

The complaint

Mrs O complains that Bank of Scotland plc trading as Halifax (Halifax) is refusing to refund her the amount she lost as the result of a scam.

Mrs O is being represented by a third party. To keep things simple, I will refer to Mrs O throughout my decision.

What happened

In summary, Mrs O saw a post on social media about investing and started to talk to a representative of a trading company via a well-known messaging application. I will call this company "X".

X explained an investment opportunity to Mrs O via calls and multiple messages. Mrs O says X appeared legitimate and she was told that it would make investments for her in commodities such as oil, and cryptocurrency.

Mrs O was required to download screen sharing software as part of the process to check her identity and personal details.

Mrs O says she initially started to invest relatively small amounts. Mrs O tells us that X then applied for multiple loans in her name and intercepted the funds without her knowledge and used them to invest.

Mrs O says she realised she had fallen victim to a scam when she received loan repayments.

Mrs O has disputed the following payments made from her Halifax account:

Payment	Date	Payee	Payment Method	Amount
1	24 April 2024	Mrs O	Transfer	£25,000
2	26 April 2024	Mrs O	Transfer	£10,000
3	29 April 2024	Mrs O	Transfer	£15,000
4	29 April 2024	Mrs O	Transfer	£10,000
5	2 May 2024	Mrs O	Transfer	£13,600
6	2 May 2024	Mrs O	Transfer	£700
7	20 May 2024	Mrs O	Transfer	£7,000
8	28 May 2024	Mrs O	Transfer	£12,999
9	28 May 2024	Mrs O	Reverted	£12,999cr
10	29 May 2024	Mrs O	Transfer	£1,000
12	5 June 2024	Payward Ltd	Transfer	£1,500
13	5 June 2024	Payward Ltd	Transfer	£1,000
14	5 June 2024	Payward Ltd	Transfer	£1,500
15	5 June 2024	Payward Ltd	Transfer	£1,000
16	5 June 2024	Payward Ltd	Credit	£1,500cr
17	5 June 2024	Payward Ltd	Credit	£1,000cr

18	5 June 2024	Payward Ltd	Credit	£1,500cr
19	5 June 2024	Payward Ltd	Credit	£1,000cr
20	7 June 2024	Venofi UAB	Transfer	£10,000

In my provisional decision issued on 21 November 2025 I explained why I didn't think Mrs O's complaint should be upheld. I said:

"It has not been disputed that Mrs O has fallen victim to a cruel scam. The evidence provided by both Mrs O and Halifax sets out what happened. What is in dispute is whether Halifax should refund the money Mrs O lost due to the scam."

Recovering the payments Mrs O made

Mrs O made payments into the scam via transfer. When payments are made by transfer Halifax has limited options available to it to seek recovery.

The payments made in relation to the scam from Mrs O's Halifax account were not made to the scammer directly. The payments were made either to Mrs O's own account held with another provider, or to a cryptocurrency exchange.

If any funds remained in Mrs O's own accounts, they would not require recovery. As she would remain in control of them.

When payments were made to cryptocurrency exchanges, they were made to a legitimate exchange likely in exchange for cryptocurrency. As it took additional steps for those funds to end up in the hands of the scammer any attempt at recovery would have no prospects of success.

Should Halifax have reasonably prevented the payments being made?

I think it's most likely that Mrs O authorised or was at least aware of the payments that were made from her account with Halifax, albeit on X's instruction. So, the starting point here is that Mrs O is responsible.

However, banks and other Payment Services Providers (PSPs) do have a duty to protect against the risk of financial loss due to fraud and/or to undertake due diligence on large transactions to guard against money laundering.

The question here is whether Halifax should have been aware of the scam and intervened when the payments were being made. And if it had intervened, would it have been able to prevent the scam taking place.

I can see that Halifax did intervene on occasions when Mrs O attempted payments.

On 27 May 2024 a call took place between Mrs O and Halifax, Mrs O was struggling to make a payment as it was not going through. Halifax discussed a £13,000 credit that had been received into her account with the reference "Car". Mrs O said the payment had come from a friend. She said she was using the money to invest in cryptocurrency.

Mrs O confirmed in this call that she had not been contacted by anyone in relation to buying crypto and no one was advising her about what website to use.

Mrs O was asked to attend a branch with ID so the payments could be discussed. Having looked over the chat transcript provided by Mrs O of the conversations between herself and X it appears that the funds going into Mrs O's account related to the scam and

not a payment from a friend. Mrs O was also not honest with the circumstances surrounding the payment she was attempting to make.

On 28 May 2024 Mrs O attended a branch and as well as face-to-face discussions taking place Mrs O and the branch staff spoke to the fraud team over the phone and Mrs O was required to watch two fraud prevention videos.

Mrs O confirmed she had taken a loan with Halifax and that this was for building work overseas. She also confirmed she had received £13,000 from a friend that owed her money. She gave the name of the friend to Halifax.

Again, Mrs O did not provide honest information. The funds from the loan were used in relation to the scam and the received funds were also in relation to the scam; Mrs O had simply given Halifax the story X had provided to her when she visited the branch. This is confirmed by the chat transcript Mrs O has provided of her conversations with X.

In addition to the above Mrs O made payments in relation to the scam from an account she held with another provider. That provider intervened and Mrs O was required to send a selfie before discussing payments with it.

Mrs O confirmed on several occasions early in the scam that:

- She understood that a scammer may ask her to hide the real reason for the payment*
- She was not being assisted with the questions*
- She had not been asked to install any software*
- Nobody was guiding her*
- Nobody was helping her with the investment*
- She was keeping the cryptocurrency in her own account*
- Nobody had called her*
- She had decided herself it's something she wanted to do*
- Nobody had told her what to do*

The information Mrs O provided was again incorrect.

Providing false information when making payments can and did make it extremely difficult for Halifax and Mrs O's other account provider to uncover the scam that was taking place. I do think that Halifax could have intervened sooner than it did, but I don't think this would have made a difference. I say this because I don't have enough to say that Mrs O would have provided any more honest information than she did on multiple occasions throughout the scam, if Halifax had intervened further than it did.

So, I don't think Halifax missed an opportunity to prevent the scam and it is not responsible for Mrs O's loss.

Mrs O has told us that X applied for loans in her name that she was not aware of and sent payments also without her knowledge. But it's clear from the multiple conversations Mrs O had with her account providers that she was the person making payments that were funded from the loans and that she was aware of the loans being in her name.

Some of the chat conversations Mrs O had with X do contradict this, but many calls also took place between Mrs O and X and I can't know what was said during them. Overall, I am satisfied that Mrs O was aware of the loans in her name, even if X helped apply for them, and that it's most likely she authorised both the loans and payments.

Mrs O has told us that Halifax should have intervened further and had it done so the scam

could have been prevented. But for the reasons I've explained above this does not change my decision."

I gave Mrs O and Halifax time to respond to my provisional decision.

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.

Mrs O did respond to my provisional decision. She didn't provide any new evidence but explained again that she was not aware of the fraudulent activity on her account. Loans were taken out, and payments made very quickly from her account before she noticed.

Mrs O has also told us that she only became aware of payments entering her account on 27 May 2024 when X explained he was gifting her the money after it had been paid to him.

Mrs O does however accept that she hid some information from Halifax as she was afraid and under the influence of X.

Mrs O says that had Halifax intervened further at other times the scam could have been uncovered, and her loss would have been avoided. Therefore, Halifax should look to refund her.

I have thought about what Mrs O has told us but unfortunately her comments don't change my decision. It's clear that Mrs O did give incorrect information when speaking with Halifax and she has confirmed she did this as she was under the influence of the scammer.

Even when Mrs O says she became aware of payments being made from her account on 27 May 2024 she continued with the payments and did not inform Halifax of what was happening, instead, Mrs O provided multiple incorrect answers to questions designed to help Halifax detect scams like the one Mrs O was experiencing.

Mrs O also had access to her account when making payments in relation to the scam so would have been able to view her account history and she confirmed to Halifax (as stated above) that she had taken a Halifax loan.

Unfortunately, with all the information available to me, I still don't have enough to be able to say that Mrs O didn't authorise the loans and payments made from her account, or that Mrs O would have been any more honest with Halifax than she did on other occasions, had it intervened sooner than it did. X was clearly able to convince Mrs O that she needed to give incorrect information to Halifax even when she said she was aware that X had already broken her trust.

I understand that this will be very disappointing for Mrs O, and I recognise that she has been the victim of a cruel and manipulative scam. But I do not consider that it would be fair to hold Halifax responsible for her loss, so I won't be asking it to refund any of that loss to her.

My final decision

I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs O to accept or reject my decision before 14 January 2026.

Terry Woodham
Ombudsman