

The complaint

Miss S is unhappy that Revolut Ltd won't refund money she lost as a result of a scam.

What happened

Miss S was the victim of a job scam, where she sent the following payments to fraudsters from her Revolut account:

Payment number	Date	Description	Amount
1	29 April 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£50.00
2	29 April 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£50.00
3	29 April 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£40.00
-	29 April 2023	Credit from Binance	+£150.99
4	30 April 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£76.00
5	30 April 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£47.00
6	30 April 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£125.00
7	30 April 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£73.43
-	30 April 2023	Credit from Binance	+£434.70
8	1 May 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£50
9	1 May 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£150
10	1 May 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£209.58
11	1 May 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£328.25
12	2 May 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£700.00
13	2 May 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£2,065.00
14	4 May 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£3,000.00
15	4 May 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£2,884.40
16	5 May 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£3,000.00
17	5 May 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£2,000.00
18	9 May 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£3,000.00
19	9 May 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£2,357.00
20	11 May 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£3,000.00
21	11 May 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£3,000.00
22	11 May 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£2,000.00
23	2 June 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£3,000.00

24	8 June 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£2,000.00
25	13 June 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£1,500.00
26	13 June 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£1,500.00
27	19 June 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£1,726.00
28	21 June 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£2,000.00
29	10 July 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£15.00
30	10 July 2023	Card Payment to Binance	£1,185.00

In summary, she was contacted via WhatsApp by someone purporting to be an agent for a genuine travel company, that I'll refer to as D. They explained she'd earn commission for positively reviewing hotels and guided her through doing this and withdrawing her commission to a newly opened Binance account. They explained to earn more, she'd need to deposit some of her own money, and that she'd be able to withdraw this along with her commission when she'd completed a certain number of tasks.

To credit her account with D, she was told to open a Revolut account. She transferred money from her Barclays' account to Revolut, before her money was sent to her wallet with Binance, a cryptocurrency exchange. From there, the money was exchanged and sent to a wallet address that 'customer service' gave her.

Miss S was later assigned a number of 'premium' tasks that required her to deposit more and more of her money to complete them. Having completed these, D asked her to pay a number of 'fees' to withdraw what she earned.

Barclays and Revolut intervened with these payments at various points:

- On 2 May 2023, Barclays intervened with a payment she was making to her Revolut account. Miss S was told not to reveal she was buying cryptocurrency – and after a conversation with Barclays, where she said she was transferring money to another one her accounts, the payment was released.
- Revolut declined a number of Miss S's card payments on 3 May 2023, and it asked her about the circumstances via its in-app chat facility. The fraudster told her how to respond – she told Revolut it's to transfer money, as her bank doesn't allow her to make large payments and after further questions, she said she's transferring money to a friend. When she was asked about investing, she replied that she was buying cryptocurrency but not as an investment. After reviewing the matter, Revolut unblocked her account the following day.
- Barclays held another payment on 6 May 2023 and directed her to branch. The notes state she told them it's connected to cryptocurrency, but she wasn't investing it. She went on to say she was buying plane tickets for her mum. Barclays ultimately refused to make the payment and her account was placed under review.

On 12 May 2023, having not received her commission, Miss S contacted Barclays to report the scam. Toward the end of May 2023, she also reported the scam to Revolut, and provided them with her crime reference number and her reference for her professional representative for this complaint.

In the meantime, Miss S continued to talk with D's agent about the issues she's having with withdrawing her money. As she couldn't use Barclays, she used another account to top-up

her account with Revolut. However, Miss S then faced further issues with Revolut, as it froze her account pending its investigation into the source of her funds. This was resolved and she resumed making payments to Binance on 2 June 2023.

On 21 June 2023, Miss S told Revolut again about payments she made as part of the scam and asked it to stop the recent card payment she made. It explained it couldn't and guided her through making chargeback claims for the payments.

Around a week later, Miss S's representatives submitted a formal complaint, stating that it failed to protect her from financial harm. Revolut didn't uphold her complaint – it explained why the chargeback claims weren't successful and how its terms and conditions mean its not obliged to refund her. Unhappy, Miss S brought her complaint to us to investigate.

In July 2023, Miss S made two further payments – she's explained that D contacted her again and she sent them as she was desperate to get her money back. Revolut has agreed we can consider these as part of the same complaint.

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.

The starting position in law is that Miss S is responsible for payments she made. And Revolut has a duty to make the payments she tells it to.

But, as supported by the terms of the account, that doesn't preclude Revolut from making fraud checks before making a payment. And, taking into account regulatory expectations and good industry practice, I'm satisfied that it should fairly and reasonably have done this in some circumstances.

Here, Revolut carried out fraud checks on 3 May 2023 which, given the increase in spending towards cryptocurrency, is in line with what I'd expect. Accordingly, it's a question of whether Revolut's intervention was proportionate and appropriate to the risk of financial harm it had identified.

Having reviewed the conversation she had with Revolut's agent via its in-app chat facility, I don't think it was. I've seen how Miss S's answers didn't always make sense, and yet Revolut didn't probe her. For example, she firstly said she was transferring money to a friend and she used Revolut as her bank won't allow her to transfer large amounts. But that didn't add up with the multiple attempted payments to cryptocurrency exchanges. When she was later asked if she was investing, she said she just buying cryptocurrency but not as an investment. But Revolut didn't ask any further questions on why she was so desperate for the transactions to go through and why she was making so many transactions to this friend via cryptocurrency.

Had Revolut probed Miss S further on her responses, I find it likely that her story would've remained suspicious, in that same way that her story didn't make sense to Barclays when they asked her to elaborate. It follows that, as Barclays did, I think it's likely Revolut would've declined to make the transaction. Given how the payments looked, I'd have also expected it to warn her about investment scams. However, given that job scams weren't as commonplace at the time, I don't think it would be fair to have expected it to cover the features of these too.

I've thought carefully about whether this would've stopped Miss S losing money to the scam. I can't say for certain what would've happened. But civil disputes like these are only ever decided on the balance of probabilities. In other words, what is more likely than not to have happened. And here, I find it more likely than not that if Revolut declined to make the payments going forward, Miss S would have found another way to make them – and ultimately would've still lost this money. In saying that, I've considered the following.

When Barclays intervened and refused to make the payment she wanted to her Revolut account, she ultimately found a way around this – seemingly withdrawing cash from her Barclays' account and using another account to top up her Revolut account.

I've noted that when Revolut froze her account, Miss S suggested to D of her own accord other ways she could make the payment happen – for example, using Western Union or she could pay D's account directly.

I've also seen how, even after Miss S reported the scam to various agencies, she carried on dealing with and making payments towards D. And while she was clearly frustrated at having to send more money, I don't find she showed much resistance to making the payments she was told to, despite D's reasoning for them becoming increasingly far-fetched and her own acknowledgement it was a scam.

In considering this, I have reflected on whether Miss S would've acted differently to an earlier, better intervention, given that she wouldn't have sent so much money at this stage and wasn't, therefore, 'chasing her losses'.

But the communication I've read between Miss S and D shows a lot of enthusiasm for making money with D from the outset – with her asking how to become an agent and recruit others, as well as volunteering to put more money in to earn a higher commission.

The conversations also show a lot of trust and reliance on D from the outset. D guided her through everything step-by-step, and Miss S didn't raise concerns when she was told to mislead firms – indeed, she copied verbatim to Revolut what D told her to say.

I've finally considered how, even when Revolut intervened relatively early in her losses towards the scam, she already seemed desperate to make the payment – she messaged it repeatedly to resolve the matter and to tell it that all was well.

All of this suggests to me that Miss S was strongly taken in by the scam and the prospect of earning money from the outset – and it's likely she would've been insistent on making the payments through other means, even if Revolut declined to make them. It follows that I don't think I can fairly say what Revolut did wrong here caused her losses. So I can't reasonably ask it to refund them.

I know how disappointing my answer will be for Miss S, who's clearly fallen victim to a horrible scam. But for the reasons I've explained, I don't uphold her complaint.

My final decision

For the reasons I've explained, I don't uphold the complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss S to accept or reject my decision before 17 April 2025.

Emma Szkolar

Ombudsman