

The complaint

Mr N is unhappy that Wise Payments Limited won't refund payments he made as a result of a scam.

What happened

In March 2023, Mr N was a victim of a job scam which involved several payments over two days to crypto exchanges from his Wise account.

In summary, Mr N was contacted by fraudsters with a supposed online job opportunity – working for a genuine marketing company by completing tasks to help apps get higher rankings and more exposure. Some of these tasks required Mr N to deposit USDT on his account – and he was told he couldn't get this back until he complete the required set of tasks. After being asked to pay more and more to complete tasks, he realised he'd been scammed.

Mr N reported what happened to Wise and raised a complaint that it failed to protect him from the scam. Wise replied that it couldn't recover the payments and it made the payments Mr N told it to.

Unhappy, Mr N brought his concerns to our service to investigate.

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.

Having done so, I've reached the same outcome as our investigator for these reasons:

- The starting position in law is that Mr N is responsible for payments he made. And Wise has a duty to make the payments he tells it to.
- But, as supported by the terms of the account, that doesn't preclude Wise from making fraud checks before making a payment. And, taking into account regulatory expectations and good industry practice, I'm satisfied that it should fairly and reasonably have done this in some circumstances.
- I've carefully reviewed the circumstances of these payments. While I recognise it was a lot for Mr N to lose, I don't think Wise ought to have been particularly concerned about the value of the payments, bearing in mind the number of similarly-sized payments it processes and the impracticalities of stopping each one.
- However, by the second day, I think a concerning pattern began to emerge. The frequency and amounts had increased, and they were all going to crypto exchanges, a destination that tends to carry an elevated risk of fraud.
- Given how Wise has to balance protecting Mr N from fraud with its duty to make the

payments he tells it to, I wouldn't have expected it to have required a conversation with Mr N based on these circumstances. Instead, I think a proportionate response would've been to show Mr N a written warning about crypto investment scams, given their prevalence at the time and how they often involved payments like the ones in dispute here.

- If that had happened, I don't think it would've changed Mr N's mind about going ahead. That's because he fell victim to an online job scam – and I don't think the hallmarks are similar enough to an investment scam that this sort of warning would've caused him to think twice about the payments.
- Mr N's representatives submit that Wise ought to have provided warnings about online job scams too. But, at the time these payments were made, I'm not persuaded they were prevalent enough that I'd reasonably expect Wise to specifically provide a warning about them.
- It follows that, while I accept Wise could've done more to warn Mr N about prevalent scams, I don't think the warning I'd have expected it to provide would've resonated with Mr N. So I don't think its mistake caused his losses here.
- I appreciate this will be disappointing news for Mr N, particularly as he's ultimately a victim in this situation. But for the reasons I've explained, I don't think I can reasonably tell Wise to refund him.

My final decision

For the reasons I've explained, I don't uphold Mr N's complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr N to accept or reject my decision before 18 June 2025.

Emma Szkolar
Ombudsman