

The complaint

Mr B is complaining that Revolut Ltd didn't do enough to prevent him from making payments to a cryptocurrency investment scam.

What happened

Both parties are familiar with the background to this complaint so I won't go into detail here.

In short, Mr B says that in late 2023 he fell victim to a cryptocurrency investment scam.

Mr B reported that he made ten payments to the scam from his account with Revolut over the course of around two months, between September 2023 and November 2023. The payments were made to his account with a cryptocurrency exchange, by debit card, before being sent on to the scam.

When he realised he'd been the victim of a scam, Mr B complained to Revolut. But it didn't uphold his complaint. Unhappy with its response, Mr B referred his complaint to the Financial Ombudsman.

Our Investigator looked into Mr B's complaint, but he didn't think Revolut ought to have done anything to intervene to prevent Mr B from making the payments. Mr B didn't agree, so his complaint has been passed to me for review and a 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.

I'm sorry to disappoint Mr B, but I'm not upholding his complaint - for much the same reasons as the Investigator.

It's not in dispute that Mr B authorised the payments. And Revolut had a duty to act on his instructions. But in some circumstances an Electronic Money Institution (EMI) such as Revolut should take a closer look at the circumstances of the payments – for example, if it ought to be alert to a fraud risk, because the transaction is unusual for the customer, or otherwise looks characteristic of fraud. And if so, it should intervene, for example, by contacting the customer directly, before releasing the payments. But I'd expect any intervention to be proportionate to the circumstances of the payment.

But I've also kept in mind that EMI's such as Revolut process high volumes of transactions each day. There is a balance for it to find between allowing customers to be able to use their account and questioning transactions to confirm they're legitimate.

I have reviewed the available statements which show Mr B's general account activity, along with the disputed payments. And having considered when these payments were made, their value and who they were made to, I'm not persuaded Revolut ought to have found any of the payments suspicious, such that it ought to have made enquires of Mr B before processing them.

At the time the payments were made I'd expect Revolut to have been aware of the increased risk to its customers of multistage fraud, often including payments to cryptocurrency. But that doesn't mean payments to cryptocurrency should automatically be treated as suspicious – people can and do make legitimate payments to cryptocurrency.

The disputed payments here were made over, broadly, a two-month period, and didn't escalate rapidly in frequency or value, in the way that can sometimes indicate a scam. From the information I have about his previous account activity, I can see that some of the disputed payments were higher than payments Mr B had previously made from the account - but it's not unusual for customers to occasionally carry out transactions of a higher value than they usually do. And while I appreciate the loss represents a lot of money to Mr B, in the scheme of the value of the payments Revolut processes daily, none of the individual payments were of a value where I'd necessarily have expected it to be concerned that they presented a significant risk of financial harm to Mr B.

Taking all the circumstances of the payments into account, I don't think it was unreasonable for Revolut not to have viewed them as suspicious, such that it should have given a warning or otherwise intervened before processing the payments. So, I don't think Revolut ought reasonably to have done any more to prevent the payments Mr B made.

I've thought about whether Revolut could reasonably have done anything else to recover Mr B's payments after he reported the scam. It's possible to dispute a debit card payment through a process called chargeback, which can sometimes be attempted if something has gone wrong with a debit card purchase, subject to the relevant card scheme's rules. But there were no grounds for a chargeback to be raised against the merchant here under any of the chargeback reasons provided for in the card scheme's rules – because there doesn't appear to be any dispute that the merchant provided the cryptocurrency Mr B had paid for.

I know this outcome will be disappointing for Mr B and I'm sorry for that. But for the reasons I've explained, I don't think Revolut should have done more to prevent his loss. So, it wouldn't be reasonable for me to ask it to refund the payments he made.

My final decision

My final decision is that I'm not upholding Mr B's complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr B to accept or reject my decision before 4 June 2025.

Helen Sutcliffe
Ombudsman