

## The complaint

Mrs K complains that Monzo Bank Ltd didn't do more to protect her when she fell victim to a job scam.

## What happened

The facts of this complaint are well known to both parties, so I will not repeat them again here in great detail. The facts are not in dispute so I will focus on giving the reasons for my decision.

Mrs K sent seven payments to a job scam through her Monzo account over a period of three days in November 2023. Mrs K realised she'd been scammed after sending a large sum and still not being able to withdraw her salary from the supposed employer. She reported the scam to Monzo, but initially said all the payments were unrecognised. She then detailed the scam she'd fallen victim to.

Monzo didn't uphold her complaint. It was able to recover a small sum for her, but didn't agree to refund any of the money she sent. Mrs K came to our service via a representative and our investigator partially upheld her complaint. Monzo didn't agree and asked for an ombudsman to review the case.

I issued a provisional decision on this case in early December 2024, my findings were as follows:

*It now isn't in dispute that Mrs K authorised the transactions in question. She is therefore presumed liable for the loss in the first instance. However, as Monzo is aware, taking longstanding regulatory expectations and requirements into account, and what I consider to be good industry practice at the time, it should have been on the look-out for the possibility of fraud and made additional checks before processing payments in some circumstances.*

*In this case, I'm not persuaded Monzo needed to intervene on any of the payments Mrs K sent to this scam. While she did send a large amount in three days, the payments went to different payees – some to individuals, some to an identifiably cryptocurrency merchant, and some to other merchants – although also for cryptocurrency. And the highest individual payment sent was only £2,600. So I'm not persuaded Monzo ought to have treated any of the payments as suspicious.*

*However, on 17 November 2023, Monzo froze Mrs K's account due to financial crime concerns and it asked her a series of questions about her spending. This was a natural opportunity for Monzo to assess whether Mrs K was at risk of financial harm. So I've reviewed what Monzo did at this time, as well as how Mrs K responded.*

*We asked Mrs K for the full conversations between her and the scammer to understand what was happening when Monzo froze the account. But she explained she no longer has access to these. Mrs K did share some of the scam conversation with Monzo when she first reported the scam, but not the full chat. It isn't clear why*

*she didn't share all the conversation, considering she indicated the scammer was still messaging her. Or why she didn't keep the chats considering she made a claim to Monzo and then this complaint was also made. But I therefore have to decide what's most likely to have happened, as key evidence is now unavailable.*

*The scam chat I have seen shows Mrs K being coached by the scammer. She sends them screenshots of what she is doing and they tell her exactly what to do next and then ask her to share another screenshot with them. They also encourage her to borrow funds from others and she suggests they lie for her in the group chat to procure funds. When Monzo gives Mrs K a scam warning on one of the payments, she screenshots this and sends it to the scammer, who reassures her. And we can see she then goes ahead with the payment.*

*Mrs K has said she wasn't given a 'cover story' by the scammer and she (twice) selected the incorrect option of paying friends and family when Monzo asked for "no specific reason". She said Monzo didn't give her sufficient context, so she didn't understand the importance of providing a specific answer.*

*However this doesn't seem plausible. Mrs K was asked by her bank why she was making a payment after she discovered her account had been blocked. Monzo explained to her it had frozen her account and a specialist team needed to look at what had happened. I can't agree it wouldn't seem important to answer the question asked correctly – her account was after all blocked and she couldn't access her own funds.*

*When asked, Mrs K gave the reason for her payments as "Payment to/from family" when she was in fact buying cryptocurrency to fund her online employment. None of her friends or family were involved in the payments. By selecting this option, Mrs K acted in a way that prevented Monzo understanding the situation. Considering what I have seen of the scam chat, it seems likely she would've been coached to mislead Monzo. But taking Mrs K's testimony at face value, she instead misled it on her own volition.*

*Monzo didn't block the payments due to concerns of financial harm to Mrs K – and I don't consider it needed to. But it did have a natural opportunity to understand more about what she was doing when it did freeze her account. However, Mrs K didn't answer the questions asked honestly, preventing Monzo from actually understanding the true reason she was making the payments.*

*Due to the reasons it intervened, combined with the responses given, I don't think Monzo needed to explore the answers Mrs K gave further. I can't see it had reason to be concerned and so to not unblock her account. It was rightly satisfied by the evidence she gave that it was her making the payments and she wasn't committing any financial crime. And I'm also not persuaded that it could've unravelled the scam in any event.*

*Mrs K was clearly trusting of the scammer and happy to share warnings and screenshots of her accounts with them. I'm satisfied that had there been further questioning, Mrs K would've continued reverting to the scammer on what to do and how to answer and would likely have done so in such a way as to avoid alerting Monzo to what was really happening. I also say this because she told Monzo her friends had fallen victim to the same kind of scams prior to her falling victim to this one, so it doesn't seem that her prior knowledge of the existence of this kind of scam prevented her trusting her scammer and going ahead.*

*Mrs K has told us that all the payments she made were for cryptocurrency, which she then used for the job, to unlock tasks. So I wouldn't expect Monzo to reimburse her for these under the principles of the Contingent Reimbursement Model code, which Monzo applies. We're aware some of the payments are direct to cryptocurrency platforms and some others are Peer to Peer payments. I haven't seen any evidence from Mrs K that any of the payments went directly to a scam firm, so they would benefit from being considered under the Code.*

*Whilst Mrs K has undoubtedly been the victim of a cruel job scam, I don't currently find there were any failings on Monzo's part that would lead me to uphold this complaint.*

Mrs K, via her representative, confirmed she'd received my provisional decision and, prior to the deadline confirmed she wanted a final decision, but had nothing further to add. Monzo didn't reply to the provisional decision. So the case has now been returned to me.

### **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.

As neither party has provided any material new evidence, I see no reason to depart from my provisional findings. I recognise this scam has had a large impact on Mrs K. But for the reasons already outlined in my provisional decision, copied above, I don't uphold this complaint.

### **My final decision**

For the reasons set out above, I don't uphold Mrs K's complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs K to accept or reject my decision before 15 January 2025.

Amy Osborne  
**Ombudsman**