

## **The complaint**

Mr G complains Revolut Ltd didn't do enough to help him when he shared the fact that he has a gambling problem.

## **What happened**

Mr G has told us that he has a gambling problem for a few years and at the time of this complaint had been in recovery for approximately three years. He says he shared the fact that he has a gambling problem with Revolut – with whom he has an account – in October 2023 but it didn't do enough to support him. In particular, Revolut said that it wasn't possible for it to "block" or "disable" the cryptocurrency feature on his account which is what he'd asked. He says this meant he continued to have access to the ability to purchase cryptocurrency, allowing him to transfer funds to crypto casinos resulting in losses of nearly £10,000. Mr G says it wasn't until April 2024 that Revolut offered a solution – in other words, after he'd complained and already asked them three times.

Revolut looked into Mr G's complaint and said that it could have offered the option to "block" cryptocurrency payments when he'd first asked for help. Revolut apologised that it hadn't done so and offered £100 in compensation for the communication misunderstanding. Mr G was unhappy with Revolut's response and so complained to our service. He said, amongst other things, that he asked Revolut to "disable" payments so its offer to "block" them wasn't good enough. Nor was their offer of £100 compensation. He also said that every other financial institution he'd spoken to about his gambling problem had made prompt and appropriate changes to his account. He also complained about Revolut describing what had gone wrong as a "communication misunderstanding" and said that what Revolut had done was let down a vulnerable customer and vulnerable customers in the same position as him.

One of our investigators looked into Mr G's complaint and agreed that Revolut could have offered to "block" cryptocurrency payments sooner than it did. They also said that Revolut had offered additional support when Mr G originally asked for help. More importantly, they said that they didn't think it would have made a difference had Revolut offered the option to "block" cryptocurrency payments earlier – as far as the losses Mr G was claiming was concerned – as this wouldn't have stopped him buying cryptocurrency in order to gamble. But they did think the £100 compensation wasn't enough given the poor journey Mr G had, so they recommended £350 in compensation. Mr G wasn't happy with our investigator's recommendation saying that they were in effect saying someone with a gambling problem will always find a way, that he had got himself banned from most cryptocurrency wallet providers and that he hadn't relapsed since the block was in place. So, they asked for their complaint to be referred to an ombudsman for a decision. Mr G's complaint was, as a result, passed to me. I should add that Revolut has not objected to us looking into this complaint notwithstanding the fact that a large part of it relates to cryptocurrency which is, at the moment, unregulated. So, I'm going to make no finding about whether or not this is a complaint we ordinarily would be able to look into.

## **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.

Mr G has told us that he opened accounts with two other businesses during the period he was speaking to Revolut – in other words, that he had at least three accounts during this period. He's told us that the other two businesses were both "unfriendly to crypto". He's also told us that he's been blacklisted from depositing through all cryptocurrency wallets since 2022 and he's named a few. I can, however, see that he made or attempted to make payments to some of the cryptocurrency providers he's mentioned to us from his account with Revolut in 2023. So, it does look like he was able to still send money to cryptocurrency providers. The more important point, however, is that his account with Revolut wasn't his only account. I say that because one option that Mr G had all along – and it was an option he suggested himself – was to close his account with Revolut. I'll come back to this later.

In May 2023 I can see that Mr G started asking Revolut if there was any way to send the cryptocurrency balance in his Revolut account to a cryptocurrency exchange and also about the daily and monthly limits Revolut imposed on cryptocurrency, how those limits worked and whether or not they could be increased. I can see that Revolut explained that there was a daily limit of £2,000 a day and £10,000 a month on cryptocurrency and that these limits could not be increased.

In July 2023 I can see that Revolut started flagging and blocking payments to a cryptocurrency exchange in the Baltics. He asked Revolut not to do so. Revolut said that the payments had been blocked because of their possible high risk nature and future payments to the same merchant would likely be blocked. Shortly after that I can see that Revolut asked Mr G a series of questions in order to verify the source of his funds. In reply, Mr G said:

"Most of my revolut transactions have come from gambling winnings, I could provide a deposit/withdrawal document provided from the gambling website if this is enough? I can also see my transaction history on [name of well-known cryptocurrency exchange], [name of well-known cryptocurrency exchange] & [name of well-known cryptocurrency exchange] which I have used if this is enough too"

And in response to a reply from the agent about the documents he'd need to upload he said:

"The gambling site does not actually use my Real-life name as it has not KYC'd me yet. however, it is connected to the same e-mail that I use with revolut ([redacted]). Is this okay?"

I can see that it wasn't until October 2023 that Mr G told Revolut that he was "a recovering gambling addict". He added that:

"the easy access to buying & withdrawing crypto has caused me to relapse each month since opening my account here. Is it possible to remove this feature or should I close my account?"

Based on the chat history I've seen, it seems that Mr G seeing an article online saying that its UK customers wouldn't be able to use their Revolut card for any online or offline gambling payments in the UK was what prompted this message. Mr G said in relation to this:

"Maybe to further support this crypto withdrawals to gambling sites should also be looked into as this feature has enabled me to lose my bank balance each month"

I can see that agent Mr G was speaking to picked up on what Mr G had said, thanked him for sharing, asked more questions and asked if he consented to his responses being recorded. In other words, followed best practice. In response, Mr G explained the support he

was already receiving for his gambling problem and the agent explained that the cryptocurrency feature couldn't be "removed" but they did refer Mr G to the gambling block that Revolut did offer, including the 48-hour cooling off period built into it. That's a feature that businesses didn't offer seven years ago. The early gambling blocks businesses started offering from 2018 were also less sophisticated than the ones that are offered today. In this particular case, the gambling block that the agent mentioned wouldn't have helped Mr G – as it's designed to stop card payments rather than transfers – and not designed with cryptocurrency in mind. The agent did, however, go on and share links to organisations who provide specialist support including one that Mr G said at the time he hadn't heard of. The chat ended with Mr G thanking the agent. In the circumstances, I can understand why the agent didn't feel they had to do more at this stage. Mr G had asked whether it was possible to remove the cryptocurrency feature – to which the answer was no – or whether he should close his account. That was an option for Mr G, particularly given that his account with Revolut wasn't his only account – as I've already mentioned he had at least three during this period, the other two being "crypto unfriendly".

I can see that it wasn't until 23 March 2024 – over five months later – that Mr G contacted Revolut to say that he:

"was easily circumventing Gamstop using Revolut's crypto currency in-app"

and had asked for support to ban him from accessing this feature. I can see that it was also at this point that Mr G complained Revolut had let him down and that he'd lost over £10,000 to gambling as a result. And that at this stage he also complained about the feature not having been "disabled". The agent in response this time said that the cryptocurrency feature couldn't be "deactivated" but could be "hidden". Mr G's response to the suggestion that the feature could be "hidden" was that this wasn't good enough. I can understand why he might have said this – "hiding" the feature wouldn't be of much help if the feature could be easily "unhidden" in the same way that some of the early gambling blocks that could be turned on or off weren't particularly helpful. That's because experience has shown that to be effective gambling tools need to create what's referred to as "friction". At this point Mr G says he's going to escalate the matter and raise a formal complaint. I can, therefore, also understand why the agent didn't feel they had to do more at this stage.

I can see that Mr G followed up his complaint on 9 April 2024 asking Revolut to close his account if it wasn't able to "close" his "crypto access". The agent who he was speaking to again mentioned "hiding" his crypto tab. The agent then says they're going to raise Mr G's case with Revolut's product expert team. Later that day, the agent agrees to "block" Mr G's crypto feature. They say:

"I will block the crypto feature for you as requested. If you want to start trading crypto again in the future, please reach us on chat so we can unblock it for you as it will not be visible in your app at all."

I accept that this was more helpful than suggesting to Mr G that he "hide" his crypto feature meaning it wouldn't be visible on his app, because Mr G would have to contact Revolut through its chat service in order to "unblock" his crypto feature – in other words, it would add another step. Even so, I don't think it was particularly helpful because that additional step won't add much, if any, "friction". I can, however, see that Mr G has told us that he hasn't relapsed since.

Both Revolut and our investigator accepted that Mr G's customer journey was poor. To an extent, I agree. But I also think it's important to remember that there are limits to what businesses can do, and that over time businesses have been offering more support to customers with problem gambling and the support they've offered has also evolved. In this

case, Revolut highlighted the gambling block it offers – these types of blocks have helped large numbers of customers with problem gambling manage their urges – and specialist support services which is in line with what we’d expect to see. It already had daily and monthly limits on cryptocurrency. What it didn’t have – in common with many businesses – is a way to block transfers (as opposed to card payments) that were destined to go to gambling either directly or indirectly. In short, given everything I’ve just said, whilst I agree that Mr G’s customer journey could have been better, I think it’s important not to overlook the support that Revolut offered and the limits in terms of what businesses can do. I also think it’s important not to overlook the fact that “blocking” the cryptocurrency feature – given that all it takes is contacting Revolut and asking for it to be “unblocked” – only goes so far.

### **Putting things right**

For the reasons I’ve just given, I agree with our investigator that it wouldn’t be fair to hold Revolut liable for the losses that Mr G has made. I do, however, agree that the £100 compensation that Revolut offered doesn’t reflect the impact Mr G’s poor customer journey had. And that £350 is fair. So, that’s the amount I’m going to award.

### **My final decision**

My final decision is that I’m upholding this complaint in part and require Revolut Ltd to pay Mr G £350 in compensation in full and final settlement of his complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I’m required to ask Mr G to accept or reject my decision before 16 April 2025.

Nicolas Atkinson  
**Ombudsman**