DRN-5610451

The complaint

Mrs G complains about the actions of Revolut Ltd when she lost money to a scam.

What happened

Around August 2023 Mrs G was contacted out of the blue via message by a third-party who claimed to represent a merchant who said they could help recover £250 Mrs G lost to a previous scam in 2017. Mrs G was told to open an account with Revolut so that she could make payments to this merchant to help her recover her money.

She started by making the following exchanges into BTC on her Revolut account;

Date	Type of payment	Amount
13 September 2023	Exchanged into BTC	£500
19 September 2023	Exchanged into BTC	£3,900

She then attempted the following crypto withdrawals;

Date	Currency	Amount
13 September 2023	BTC withdrawal	0.02297961 (£492.02)
19 September 2023	BTC withdrawal (failed)	0.09000000
20 September 2023	BTC withdrawal (failed)	0.09000000
	Total Loss	**£492.02**

Mrs G then made the following payments to the merchant;

Date	Type of payment	Amount
20 September 2023	*Exchanged to GBP*	*£3,624.82*
20 September 2023	Exchanged to CHF and sent internationally to third-party	£3,636
20 September 2023	*Top up by Mrs G*	*£950*
20 September 2023	Exchanged to CHF and sent internationally to third-party	£850
	Total Loss (including BTC withdrawal worth £492.02)	**£5,056.02**

Mrs G was then told that she needed to pay a further £8,000 to withdraw her money which is the point she realised she had been scammed. Mrs G raised a claim with Revolut in relation to the two exchanges into BTC and the above crypto withdrawals. Revolut considered the claim but said it wasn't going to offer her a refund as it hadn't done anything wrong. So, Mrs G brought her complaint to this service.

Our Investigator didn't think the complaint should be upheld. He didn't think Revolut could've reasonably stopped Mrs G's loss here.

Mrs G disagreed and asked for an Ombudsman's review. She said that she was vulnerable at the time of the payments, so Revolut should've done more to stop the payments and uncover the scam because Revolut's systems should've detected her account activity here as suspicious. She said that Revolut's anti-fraud systems failed to protect her from this scam because its questions were inadequate and it allowed her payments to leave the account with minimal scrutiny.

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 conclusion as our investigator. And for largely the same reasons. I'm sorry to hear that Mrs G has been the victim of a cruel scam. I know she feels strongly about this complaint and this will come as a disappointment to her, so I'll explain why.

I've read and considered the whole file. But I'll concentrate my comments on what I think is relevant. If I don't mention any specific point, it's not because I've failed to take it on board and think about it, but because I don't think I need to comment on it to reach what I think is a fair and reasonable outcome.

Where the evidence is incomplete, inconclusive, or contradictory (as it is here), I have to make my decision on the balance of probabilities – that is, what I consider is more likely than not to have happened in the light of the available evidence and the wider surrounding circumstances.

I've considered whether Revolut should've done more to stop the exchanges of GBP into crypto and the payments Mrs G made out of the account. It is common ground that Mrs G authorised the exchanges, the crypto withdrawals and the payments here. I accept that these were authorised even though Mrs G was the victim of a scam. So, although it wasn't her intention to pay money to the scammers, under the Payment Services Regulations 2017 (PSRs) and the terms of her account, Mrs G is presumed liable for the loss in the first instance.

I need to decide if the activity on Mrs G's account in relation to the transactions involved in this complaint were unusual enough for Revolt to have stopped some of the exchanges and payments and taken further action. This was a newly opened account at the time so there was no previous activity to compare this to. As a result, I'm not satisfied that the account activity in relation to the first exchange into BTC was sufficiently unusual for Revolut to have stepped in here and done more. Also, Mrs G only withdrew around £492 in BTC – not £4,400. So, she didn't actually lose the BTC that she attempted to withdraw on 19/20 September 2023. The first exchange into BTC was for a relatively small amount so I'm not satisfied that was sufficiently unusual for Revolut to have intervened. It's arguable that the £3,900 exchange into BTC was sufficiently suspicious and unusual here. Revolut didn't provide any warnings to Mrs G at that point. But it did stop the transfer of £3,636 on 20 September 2023 and ask Mrs G why she was making it. And based upon what happened when Revolut stopped the £3,636 payment, I'm not satisfied – on balance - I can reasonably say it could've stopped this scam.

Revolut asked Mrs G if she was being prompted or assisted with its questionnaire and if she had been told by someone to ignore any warnings. I'm satisfied that was a reasonable step for Revolut to take at that point in the transactions. Mrs G responded that she wasn't. Revolut then asked Mrs G why she was making the £3,636 payment. Mrs G said she was paying a family member or friend and the reason for that payment was private. Revolut asked some reasonable follow up questions based on the payment reason Mrs G provided, and she confirmed she hadn't been contacted unexpectantly, she hadn't paid this person before and she got the bank details 'face to face'. This led Revolut to provide warnings based upon Mrs G's answers. But these warnings wouldn't have resonated with her at the time because they were based upon her inaccurate payment reasons and responses to Revolut's questions. Revolut then told Mrs G that the payment was suspicious, but she could continue if she wanted to. Mrs G confirmed she wanted to continue.

Mrs G says Revolut should've seen through her answers and it therefore failed to prevent foreseeable harm, but I don't agree. Revolut considered the payment Mrs G was making as suspicious and stopped it so it could ask her some further questions. Which I think was a reasonable position for it to take. However, at that point Mrs G failed to provide Revolut with accurate payment reasons, despite Revolut telling her that she may not be able to get her money back if she didn't answer its questions truthfully. She wasn't paying a family member or a friend and she hadn't been given the bank details face to face by such a person. She also had the option to select that the payment she was making was 'As part of an investment' but this wasn't selected. If that payment reason had been selected, the follow up questions from Revolut would've been more tailored to Mrs G's investment recovery scam and in line with the points she has made to this service. So, I don't think I can reasonably blame Revolut for what happened here. It stopped the payment and asked reasonable questions and follow up questions to try and narrow down the payment reason and the risk. But it wasn't provided with accurate answers.

As a result of the above, I don't think Revolut stopping any of the earlier exchanges of GBP into crypto would've led to a different outcome. I think it's more likely that Revolut wouldn't have been provided with accurate reasons for Mrs G making the exchanges as she did when it stopped the later payment.

So, I can't reasonably conclude that Mrs G wasn't treated fairly here by Revolut.

Recovery

Revolut isn't able to recover the crypto withdrawal as that money has been sent to the scammer. The withdrawal of crypto isn't a regulated activity either as our Investigator has explained. So, I'm unable to comment on that any further.

When the complaint was raised to Revolut it was told Mrs G had a total loss of £4,400. But the complaint letter mentioned £3,900 of that total loss being sent to the scammer on 19 September 2023 (which was the exchange of GBP into BTC). But I can't see that Revolut was told specifically about the payments made on 20 September 2023. Revolut also asked for further information to complete its investigation but that wasn't provided. So, the chances of it recovering Mrs G's loss from the payments she made on 20 September 2023 are unlikely given the time that passed before the complaint was made and then when the payments were specifically provided to Revolut. It's very typical for the scammers to remove the money (which was a foreign currency) from the receiving accounts very quickly.
As a result, I can't fairly say Revolut didn't treat her fairly by not attempting recovery of that loss when the claim was made.

Mrs G has said she was vulnerable at the time of the scam and Revolut should've given consideration to her health conditions when considering the claim. But I can only ask Revolut to take those health conditions into account if it was aware of them at the time Mrs G made the payments. And I've not seen any evidence which persuades me Revolut was aware of those health issues at the time the scam occurred. Neither do I agree that the transactions on the account and Mrs G's responses should've been of further concern to Revolut at the time. So, I can’t reasonably hold it to a higher standard based upon the circumstances of this complaint.

My final decision

My final decision is that I don’t uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I’m required to ask Mrs G to accept or reject my decision before 25 August 2025.

Mark Dobson
Ombudsman