

The complaint

Mr G complains Revolut Ltd didn't protect him from harmful and compulsive spending.

What happened

Mr G complained to Revolut, saying it had a duty of care to protect his money, identify harmful behaviour and gambling. Mr G said he'd spent well over one hundred thousand pounds using Revolut, but Revolut never challenged this.

Mr G thought Revolut should have asked more questions about where the money was coming from, spotted this change in behaviour and intervened. Mr G also said it should have been clear he was in financial difficulties, so Revolut should have picked up on this too.

Mr G said he was compulsively spending money on cryptocurrency.

Revolut responded to say Mr G hadn't told it about his problems with compulsive spending. Revolut said it had challenged some payments and declined some payments as they were considered high risk.

Revolut said it couldn't see any applications for credit and didn't think it needed to refund any of the payments Mr G made.

Mr G brought his complaint to this service. Mr G said one of the sites he used is banned in the UK, no other bank allows people to spend on it, but Revolut did. And Mr G said there was proof of his applications for credit, he'd joined a waiting list for an overdraft.

An investigator looked into things but didn't think Mr G's complaint should be upheld. The investigator couldn't find any evidence of Mr G telling Revolut about his compulsive spending problems and didn't think Revolut needed to intervene.

The investigator didn't think Mr G's statements showed he was in financial difficulty. The investigator also didn't think Revolut needed to block the merchant Mr G said was banned and thought any intervention by Revolut would have failed to stop Mr G spending.

Mr G disagreed and said he often fell into arrears and had payments declined. Mr G said his behaviour was unusual, he was previously spending around a thousand pounds a year, then suddenly spent over a hundred thousand.

Mr G felt Revolut did nothing to safeguard him and an intervention would have made a difference, he'd have stopped spending with two specific merchants.

The investigator issued a second assessment, saying there was no proof of Mr G joining a waiting list for an overdraft. The investigator said there had been 664 declined payments between 2022 and 2024, but only 16 of these were cryptocurrency purchases.

The investigator said Mr G went overdrawn at times and Revolut had sent Mr G letters saying it would close his account, but didn't feel this was enough for Revolut to step in and

stop Mr G spending.

The investigator still didn't think the merchant in question should be blocked automatically and maintained an intervention wouldn't have made a difference.

Mr G repeated one of the merchants he used was banned in the UK and said the investigator was using their personal opinion around any intervention. Mr G said his account was in arrears more often than not.

Mr G asked for an ombudsman to decide things, and specifically said the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) guidance said Revolut had to look out for escalating spending and should have realised he was a vulnerable consumer.

Mr G said the spending on his account was clearly unusual, with most spending going to two cryptocurrency platforms. Mr G said Revolut had no idea what his salary was but identified he was one of its biggest spenders.

Mr G said it was clear he was in financial difficulties and Revolut's records are incomplete if it can't find record of his overdraft application.

Mr G said one of the merchants wasn't simply unregulated in the UK but specifically banned.

Mr G said Revolut only gave out external support after it knew he was spending compulsively, and still allowed him to spend on high risk platforms.

Mr G said Revolut failed in its duty of care towards him, and its record keeping is poor, as evidenced by his incomplete data subject access request (dSAR). Mr G would like this service to compel Revolut to issue a complete dSAR including call logs.

Mr G would like this service to accept meaningful intervention would have stopped Mr G spending in a harmful manner. Mr G feels Revolut allowed him to spend despite overwhelming indicators of vulnerabilities and illegal transactions.

Mr G's complaint was passed to me to decide things.

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.

There's no dispute there was an increase in Mr G's spending with Revolut. Mr G says this should have been an obvious indicator he was spending too much and in a harmful way.

But I don't agree. I've looked at Mr G's statements and there's an increase in all kinds of spending on his Revolut account. Mr G's spending money in high street shops and other retail outlets, withdrawing cash and making payments to other people.

I can see there were also a significant number of large payments to cryptocurrency platforms, but this isn't the only spending on Mr G's account.

I don't think this increase in the volume of transactions on Mr G's account would mean Revolut had to step in and challenge Mr G on the source of the money or whether he was spending in a harmful way.

But Revolut did challenge several of Mr G's payments. I can see in December 2023 Mr G wanted to make a payment to a cryptocurrency platform and Revolut thought this might be a scam. Revolut asked Mr G if he wanted to make the payment.

Revolut also asked Mr G what the payment was for, whether he was being pressured into making it. Mr G had time to stop and reflect, and answered he wasn't being pressured, and he was looking to make gains on his cryptocurrency investment.

I realise this isn't the intervention Mr G thinks Revolut ought to have made, but I think it is an intervention. Mr G is challenged on whether he wants to make the payment, and he seems happy to make it. At no point does Mr G say he has a compulsive need to spend.

And I can't see anywhere else where Mr G has told Revolut, prior to his complaint, he has a problem with compulsive spending. Mr G says he called Revolut and told it this several times, but Revolut has no record of any calls and nor does Mr G.

Mr G uses the chat function quite a lot, and I've read these messages. Mr G doesn't tell Revolut about his problem with cryptocurrency investments here either.

Overall, I'm not persuaded Mr G told Revolut about his compulsion to spend prior to his complaint being logged.

In the chats Mr G has an issue with one particular platform, and asks to raise chargebacks because his payments aren't being credited. Mr G also asks for this merchant to be blocked, which Revolut does.

Mr G says this intervention stopped him spending with this particular merchant, and I agree it did. But Mr G continued to spend with other merchants, before and after the block.

Although Mr G was clearly frustrated with the investigator using their personal opinion in an assessment, it's something this service does when assessing and deciding complaints where there's dispute about what might have happened.

No one can know for sure what would have happened had Revolut blocked the cryptocurrency platforms Mr G was using at the time. But I think, on balance, Mr G would have found other sites to spend on, or spend from another account.

It's clear Mr G has a problem with compulsive spending, and I'm glad he's getting some support in dealing with this. But this compulsion to spend wouldn't, I think, be stopped by Revolut blocking individual merchants.

Like the investigator, I think it's much more likely Mr G would have found other platforms to use had Revolut stepped in. I don't think an intervention would have stopped Mr G spending, he had a compulsion to do this, and blocking individual sites wouldn't stop the compulsion.

Mr G needed practical help, and Revolut provided this when it sent Mr G details about places he could get support for his compulsion to spend. I think this was a fair thing for it to do, I think there's a limit to the practical support Revolut can offer.

Mr G says he joined a waiting list for an overdraft, and this should have been a strong indication he was in financial difficulties. I don't agree this on its own would have been

indicative of Mr G spending in a harmful way.

Revolut is an electronic money provider, it doesn't offer lending in the same way a bank does. And the waiting list for an overdraft was, from what Revolut says, a way for it to measure consumer appetite for this product.

I don't think asking to join a list for a potential new product, even a borrowing one, says Mr G was experiencing financial difficulties.

I've also looked at the declined transactions on Mr G's account. I accept there are a lot over the three years, but many are grouped together in the same day. It seems Mr G was using his card for travel and the company was trying to debit fares.

Often the travel company would attempt the payment numerous times on the same day. I'm not sure this says Mr G was experiencing persistent financial difficulties, I think it more indicated Mr G wasn't covering payments he perhaps was unaware were due to debit.

And I don't accept Mr G was in arrears more often than not, Mr G was very rarely overdrawn and when he was, he cleared the balance quite quickly.

I can see Revolut asked Mr G to clear the balance or it might close his account, but this is because Revolut's an electronic money provider, the account should always be run in credit.

I don't think any threats to close Mr G's account was because Revolut thought he was experiencing financial difficulties, I think it was because he was breaching the terms.

Overall, I don't think Revolut should have thought Mr G was in a difficult financial position because of the way he ran his account.

Mr G says one of the platforms he used is banned in the UK, and transactions to it are illegal. I've read what Mr G sent in about this platform, and I don't think this shows the platform is banned.

The platform says it reserves the right not to transact with people in the UK, it doesn't say it's illegal to do this. The FCA doesn't regulate this platform, and has warned it might be offering its services as a regulated entity even though it isn't.

I don't think this warning is enough to say people can't transact with this platform. There are many overseas financial institutions which aren't regulated by the FCA. I don't think this means it's illegal to transact on them, even if other banks might not want to.

Again, I don't think using this platform should have flagged up any other concerns with Revolut than the fraud concerns it had, and raised with Mr G.

I can see how strongly Mr G feels about how his spending with Revolut went. And I accept Mr G spent a lot of money with several different cryptocurrency platforms.

But I don't think Revolut could have known Mr G had a compulsion to spend on these platforms, rather than legitimately investing in cryptocurrency. Whilst this type of investment is risky, it's not something unlawful or something I think Revolut should stop Mr G doing.

I think it was for Mr G to let Revolut know his spending was compulsive and harmful, and I can't see Mr G did this until he raised his complaint.

And even since Mr G's complaint, and getting some support for his compulsion to spend, Mr G's said he's continued to spend on cryptocurrency platforms.

I think this shows any intervention would only have closed down individual avenues for Mr G to spend, I don't think it would have stopped Mr G spending entirely.

I don't think Revolut could, just through the transactions on Mr G's account, have decided he was spending harmfully or Mr G needed help.

I think Mr G had several chances to tell Revolut about his compulsion to spend, when discussing cryptocurrency purchases, specifically via the chat function, but didn't do this.

And in any event, I think any potential intervention from Revolut would only have meant Mr G found other platforms, or other banks or electronic money providers, to make his purchases.

Mr G also mentioned a dSAR he says Revolut failed to complete properly. I can see Revolut sent Mr G a response to his dSAR request, which is what I can comment on. I think Revolut completed Mr G's request and sent him his data.

I think the contents of the dSAR, and whether Revolut has sent everything it should have, are for the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to look into, so Mr G might want to consider contacting the ICO for more guidance here.

My final decision

My final decision is I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr G to accept or reject my decision before 7 August 2025.

Chris Russ
Ombudsman