

## **The complaint**

Ms P complains that Revolut Ltd treated her unfairly in relation to a chargeback request. She's also unhappy with her account being suspended and with the service provided throughout, Ms P feels Revolut have discriminated against her.

## **What happened**

Ms P lives abroad but had an apartment booked for around a week-long stay in England in March 2020. Ms P says the apartment wasn't as advertised, and so while she still stayed there, Ms P subsequently raised a chargeback request. Ms P felt she ought to have her payment returned due to the differences she'd identified, saying the local authority had also told her the letting was illegal.

Revolut said Ms P wasn't entitled to a chargeback, since she had stayed at the apartment. They said they wouldn't even submit a request to Visa, because they believed it would be declined for that reason. Revolut also commented that there would be a cost to them for doing so.

Ms P said it was her right to be able to submit a chargeback request and Revolut was putting an unreasonable barrier in place.

Ms P says Revolut later unfairly suspended her account, and that they didn't give her adequate notice. Ms P also said that Revolut staff don't use their own names and got offended when she pointed this out.

Revolut explained that Visa have strict guidelines when dealing with chargeback requests, and that all they had done was followed those.

Finally, Revolut said their staff don't display their real names on the online chat function for their own security. They say they have no regulatory obligation to display their names', but they do have internal records should they ever be required to identify someone.

An investigator here looked into Ms P's case. They felt Revolut had handled the chargeback fairly and that their reason for not requesting it through Visa was acceptable. There would be a cost to them, and based on what happened, it would likely be unsuccessful. So, there was no point in any cost being incurred.

The investigator also said it was acceptable for Revolut staff to use pseudonyms, and noted that Revolut took on board Ms P's comments and refunded a one-month subscription fee as a goodwill gesture.

Ms P did not agree. She said she felt discriminated against and said that Revolut had no right to reject her chargeback request. Ms P said the bank in her home country had allowed chargebacks in the same circumstances, so she felt it would be successful if Revolut would only do it. And she felt the gesture of refunding a one-month subscription fee (£6) was an insult given the chargeback was for over £300.

Ms P also raised concerns that Revolut had suspended her account without adequate notice.

Because agreement couldn't be reached, the matter was passed to me to decide. In the meantime, however, Revolut offered Ms P £200 as a goodwill gesture for having not allowed her two months to withdraw her funds. Ms P hasn't accepted this offer.

I issued a provisional decision on this case in November 2021, a copy of which is repeated below.

"Having reviewed everything very carefully I'd like to confirm that my decision relates to the following:

- Revolut's decision not to raise a chargeback with Visa
- Revolut's alleged discrimination and use of pseudonyms
- Revolut's suspension of Ms P's account

I am aware that Ms P has another case with our service but that relates to other matters which have not formed part of my consideration.

### *The chargeback*

I think the first thing for me to say here is that chargebacks are not a customer right, as Ms P has stated. And while we might sometimes think it's good practice for a chargeback to be done when requested by a customer, that won't always be the case.

In this instance, Ms P paid for an apartment. And while she says it didn't perfectly match the one advertised (a missing table has been noted), Ms P was still provided with an apartment in the city she'd booked one for. And from what has been said it doesn't sound to me that the apartment was particularly unsuitable.

I do appreciate what Ms P said about it being an illegal letting, but that doesn't mean Revolut are responsible for doing any more for her. That would be an issue between her and the company she arranged it through. It was of course up to Ms P as to whether she wanted to raise an issue with that company.

I've also considered what Ms P said about making successful chargeback requests in other countries. But that doesn't mean Revolut was wrong, it just means that different banks will have different procedures. And that alone is not unfair.

Overall, I think Revolut was entitled to decide whether to raise the chargeback request with the card scheme. And I think the reasons they chose not to were fair.

I would add though, I appreciate Revolut has said Ms P might have had more success with the chargeback if she'd refused the apartment. But I think it might have been difficult for her to find replacement accommodation at short notice, so I can understand why she still stayed there. Nevertheless, the fact she did that is relevant in the circumstances and so it wasn't unfair for Revolut to take it into account in their decision making.

### *Discrimination and use of pseudonyms*

I can understand Ms P's concerns with Revolut employees using pseudonyms, and I agree it seems an unusual thing to do – especially if they're using names of characters in films. But that doesn't mean it isn't fair or is discriminatory. Revolut explained to Ms P that it is done for the protection of their staff, and that there had been incidents in the past.

I appreciate Ms P's view that this creates an imbalance between her and Revolut. Because their staff have her name, address, date of birth and her financial information – while she doesn't even have a real name for the person she's dealing with. I think most of that's an inevitability when dealing with finances. Financial businesses require such information for regulatory and data protection reasons, so it's only right that they have it.

And I note Revolut reassured Ms P that her details are held securely and that they keep records of which staff members have helped which customers, should this be required at a later date.

Overall, I don't think it's unfair for Revolut to allow the use of pseudonyms and I haven't seen anything to make me think they treated Ms P differently on account of her nationality or gender. I think her chargeback request would have been declined regardless of those characteristics.

### *Account suspension*

Ms P says Revolut suspended her account prematurely, and that this meant she didn't have as long as she expected to be able to make withdrawals and currency transfers. Ms P said this was of particular concern at the time, because the coronavirus had made currencies fluctuate more than usual. Ms P said she used to transfer between currencies and sometimes made a small profit.

I can see from their records that Revolut found Ms P to be rude and offensive to their staff. Revolut has provided evidence of Ms P saying Revolut staff members are corrupt, they're liars and she also says they're ignorant. In view of this I don't consider Revolut's actions in suspending the account to be unreasonable. I can see that on 4 September 2020, Revolut informed Ms P they'd be suspending her account and asked that she withdraw her funds in 1-2 weeks.

I appreciate this isn't as long as they say they'll allow on their website (which is two months), but they have apologised for that and have offered Ms P £200 compensation. I think £200 is reasonable in the circumstances. I understand Ms P withdrew her money within a few days of being informed of the suspension. I don't know what the rates were at that time or how they fluctuated in the period that followed. But I've not seen anything to make me think a) that Ms P would have waited or b) that she'd have been able to benefit from further currency exchanges. After all, Ms P could have found herself in a worse position if the markets didn't change in the way she hoped.

Furthermore, I think Ms P could have avoided having her account suspended by modifying her behaviour. And therefore, I think £200 fairly compensates Ms P for the worry she was caused in relation to not having as long as she should have been given.

Overall, while something went wrong with the account suspension, I think Revolut otherwise treated Ms P fairly. And their offer of compensation is fair for the reasons explained."

Revolut didn't disagree with my provisional decision, although they did ask for conditions to be attached to the offer of £200. They wanted it to be conditional on Ms P withdrawing another complaint she had with our service. I explained that they couldn't attach such a condition to the offer and that I would proceed to make a final decision on the matter.

Ms P disagreed with my provisional decision. She reiterated that the apartment was illegally let and that meant it was unsuitable. Ms P also said it was ok to call Revolut staff corrupt and liars because she felt that was the truth. And that advisers left the online chat open for days

to prevent her from connecting to anyone else.

Regarding the suspension of the account, Ms P said this generated losses of thousands of euros – explaining that she did trading using the account, not transfers. But that she had stopped doing this when the currency fell during the coronavirus that year, and was waiting for the value of the pound sterling to recover, which it now has. Ms P also said she shouldn't have to change her behaviour just to keep the account open.

### **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.

My final decision is along the same lines as my provisional decision, because I have seen nothing to persuade me to depart from what I previously said. I will, however, address some of the points raised by Ms P.

I accept that the apartment may not have been exactly the same as the one advertised, and it may have been illegally let. But Ms P was able to stay there and has not explained how any harm came to her. I note the reference to a missing table (there just being one instead of two), but I do not agree that made the apartment particularly unsuitable.

If Ms P considers any illegality to mean she deserves a refund, then she can take that up with the vendor. For the reasons explained, I don't consider this to be the responsibility of Revolut.

I don't agree with Ms P saying that it's ok to call someone corrupt or a liar if she considers it to be the truth. Firstly, Ms P's belief does not make it fact. Secondly, Ms P could still remain polite and professional without using such emotive words. And I don't think it's unreasonable for Revolut or their employees to find such accusations offensive.

I've reviewed the online chat for the period relating to the chargeback and I don't have any major concerns. On 6 April 2020, an adviser left the chat open for a while after asking Ms P a question, but when Ms P asked for it to be closed this was done within one minute.

Then, during a chat on 17 April 2020, an adviser asked how they could help Ms P. She said she requested a chargeback, but within just two minutes, Ms P then asked for the chat to be closed. I don't consider the lack of an immediate response to be unreasonable on Revolut's part and the chat was closed promptly on request.

Later that day, an adviser said they would put Ms P through to the relevant team, to advise her on the chargeback. There was a delay here of around 20 minutes, which Revolut acknowledged. Ms P then sent six statements and a question over the course of six minutes, and received a response within a minute of her last message. Ms P then asked to be put through to a supervisor. I note that took about half an hour, which is longer than perhaps it could've been, but I don't find it to be excessive as there will no doubt be fewer supervisors than advisers, and so their availability is unlikely to be immediate.

The supervisor provided Ms P with an answer regarding her chargeback request. Ms P then sent five messages over the course of around 12 minutes, before asking for the chat to be closed. This was done within around one minute of her request.

Ms P then opened another chat that day. In this Ms P asked to be given the complaint, a request she repeated within two minutes. Four seconds after that, and clearly frustrated, Ms P said "Now???". A minute later the adviser explains Ms P can raise a complaint with him. But

shortly after that Ms P twice asked for the chat to be closed.

And after asking the adviser *“What part of “close it now please” do you not understand??”* the chat was closed within around three minutes of the first request on that exchange.

After starting a fourth chat that day Ms P explains further why she has been unhappy with her recent interactions and a link to a complaint form was provided to her.

I do appreciate the total time spent on these chats was over two hours, but I think a fair amount of that was because Ms P kept requesting their closure and having to explain her concerns to a new person each time. Overall, and while it could've been better, I don't think the service provided by Revolut in this respect to have been so bad as to warrant compensation.

Ms P hasn't provided any evidence to demonstrate she lost thousands of euros as a result of the premature account suspension. I appreciate she wasn't given as long as she should've been, and that given more time she may have traded currencies on the account. But I maintain that there's no way of knowing what trading Ms P would have done, nor whether it would've been profitable. So, I'm not going to make an award in that respect, and I still believe Revolut's offer of £200 compensation for trouble and upset caused is reasonable.

### **My final decision**

It is my final decision that I uphold this complaint. I require Revolut Ltd to pay Ms P £200 compensation.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Ms P to accept or reject my decision before 2 March 2022.

Will Weston  
**Ombudsman**