

The complaint

Mr B complains that Wise Payments Limited (“Wise”) won’t refund a payment of £2,000 made to the wrong person/account resulting in the closure of his US bank account.

What happened

On 20 January 2025 at 15.29 Mr B manually sent a transfer for £2,000 from his Wise account ending 75162 to (according to Wise’s Transfer confirmation) an account ending 67992 in the USA which Mr B believed to his USA Wise account ending 87992.

Mr B checked his USA account a few minutes later but could not see the funds being received in the account despite receiving a receipt confirmation the transaction had been made. Mr B was concerned by this as when previously making transactions such as this the funds would show a few minutes later and so he called Wise around 30 minutes later and its representative confirmed the details were correct and said it can take 1-3 days to clear. Wise sent Mr B an email confirming the same and asking Mr B to check his bank account details entered for the transfer were correct and get back to it in case a mistake was made.

Mr B feeling something was wrong emailed Wise on 21 January asking if he could stop the transfer. Wise responded the following day asking Mr B to again check the details of the transfer which Mr B says he did. Mr B sent a further email asking for Wise to cancel the transfer but getting nowhere with this he called Wise on 23 January where Mr B again confirmed everything was correct and was told it wasn’t possible to cancel the transaction because it had gone through and to contact the recipient bank and share the transfer receipt to try locate the money.

Further emails were sent back and forth and Mr B made a further call to Wise on 25 January. During the call the call handler noticed the account number put in for the receiving account was wrong showing a “6” digit in it when it should’ve been an “8” and that the transfer had been made to a recipient Mr B didn’t recognise.

Mr B immediately asked Wise to return the money as an incorrect digit had been entered which he believed to be Wise’s fault as he usually does a copy and paste on the details and had used the account number on numerous occasions.

Wise made a recall request asking the recipient send the money back to their balance on 27 January and advised Mr B that the process can take 10 days but there was no guarantee the funds would be returned as it relies on the recipient sending the funds back. Despite chasing Wise for an update, it was only on 13 February when Wise advised the recipient of the funds had not responded as expected at which point Mr B raised a complaint.

Wise didn’t uphold Mr B’s complaint as it says it followed the correct processes and could not prevent or return the transfer.

Mr B was dissatisfied with this and so brought his complaint to this service. Mr B wants Wise to refund the £2,000 that was meant to be transferred from his Wise UK account to his Wise USA account.

Mr B says he entered the details correctly and wants to know why Confirmation of Payee (CoP) didn't come up when the account name didn't match the account number. Wise says the details were entered manually and CoP only applies to UK domestic payments and so no CoP check was available for this transfer, but Mr B was shown the full account details during the transfer process and that it was Mr B's responsibility under the terms and conditions to verify the information was correct.

Wise have explained that when Mr B first contacted it on 20 January it couldn't do anything as Mr B hadn't confirmed if the account details entered were incorrect and that as soon as Mr B notified it that an account digit had been entered incorrectly a recall request was completed on the next working day on 27 January. Unfortunately the recipient didn't respond but as the recipient was a Wise account holder it could see the funds were spent shortly after the transfer was made and as such Mr B would need to consider alternative action.

Wise say it is a money remittance service provider and it can't intervene in disputes between senders and recipients and isn't responsible for loss or damage that isn't foreseeable such as here where it wouldn't have known the details provided were incorrect.

One of our investigator's looked into Mr B's concerns, but didn't think Wise had made a mistake or treated Mr B unfairly. They found the payment was set up by Mr B without any involvement from Wise and that it could not have stopped the transfer when Mr B had asked it to as once it is sent it can't be stopped. They thought Wise had done what we'd expect it to do in assisting Mr B in the recall of the payment once Mr B had notified it the details were incorrect but as the funds were spent shortly after the transfer and there is no guarantee of the funds being returned there was nothing further Wise could do.

Mr B disputes the error was at his end and says that Wise's representative must not have checked the details of the transaction fully when he first called Wise 30 minutes after making the transaction and had they done so he could've asked for a trace request at the outset and recovered the funds. Mr B wants Wise to provide proof of when the recipient withdrew the funds and has asked for an ombudsman's decision on the matter.

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.

It might help if I explain here my role is to look at the problems Mr B has experienced and see if Wise has done anything wrong or treated him unfairly. If it has, I would seek – if possible - to put Mr B back in the position he would've been in if the mistakes hadn't happened. And I may award compensation that I think is fair and reasonable.

And having carefully considered everything – and I know this will come as a disappointment - I'm in agreement with our investigator and don't think there is anything much more of use that I can add.

I sympathise with Mr B as he has lost a not insignificant amount of money, but having considered everything carefully I don't think this is due to the action or inaction of Wise, but rather purely down to an unfortunate mistake made on his behalf.

After considering all the evidence I think it was Mr B who set up the payment and entered one wrong digit in the recipient account completely independently of Wise and Wise merely carried out this instruction. I appreciate Mr B feels that if the account details didn't match the account name then CoP should have caught this. But Wise has explained that CoP only

applies to external UK banks and so no CoP check was available for this transfer and that ultimately it is Mr B's responsibility to check all the details including the account number are correct. And as the payment instruction was coming from Mr B and it was his mistake, I don't think it would be fair to penalise Wise for this as it would have no way of knowing a mistake had been made.

I appreciate that Mr B feels that Wise should've spotted the mistake at the outset when he called up around 30 minutes after making the payment and if it had done so a recall could've been done sooner. But there is no guarantee that a recall would've been successful, and it is not for Wise to check these details as it doesn't know who the recipient is or what the correct details are meant to be as it is not Wise giving the instruction. Only Mr B can say if a mistake has been made. So I can't say fairly that Wise should've tried a recall earlier than it did as it wasn't until 25 January Mr B notified Wise that a mistake had been made following him on numerous occasions saying the details were correct.

Furthermore, as soon as Mr B notified Wise of the error it acted promptly and within what I believe is a reasonable timeframe – the next working day - and did all it could within the powers it had to try and retrieve the payment for Mr B by directly asking the recipient to return the funds to their account. Unfortunately, by this point the funds had been spent and a response to this request wasn't received and so Mr B remains out of pocket. But again, as this wasn't due to any mistake or error on Wise's part, I don't think it would be fair to ask Wise to refund the payment.

So it follows I don't uphold Mr B's complaint as Wise haven't made an error or treated Mr B unfairly as it did all it could reasonably do to retrieve the payment and Wise is under no obligation in the circumstances to refund the payment.

My final decision

For the reasons I've explained I've decided not to uphold Mr B's complaint against Wise Payments Limited.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr B to accept or reject my decision before 3 September 2025.

Caroline Davies
Ombudsman