

The complaint and background

Mr M complains Wise Payments Limited ('Wise') won't reimburse over £16,000 that he lost when he fell victim to a cryptocurrency investment scam.

Our investigator didn't uphold the complaint. He didn't think Mr M's account activity ought to have caused Wise any concerns. However, he did identify that Mr M was asked to provide the purpose of a payment where he wasn't honest and this prevented Wise from showing him an appropriate warning. He also found that Mr M was being guided by the scammer throughout and wasn't persuaded he'd have been honest with Wise even if it had questioned him further.

Mr M's representative disagreed and asked for the matter to be referred to 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.

Having taken into account longstanding regulatory expectations and requirements, and what I consider to be good industry practice, Wise ought to have been on the look-out for the possibility of fraud and made additional checks before processing payments in some circumstances.

I have reviewed Mr M's account and the payments he made to the scam. Having considered when they were made, their values and who they were made to, I'm in agreement with our investigator. I'm not persuaded Wise ought to have found any of the payments suspicious, such that it ought to have made enquiries of Mr M before processing them. The payments were spread out over seven individual payments over an eight-week period and to six individually named payees. I'm not satisfied there were any other concerning factors about the payments either.

That said, Mr M was asked to confirm the purpose of a £2,600 payment he was making on 14 December 2023 – the fifth disputed transaction. Wise has provided evidence Mr M responded with '*friends or family*' and a warning was presented to him. I haven't seen sight of the content of that warning itself, but I'm not satisfied I need to see it in deciding this case as the warning would not have been relevant to the cryptocurrency investment scam Mr M was falling victim to. And in responding the way he did, this would have only reassured Wise the payment and his activity was in keeping with the information he first provided to them when the account was first opened.

Even if I was satisfied Wise ought to have questioned Mr M further (which I'm not), like the investigator I'm not persuaded he'd have been honest with them in light of the coaching that was evidently taking place.

Whilst Mr M has undoubtedly been the victim of a cruel scam, I don't find there were any failings on Wise's part that would lead me to uphold this complaint.

Lastly, I'm not persuaded there were any prospects of Wise successfully recovering the funds, given the money was paid to individuals for the purchase of cryptocurrency which Mr M received. The loss occurred only when Mr M transferred that cryptocurrency to another wallet address of his choosing (albeit upon the scammers instructions).

My final decision

For the reasons given above, my final decision is that I don't uphold this complaint.

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

Mark O'Connor
Ombudsman