

The complaint

Miss K complains Revolut Ltd didn't do enough to protect her when she fell victim to a safe account scam.

What happened

Miss K has an account with Revolut that she opened on 30 June 2023. She also has an account with a business who I'll refer to as "S" throughout the rest of this decision.

Miss K says someone called her on 24 August 2023 saying that her account had been compromised and she needed to move her money. Miss K says that she spoke to both of her banks and was persuaded to transfer £2,300 from her account with S into her Revolut account and then persuaded to transfer £2,000 out her Revolut account having been told this would "wire" that money back to her account with S. Miss K says she got suspicious when the money didn't re-appear in her account with S. She says she subsequently realised she'd been scammed.

Miss K says she told S what had happened and they said that as she'd sent money to her own genuine account there was nothing it could do. They said she needed to contact Revolut. Miss K did so and complained to us saying no-one was getting back to her.

Revolut says Miss K contacted them via its in-app chat on 24 August 2023 to report that they suspected they'd been the victim of an impersonated scam and had made a £2,000 payment that she wanted recovering. Revolut says it looked into Miss K's claim and concluded that it wouldn't be able to raise a chargeback as she'd authorised the payment. Revolut says it emailed Miss K back on 25 August 2023 to say that it couldn't refund her money.

Miss K complained to us on 30 August 2023. We said she'd need to complain to her bank first about the way they'd handled her claim before coming to us.

Revolut looked into Miss K's complaint and said that it wouldn't have been able to raise a chargeback in her case as she'd authorised the transaction. It didn't, therefore, agree that it had done anything wrong. Revolut issued a final response on 27 September 2023. Miss K was unhappy with Revolut's response and contacted us again.

One of our investigators looked into Miss K's complaint and said that Revolut could and should have done more. Revolut didn't agree and asked for Miss K's complaint to be referred to an ombudsman.

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.

Last month I issued a detailed provisional decision. In that decision I said:

"I've spoken to Miss K about her complaint, and I've listened to what she said when she originally contacted us and seen what she said when she originally contacted

Revolut. I can see at times that she's said she the first call came from S, and at other times that the first call came from Revolut. And she's said, for example, at times that the first call was from a withheld number. So, I asked Miss K to check the times at which she received calls that day – she's consistently spoken about the fact that she talked to both Revolut and S. Having done so, I'm satisfied that she received:

- a call from 0345 8500633 at 16:15 and that this call lasted 31 minutes;
- a call from 0203 33228352 at 16:47 and that this call lasted 22 minutes; and
- a call from a withheld number at 21:10 and that this call lasted three minutes.

Miss K has said that she believed it was her banks speaking to her because she Google'd the numbers calling her. Fraudsters can, of course, spoof numbers so that it appears they're calling from any number they want. That would explain why the second call appeared to come from a genuine Revolut number. As far as I can see, however, the first number is an HSBC number who Miss K doesn't bank with at all. So, that doesn't quite make sense.

The first call that I've mentioned started at 16:15 and ended at 16:46. I can see that Miss K converted the money in her Revolut account into cryptocurrency at 16:53 and then attempted to make a cryptocurrency withdrawal at 16:59 which failed. That's not something Miss K had mentioned before as far as I can see. But when I spoke to her she told me that the fraudsters had tried to get her to send money as cryptocurrency first. It's unclear why this withdrawal failed. It is, however, clear from the evidence that I've seen that Miss K didn't convert the money in her Revolut account into cryptocurrency until she'd received the second call. I can, however, see that she did made two transfers from her account with S into her account with Revolut during that first call. Those transfers took place at 16:32 and 16:34.

I'm satisfied that the first transfer was for £2,000 and the second was for £300. More importantly, I'm satisfied that S asked Miss K what the purpose of the first transfer was and she answered "paying a friend". I'm also satisfied that S warned Miss K:

"Before sending your money, make sure

This is not an unexpected request to move your money by the Police, Santander or any government department

You've considered using a future payment date to give you time to change your mind

Please don't ignore this as we're unlikely to be able to recover your money if this is a scam.

If you're at all nervous, stop this payment and contact us immediately."

Miss K has sent us an email with a "link" in it that was sent to her at 16:39. In other words, an email that was sent to her during the second call and before she'd converted the money in her Revolut account into cryptocurrency. The format of the "link" suggests that Miss K was sent a cryptocurrency wallet address which would be consistent with the timing. The email that sent the link came from [details redacted]. [details redacted] provides anonymous, disposable email addresses, so this was a potentially obvious red flag.

Having converted the money in her Revolut account into cryptocurrency and tried and failed to withdraw this cryptocurrency – potentially attempting to send it to a cryptocurrency wallet controlled by a scammer – I can see that Miss K attempted to send £2,000 via a card payment to a merchant named [details redacted]. That merchant appears to be genuine. She attempted this payment six times – namely at 17:10, 17:10, 17:15, 17:19, 18:36 and 18:38 – and each time the payment was declined. At this stage she wasn't on the phone to the scammer as the second call ended at 17:09. I can see that she received the third call at 21:10 and during this call – at 21:12 – she finally managed to make the £2,000 payment. I asked Miss K when I spoke to her why she'd carried on trying to make the payment for several hours after she'd come off the phone and why there was an almost four-hour delay. She explained that she was looking after children at the time, and she was getting them their dinner etc.

In cases involving safe account scams, the scammers typically put the victims under intense pressure meaning that they often miss what would otherwise be obvious red flags. In this case there are a number of obvious red flags – including the failed attempt to transfer the money to a cryptocurrency wallet, the unusual email address containing the link and the fact that the merchant's name would have been visible when the payment was attempted. In this case, there was also a long gap between the scammer calling Miss K and the initial calls coming to an end and the payment that moved the money out of Miss K's account with Revolut. These factors, along with the fact that Santander gave Miss K the type of warning that I would have expected Revolut to give which Miss K ignored as well as giving Santander a payment purpose that wasn't correct, collectively mean that I don't think it would have made a difference had Revolut given Miss K the type of warning I would have expected. For those reasons, I don't agree that it's fair to hold Revolut liable in this case."

Both parties were invited to respond to my provisional decision. Neither did.

Having reconsidered everything again, I remain of the view that this complaint isn't one I should uphold for the reasons given above.

My final decision

My final decision is that I'm not upholding this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss K to accept or reject my decision before 9 November 2024.

Nicolas Atkinson
Ombudsman