But I’ve reviewed the terms and features of the BPA, and these confirm that Mr S was free to withdraw money from his BPA at any time. Indeed, Mr S’s BPA account statements show money coming into the account and money leaving the account, and Barclays have confirmed that there were no restrictions on the BPA that would have prevented Mr S from accessing any sponsorship money that he received into it.

I accept that Mr S was frustrated and inconvenienced by what happened here. But I feel that the impact of what happened on Mr S is limited to his having to chase Barclays to upgrade his account and by his not having access to the additional features offered by a YPA for the period after he requested the upgrade until his BPA was upgraded to a YPA by Barclays.

I’ve therefore considered Barclays payment of £100 compensation to Mr S in the context of the above. Having done so, I feel that Barclays apology and payment of £100 compensation amount does provide a fair resolution to Mr S’s complaint, and I can confirm that it’s commensurate with what I might have instructed Barclays to have paid to Mr S for what happened here, had they not already done so.

Accordingly, I don't feel that Barclays fairly or reasonably need to take any further or alternative action here, beyond that which they've already taken. And it follows from this that my provisional decision here is that I won't be upholding this complaint.

Finally, Mr S has said that he tried to transfer £1,000 into the BPA, but the money was lost. Barclays have advised Mr S that they can look to trace this payment if Mr S can provide evidence of it being made, such as an account statement from the sending bank account. This seems reasonable to me, and I feel it's now for Mr S to provide the proof of transfer that Barclays have requested.

Neither Mr S nor Barclays responded to my provisional decision which means that no objections to it have been received by this service.

As such, I see no reason not to issue a final decision here whereby I do not uphold this complaint on the basis described in my provisional decision. And I therefore confirm that my final decision is that I do not uphold this complaint accordingly.

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 S to accept or reject my decision before 25 December 2024.

Paul Cooper
Ombudsman