

The complaint

Miss C complains Wise Payments Limited won't refund the full amount of money she lost to a scam.

What happened

The background to this complaint is well-known to both parties, so I won't repeat it in detail here. But in summary and based on the submissions of both parties, I understand it to be as follows.

Miss C complains that she sent several payments to what she thought was a task-based job. Shortly after making the payments, Miss C realised she had been scammed. So, she logged a complaint with Wise.

Wise investigated the complaint but didn't uphold it. So, Miss C brought her complaint to our service.

Our investigator looked into the complaint but didn't uphold it. Our investigator didn't find any of the successful payments were of a value that ought to have concerned Wise. He went on to say that Wise stopped the payments it should have done and recovered all the funds that it could.

Miss C didn't agree with the investigator's view. As no formal resolution could be reached, the complaint has been passed to me for a final 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 very aware that I've summarised this complaint briefly, in less detail than has been provided, and in my own words. No discourtesy is intended by this. Instead, I've focussed on what I think is the significant part here. If there's something I've not mentioned, it isn't because I've ignored it. I haven't. I'm satisfied I don't need to comment on every individual point or argument to be able to reach what I think is the right outcome. Our rules allow me to do this. This simply reflects the informal nature of our service as a free alternative to the courts.

Where the evidence is incomplete, inconclusive, or contradictory, I must make my decision on the balance of probabilities – that is, what I consider is more likely than not to have happened in the light of the available evidence and the wider surrounding circumstances.

In line with the Payment Services Regulations (PSR) 2017, consumers are generally liable for payments they authorise. Wise is expected to process authorised payment instructions without undue delay. As a bank, it also has long-standing obligations to help protect customers from financial harm from fraud and scams. However, there are many payments made by customers each day and it's not realistic or reasonable to expect a bank to stop

and check every payment instruction. There's a balance to be struck between identifying payments that could potentially be fraudulent, and minimising disruption to legitimate payments.

Having considered the successful payments Miss C sent, individually I don't think any of them are of a value that I think ought to have triggered Wise's automatic payment checking systems. None of the payments reached a single, combined value or a pattern that I think would have alerted Wise to the fact Miss C could be at risk of financial harm.

It's worth noting that Miss C also chose a payment purpose that didn't match what Miss C thought she was making payments to (a task-based job). So, if Miss C had been given any automated warnings, it's unlikely they would have resonated with her due to the fact they would have been directed to a different type of scam.

When Miss C made a payment of £4,284.25 on 24 January 2024, it was of a value that I think ought to have concerned Wise, and it did intervene. Here Wise blocked the payment and the ones that followed. So Wise functioned as it should have done in the circumstances and prevented further funds being lost to the scam.

Miss C has said that Wise failed to tell her why the payments were blocked, and if it had done, more money could have been recovered.

As our investigator has pointed out, Wise were able to see into the receiving accounts, and the funds were moved before 24 January 2024. So, no further funds could have been recovered, even if they had alerted Miss C on 24 January 2024 when the first block was put in place.

Miss C's representative has said she was vulnerable at the time; due to some personal circumstances she was experiencing. I'm sorry to hear Miss C was experiencing a challenging time. I've thought about this point carefully, but I've not seen any information to show Miss C had made Wise aware of this. So, I wouldn't have expected it to treat the payments any differently because of this point.

Wise have confirmed that although the money was transferred to other accounts held with the bank, most of the funds were moved on before 24 January 2024 when the first payment was blocked. Wise was able to recover £614.31 and this has since been transferred back to Miss C. So, I'm satisfied no further recovery was possible.

Miss C thinks that Wise should refund the full money she lost and pay her compensation. I understand that this will have been frustrating for her. But I've thought carefully about everything that has happened, and with all the circumstances of this complaint in mind I don't think Wise needs to pay Miss C any compensation for the loss due to the scam, or for any customer service failings. I realise this means Miss C is out of pocket and I'm sorry she's lost this money. However, for the reasons I've explained, I don't think I can reasonably uphold this complaint.

My final decision

My final decision is that I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss C to accept or reject my decision before 15 August 2025.

Tom Wagstaff

Ombudsman