

## **The complaint**

Mr B has complained that Wise Payments Limited won't refund the money he lost after falling victim to a scam.

## **What happened**

In 2023, Mr B was contacted by a scammer posing as a romantic interest. After some messaging, they persuaded Mr B to invest in a cryptocurrency investment scheme.

Mr B used his Wise account to pay third party individuals who were selling crypto. The sellers provided the crypto he bought, and he had it sent on to the scammer's platform. Mr B paid the scammer around £9,000 this way over the course of about a month.

In the end, Mr B was unable to withdraw his investment and the scammer demanded tax payments. He realised he'd been scammed.

In 2024, Mr B complained to Wise via representatives. Wise didn't think they were liable for Mr B's loss.

Our Investigator looked into things independently and didn't uphold the complaint. Mr B's representatives asked for an ombudsman's final decision, so the complaint's been passed to me to decide.

## **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 understand that Mr B fell victim to a scam, and so he has my sympathy. I appreciate this cannot have been an easy matter for him to face, and I appreciate why he would like his money back. It's worth keeping in mind that it's the scammer who's primarily responsible for what happened, and who really owes Mr B his money back. But I can only look at what Wise are responsible for. Having carefully considered everything that both sides have said and provided, I can't fairly hold Wise liable for Mr B's loss. I'll explain why.

It's not in dispute that Mr B authorised the payments involved. So although he didn't intend for the money to end up with a scammer, under the Payment Services Regulations he is liable for the loss in the first instance. And broadly speaking, Wise had an obligation to follow his instructions – the starting position in law is that payment service providers are expected to process payments which a customer authorises them to make.

Wise should have been on the lookout for payments which could be the result of fraud or scams, to help prevent them. But a balance must be struck between identifying and responding to potentially fraudulent payments, and ensuring there's minimal disruption to legitimate payments. I've thought carefully about whether Wise should have done more in Mr B's case.

However, while I appreciate that this was a significant amount to lose in total, the individual payments were not notably large, and were spread out over the course of about a month. So the spending was never quite large or rapid enough to have been of particular concern. There was no recent transaction history to compare this to, so it wasn't possible to see whether it was out of character for Mr B in particular. And this type of account was intended for remitting money in the way that Mr B was doing, so it was in line with the account's nature. All Wise could see was that Mr B was paying individuals – they couldn't see the payments were to buy crypto. Overall, I don't think that Wise had sufficient reason to be particularly concerned, and I don't find that they needed to intervene here.

Wise did give Mr B automated warnings tailored to his answers about what the payments were for. Unfortunately, Mr B gave Wise false answers on the scammer's instructions, which was the primary reason why Wise were unable to give him relevant warnings. I don't find that to be Wise's fault.

Finally, I've considered what Wise did to try to recover Mr B's money after he told them about the scam. But as his payments from Wise were to the cryptocurrency sellers, and the sellers provided the crypto they were supposed to, Wise didn't have any basis to be able to recall those funds from the sellers. And the crypto itself had already been moved to the scammer. There was nothing more that Wise could've reasonably done there. And they weren't signed up to the CRM Code for scams.

So while I'm very sorry to hear about what the scammer did to Mr B, I don't think Wise can fairly be held responsible for his loss. And so I can't fairly tell Wise to reimburse Mr B in this case.

### **My final decision**

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

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr B to accept or reject my decision before 26 August 2025.

Adam Charles  
**Ombudsman**