

## The complaint

Mr R complains that Wise Payments Limited ('Wise') won't refund the payments he made as the result of a scam.

## What happened

In October 2023, Mr R was contacted via a messaging app about a job opportunity. The job involved Mr R completing tasks which reviewed apps, in order to increase their rankings in app stores. Mr R was told he would be paid commission on completing each set of 40 tasks. Mr R opened an account with a company I'll refer to as N, through which he would complete the tasks.

Mr R was told that combination tasks would earn him a higher commission but placed his account with N into a negative balance, which he had to clear by purchasing and transferring cryptocurrency into his account with N.

These are the payments Mr R made from his Wise account. These payments were peer-to-peer cryptocurrency purchases.

Date	Details of transaction	Amount
21.10.2023	Payment to A1 – an individual	£4,900
22.10.2023	Payment to A2 – an individual	£3,000
22.10.2023	Payment to W – an individual	£3,000
22.10.2023	Payment to A2 – an individual	£7,000
22.10.2023	Payment to A2 – an individual	£1,100

Mr R realised it was a scam when he couldn't clear his negative balance with N and he was unable to withdraw his commission. Mr R raised a fraud claim with Wise, who declined to refund him. Wise said they'd completed Mr R's transfer orders as they're obligated to do and weren't liable for his loss.

Mr R wasn't happy with Wise's response, so he brought a complaint to our service.

An investigator looked into Mr R's complaint but didn't uphold it. The investigator felt Wise had intervened appropriately on 22 October, when it had shown Mr R a tailored warning based on selecting the payment purpose of "paying friends and family". As Mr R hadn't chosen the payment purpose of "paying to earn money online", Wise had been prevented from providing a more relevant warning. The investigator also highlighted that as the payments were made to individual payees, the payments weren't identifiably going to cryptocurrency.

Mr R disagreed with the investigator's opinion, saying Wise shouldn't have taken the answers he gave at face value and should've asked probing questions. Especially as he had made multiple payments to new payees on one day, which is a known scam pattern.

Mr R asked for an ombudsman to review his case.

## **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 investigator's conclusions for the following reasons:

- It isn't in dispute that Mr R authorised the transactions in question. He is therefore presumed liable for the loss in the first instance under the PSR's and terms conditions of his account. However, Wise are aware, taking longstanding regulatory expectations and requirements into account, and what I consider to be good industry practice at the time, that it should have been on the look-out for the possibility of fraud and made additional checks before processing payments in some circumstances.
- I would've expected Wise to intervene on 22 October 2023 based on the total value of the payments Mr R had made – which Wise did do. Based on the size of the payments, the fact they weren't identifiably related to cryptocurrency and only two payees were involved, I would've expected Wise to ask Mr R questions on-screen to identify the type of scam risk associated with the payments and provide a tailored written warning in response.
- I do think Wise could've asked more and better probing questions of Mr R onscreen about the payment he was making, but I'm not persuaded that would have prevented his loss.
- Mr R chose "paying friends and family", not "paying to earn money online". This prevented Wise from correctly identifying the scam he was at risk of and providing a relevant warning that would've resonated with Mr R. Even if Mr R had been asked more questions based on the payment purpose he selected (paying friends and family) I think it's unlikely Wise could've provided a warning that would've prevented Mr R from making the payments. And I'm not satisfied, based on the specifics of the payments, that I would've expected Wise to have provided human intervention.
- I can only ask Wise to reimburse Mr R if I find that any wrongdoing on its part caused his loss. Mr R's professional representative has said Wise should've asked more probing questions, but I'm not satisfied that it has explained how this would've uncovered the scam or prevented Mr R's loss based on the information Wise was given by Mr R in relation to the payment purpose he chose.
- I'm not persuaded there were any prospects of Wise successfully recovering the funds, given the money was used to purchase crypto-currency from legitimate providers.

I'm really sorry that Mr R has lost a significant amount of money as the result of this scam, and to hear of the impact this has had on his well-being. But I'm not satisfied that I can fairly hold Wise liable for his loss or ask them to refund him.

## **My final decision**

My final decision is that I don't uphold this complaint against Wise Payments Limited.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr R to accept or reject my decision before 11 March 2025.

Lisa Lowe  
**Ombudsman**