

The complaint

Mr K complains that Wise Payments Limited (“Wise”) won’t refund payments made as part of a scam.

What happened

In June 2024, Mr K contacted Wise and disputed two card transactions to a cryptocurrency provider I’ll call “B”. He said he’d received an email that purportedly came from B which said he needed to secure his account. Mr K later discovered that the email hadn’t come from B. Instead, he’d been scammed, and money was taken from his Wise account after he clicked on a link in the email and followed instructions which included approving some notifications. Mr K states the funds went to his account with B, before being sent on to an external account.

Wise declined to refund Mr K and said he’d approved the transactions in dispute by completing an additional layer of security (3DS authentication). It also refused to raise a chargeback.

Our Investigator didn’t uphold Mr K’s complaint. They noted that there was a discrepancy between Mr K’s recollection of the steps he took and what Wise’s technical evidence showed. Weighing everything up, the Investigator thought it was fair for Wise to consider the payments authorised. They noted that Wise did take additional steps when one of the payments flagged as suspicious. While they considered that it should have gone further with its intervention, because of the inconsistencies, they couldn’t confidently conclude that this would have made a difference. Mr K disagreed with the Investigator’s conclusions and asked for an ombudsman to review his complaint.

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, while I recognise how disappointing this will be, I’m not upholding this complaint. I’ll explain why.

Has Revolut acted fairly in treating the disputed payments as authorised?

The relevant law here is the Payment Services Regulations 2017 (PSRs). The starting point is that Mr K is responsible for a payment he authorised, and Wise would generally be liable for an unauthorised payment.

Where a payment is authorised, that will often be because the account holder has made the payment themselves. But there are other circumstances where a payment should fairly be considered authorised, such as where the account holder has given permission for someone else to make a payment on their behalf or they’ve told their payment service provider they want a payment to go ahead.

Where evidence is incomplete or contradictory, I need to determine what I think is more likely than not to have happened. I do this by weighing up what I do have and making a finding on the balance of probabilities.

Mr K's recollection is that he clicked on the link contained in the phishing email and this prompted him to enter his credentials to sign into his account with B. He was then asked to confirm his card details and this led to him receiving notifications in his Wise app. Mr K says he doesn't remember if an amount was mentioned on the notifications he approved. He states that many times he's asked to confirm his identity by approving card authorisation notifications, but there's no associated charge. Mr K has told us that he didn't download any remote access software.

Wise has shown that both card payments were processed after 3DS authentication was completed. Its records also show that this was completed via OTPs which were sent to Mr K's registered phone number. Wise says the payments were initiated on B's platform and the OTPs were required to be entered on B's platform when prompted.

While I appreciate that Mr K says he recalls approving notifications in his Wise app, on balance, I think it's more likely than not that he accessed the SMS texts containing the OTP codes which were sent to his phone. And he either used the codes on B's platform himself or shared them with a third party. I'm also aware from the chat correspondence between Mr K and B that it was his registered device that accessed B's platform on the day money was sent from his Wise account – and withdrawals were then made from his account with B.

Given that the payments could have only been processed once the OTP was entered, and there's no evidence to support that Mr K's device was compromised, I think it's unlikely that the payments were made without some form of involvement on Mr K's part. I also don't think it's likely that Mr K was unaware of the payments, given he recalls receiving and approving authentication prompts on his phone. Having considered all of the above, I don't think Wise has acted unfairly in treating the payments as authorised.

Other considerations

Mr K says that he's been recognised as being vulnerable and has provided evidence to support this. He states that his vulnerability affects his decision-making and makes him more susceptible to scams. Mr K believes he misinterpreted the authentication prompts as routine verifications rather than a payment authorisation.

I thank Mr K for sharing further details about his health. I don't doubt what he's told about how it impacts his decision-making. But this isn't reason alone to tell Wise to refund him in full. Wise wasn't aware of Mr K's circumstances given he's told us he didn't notify it of his vulnerability. I've considered Mr K's point that firms should proactively identify potential vulnerability. But I don't consider there was anything during Wise's intervention when the first payment was initially declined which ought to have put it on notice about Mr K's circumstances. So, I don't think Wise could or should have taken different or additional steps.

Mr K also says that Wise ought to have done more to identify the payments as suspicious and protect him from fraud. There are some circumstances in which our Service may conclude that a business is fairly responsible for a loss arising from authorised payments if, among other things, we consider it could and should have prevented the loss. As I've mentioned, Wise did initially decline the first payment when it flagged as suspicious on its systems. After informing him that if someone was pressuring him or giving him investment advice it was more likely that this could be a scam, Mr K was asked if he wanted to proceed with the transaction. I've seen a screenshot of this warning, and it shows the date, amount,

and the merchant the transaction in question. We know from Wise's records that the payment was re-attempted following this warning, indicating that Mr K wanted to proceed despite the warning.

I've considered whether Wise's intervention should have gone further than displaying an automated warning, and the likelihood of that making a difference to Mr K's decision-making. But I don't think it would be reasonable to speculate what Mr K might have said or done in response to further probing, given that there are discrepancies between what Mr K recalls about how the events unfolded and what the technical evidence from Wise shows. Ultimately, the evidence we do have conflicts with what Mr K has told us. Without a credible explanation as to why Mr P authorised the payments from his Wise account (and from his account with B), I don't think Wise has unfairly declined to reimburse him.

Thinking next about recovery once Mr K reported the matter to Wise, as these were card payments the only avenue for recovery would have been via the chargeback scheme. It is a voluntary scheme and card issuers don't have to raise a chargeback if there's no prospect of success. Mr K's payments were made to purchase cryptocurrency from a legitimate provider who he already had an account with. We also know from his testimony that cryptocurrency was deposited into his account with B in exchange the payments. A chargeback would therefore not have been successful, given B had provided the service requested of it (i.e., conversion of fiat money into cryptocurrency). That the cryptocurrency was then lost to a third party doesn't give grounds for a chargeback for the payments to B. And given how the payment was authenticated, it's unlikely that a chargeback on the grounds of fraud would have been successful either. So, I don't think there was anything more that Wise could or should have done to recover Mr K's money.

In conclusion, I realise that this outcome will come as a significant disappointment to Mr K. Not least because this complaint has been ongoing for some time. Despite my natural sympathy for the situation in which he finds himself, for the reasons given, it wouldn't be fair of me to hold Wise liable for his loss.

My final decision

For the reasons given, my final decision is that I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr K to accept or reject my decision before 27 December 2025.

Gagandeep Singh
Ombudsman