

## **The complaint**

Mrs B complains that Wise Payments Limited (“Wise”) won’t refund £8,507.50 she lost to an investment scam in June 2022.

The details of this complaint are well known to both parties, so I won’t repeat everything again here. Instead, I will focus on giving the reasons for my 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 agree with the conclusions reached by the investigator and have decided not to uphold it for the following reasons:

- It isn’t in dispute that Mrs B has fallen victim to a scam here, nor that she authorised the three disputed payments totaling £8,507.50 made from her Wise account between 22 June 2022 and 19 July 2022. The payments were requested using her legitimate security credentials provided by Wise, and the starting position is that firms ought to follow the instructions given by their customers in order for legitimate payments to be made as instructed.
- However, I’ve considered whether Wise should have done more to prevent Mrs B from falling victim to the scam, as there are some situations in which a firm should reasonably have had a closer look at the circumstances surrounding a particular transfer. For example, if it was particularly out of character.
- I appreciate that overall, Mrs B has lost over £8,000 which is a significant amount of money. And I don’t doubt the impact this has had on her both emotionally and financially. But I have to take into account that this amount wasn’t paid in one large or ‘out of character’ transaction. It was spread over three separate smaller increments to three different payees which, in my judgment, would not have appeared particularly unusual or out of character when compared with Mrs B’s previous spending history. The highest payment she made as part of the scam was for £4,000, for example, which I don’t think ought reasonably to have been regarded as suspicious or indicating that she might have been at risk of financial harm.
- I appreciate that two payments were made to different payees on 19 July 2022. But cumulatively, this still only totalled £6,000 which I don’t think would have appeared overly unusual. And I don’t consider these two payments alone are enough to amount to a ‘suspicious sequence’ of payments either, for example, so I don’t consider there to have been any other indicators of fraud that ought to have been spotted by Wise.
- So, having considered the payments Mrs B made, I’m not persuaded there was anything that ought reasonably to have triggered Wise’ fraud monitoring systems, or that would have indicated she was in the process of being scammed.

- I've also considered whether Wise did enough to try and recover the money after Mrs B reported the fraud. The scam payments were sent to other Wise account holders, but unfortunately, by the time the fraud was reported on 4 August 2022, no funds remained in the beneficiary accounts.

I appreciate this will likely come as a disappointment to Mrs B, and I'm sorry to hear she has been the victim of a cruel scam. However, in the circumstances, I do not consider it would be fair and reasonable to hold Wise liable for her loss.

### **My final decision**

For the reasons given above, I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs B to accept or reject my decision before 8 January 2024.

Jack Ferris  
**Ombudsman**