

The complaint

Mr E complains that Wise Payments Limited trading as Wise didn't do enough to trace and recall an international payment he made using the SWIFT payment system.

What happened

Mr E explains that he arranged to send a payment of US Dollars 540 to his bank account abroad on 22 June 2024. But that this didn't arrive. And he believes that Wise gave him misleading and incorrect information about this. He says it ought to have done more to ensure the payment was credited. He explains the importance of the money for him, and his financial situation and that he had to resign from his job. And that this all made a health condition he had worse, and he couldn't afford treatment.

Wise had issued a final response letter to him on 17 July 2024. At that time, it was attempting to trace the payment. There have been further updates and on 22 July 2024 it was asked for details about the payment which it provided for the beneficiary bank. The information it had was that the payment had arrived. But Mr E showed he hadn't received it in his account. It started a recall of the payment on 13 August 2024 but received no response. It followed this up on 17 October 2024 and the recall was successful and the payment returned on 21 October 2024 and then credited to Mr E. Wise recognised that it could have done more to follow up the recall before then. And so, it offered to pay Mr E £75 in compensation.

Our investigator didn't recommend that Wise do anything more than this. She said that Wise had told Mr E that it could typically take 1 to 6 working days for a payment sent through SWIFT to arrive. It raised a trace on 8 July 2024 and answered some questions about the payment on 22 July 2024. Wise had raised the recall as set out above. She said that it isn't within Wise's control as to whether a recall is successful as this is down to the beneficiary bank. She didn't think Wise had made an error but agreed that it could have followed this up especially as Mr E had requested this. But there is no guarantee that this would have resulted in the payment being recalled sooner.

Mr E didn't agree. And he wanted a referral to an ombudsman for certainty on this case. He said that £75 doesn't cover his inconvenience, the misinformation he was given and the lack of effort on the part of Wise.

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 appreciate the difficult circumstances here for Mr E and the impact of him not receiving this money when he expected. He had a job which required he be paid into his Wise account. And he needed to transfer that to his bank account abroad to cover his living costs and expenses there. The money never arrived in his bank account abroad. And he has been

without the benefit of it for 4 months. He has shown that he resigned from that job in August 2024 and referred in his email doing so to the difficulty of receiving payments.

I need to say though that Wise doesn't have any control over the actions of the beneficiary bank or any correspondent bank that bank uses. And nor do we have a role in looking at those other activities in this complaint: only what Wise did or ought to have done.

There is no evidence that Wise made any mistake in sending this payment. I note and as referred to in the final response letter another payment – this time for US Dollars 280 had been sent on 1 July 2024 and was traced. This was I understand since credited to Mr E's account abroad. And I also note that in his complaint form he refers to making a transfer "every week" to his account abroad and that it would usually arrive in 2 days.

I've seen the payment instruction for the payment here which included the relevant details. And it's unclear to me why a query was raised about it on 22 July 2024. But Wise dealt with that, and I'm satisfied had provided all the information necessary for the payment to be credited through the SWIFT system. And that it was reliant on what it was told through the SWIFT messaging system and which it relayed to Mr E. I appreciate this was different to what Mr E says he was told by his bank abroad.

I'd expect Wise to take reasonable steps to trace and then recall the payment. I consider that the timescales for attempting to trace and then recall the payment here were reasonable. It's unfortunate that Wise didn't chase the recall up further as Mr E asked. Although I consider it couldn't guarantee this would be successful and there is a limit on what it can do. But here it accepts it could have done more and unfortunately that this payment wasn't followed up until after Mr E had referred his complaint to this service.

Taking all this into account I'm not satisfied on balance that Wise is responsible for the delay with the payment. I think that the compensation for it not chasing up the recall once more is reasonable, but it's clear that this payment was being held by the recipient bank/ that bank's correspondent bank and not Wise for a significant period. So, I don't have a basis to find that Wise can fairly be responsible for the impact on Mr E of not having that money in his account abroad. And I note that it was never credited in any event by his bank but sent back to Wise.

I can appreciate Mr E will be disappointed with my conclusions.

My final decision

Wise has made an offer to settle this complaint which I think is reasonable in the circumstances. So, my decision is that Wise Payments Limited trading as Wise pay Mr E £75.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr E to accept or reject my decision before 13 March 2025.

Michael Crewe
Ombudsman