

The complaint

Mr N complains that Wise Payments Limited ("Wise") won't refund a payment he made to the wrong person.

What happened

Mr N holds an account with Wise an international money transfer platform. On 11 October 2024 Mr N topped up the balance of his account and sent by way of transfer a payment of £1,750 to X.

A few days later on 17 October Mr N discovered he'd sent the payment to the wrong person. He says when searching for them by name he selected the incorrect account and that he didn't know the recipient that the payment went to.

Wise systems show Mr N used its profile identifier to find the recipient of the payment and explained that it is only able to use this to find other Wise account holders based on their email or phone numbers only. If these details match the matching account is displayed along with the recipient's photo, and only after confirming the recipient details can the user proceed with the transfer.

Mr N contacted Wise about this and on the same day Wise responded asking for further information about the payment.

Mr N responded to this on 18 October at which point Wise directly contacted X – who was an account holder of Wise's and who'd already withdrawn the money - and asked that they reverse the transaction. Unfortunately for Mr N, Wise never received a response and so Mr N remained out of pocket.

Mr N complained to Wise about this. Wise didn't uphold Mr N's complaint as it had acted within the terms and conditions of the account and weren't obliged to refund the payment as there had been no error on its behalf.

Mr N was dissatisfied with this and so brought his complaint to this service. Mr N says due to his personal situation he wasn't able to review the details of the recipient to check they were correct before making the payment.

One of our investigators looked into Mr N's concerns but didn't think Wise had made a mistake or treated Mr N unfairly. They found the payment was set up by Mr N without any involvement from Wise and that it had done what we'd expect it to do in assisting Mr N in the recall of the payment but was unsuccessful and as such didn't think Wise needed to do anything more or refund the payment.

Mr N remained unhappy and has asked for an ombudsman's decision on the matter.

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.

It might help if I explain here my role is to look at the problems Mr N has experienced and see if Wise has done anything wrong or treated him unfairly. If it has, I would seek – if possible - to put Mr N back in the position he would've been in if the mistakes hadn't happened. And I may award compensation that I think is fair and reasonable.

And having carefully considered everything I'm in agreement with our investigator and don't think there is anything much more of use that I can add.

I sympathise with Mr N as he has lost a not insignificant amount of money at a difficult time for him. But this is not due to the actions of Wise, but rather purely down to an unfortunate mistake made on his behalf.

It was Mr N who set up the payment online completely independently of Wise. I appreciate Mr N has difficulty with his memory and was in an emotional situation at the time which meant that he was unable to review the details of the recipient as thoroughly as he'd have liked to check they were correct. But I don't think it would be fair to penalise Wise for this.

Furthermore, as soon as Mr N notified Wise of the error it acted promptly and did all it could within the powers it had to try and retrieve the payment for Mr N by directly asking X to return it. Unfortunately, a response to this request wasn't received and so Mr N remains out of pocket. But again, as this wasn't due to any mistake or error on Wise's part, I don't think it would be fair to ask Wise to refund the payment.

So it follows I don't uphold Mr N's complaint as Wise haven't made an error or treated Mr N unfairly as it did all it could reasonably do to retrieve the payment and Wise is under no obligation in the circumstances to refund the payment.

My final decision

For the reasons I've explained I've decided not to uphold Mr N's complaint against Wise Payments Limited.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr N to accept or reject my decision before 19 February 2025.

Caroline Davies
Ombudsman