Financial Ombudsman Service

The complaint

Mr G is unhappy with Wise Payments Ltd trading as Wise. Mr G thought he was using his Wise account to transfer money to an account belonging to his daughter abroad. It turned out to be an incorrect account and Mr G wants Wise to refund him the lost money - $3,800.87.

What happened

Mr G did the transfer while his daughter was with him. Mr G said he pressed the send function key on the Wise app and then searched existing recipients and was presented with three options all for names in line with his daughter, but he selected the one that was marked USD account. The money didn't arrive in his daughter's account.

Mr G immediately contacted Wise who said it was Mr G's responsibility to check the account number before completing the transfer. Mr G told Wise that his daughters name had a rare spelling and he had used the existing recipients supplied by the Wise app to find her.

Wise attempted to recall the funds but didn't accept it had done anything wrong. It noted Mr G had created the recipient details some four years earlier but to an external bank account not a Wise account. Wise gave a specific time and date in 2021 when Mr G created the recipient details through his online account. It then said it was probably set it up as part of a *"refund creation flow."*

Wise maintained Mr G set up the recipient details four years earlier and he selected to send the money to this recipient when he made the transfer. Wise said it couldn't take responsibility for a transfer being sent to an unintended recipient due to Mr G choosing to send the funds to that recipient. It referred to sections 13.3 and 13.4 of its account terms and conditions.

Wise did attempt to recall the money but so far has not had any success.

Mr G didn't accept this and brought his complaint to this service.

Our investigator didn't uphold the complaint. She said Wise confirmed its system doesn't suggest new recipients. She said users can select existing recipients who they have transacted with before, or customers can search their existing contacts. Our investigator accepted Mr G created the USD details recipient record for his daughter in 2021 and had manually entered bank account details for a different account with an external bank. She concluded Wise hadn't made any errors and had only made the transfer Mr G requested it to. She also noted Mr G could check the account details and which bank the payment was being made to in advance of completing the transfer.

Mr G didn't accept this and asked for his complaint to be passed to an ombudsman for a final 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.

Mr G said he didn't think Wise had exercised a duty of care towards him. He said its systems had provided the incorrect recipient for the transfer.

Mr G also said it failed to act promptly to cancel the transaction and return the funds.

He said Wise should take full responsibility for the error and refund him the transferred money.

Wise maintained transfer funds were sent to the recipient details Mr G provided when setting up the transfer. So, it didn't make the error. It continued Mr G had set up the recipient details back in 2021 and chose to use them this time. It said he selected these old details which resulted in the error. It noted customers can choose from pre-existing details.

Wise made a recall attempt but this was unsuccessful as the recipient wouldn't return the money. It wouldn't refund Mr G as it didn't make the mistake and had made reasonable efforts to retrieve the funds.

Here are the terms sections Wise referred to:

"13.3 You must provide correct information to us. When setting up your withdrawal request, you must ensure that the information you provide is correct and complete. We will not be responsible for money sent to the wrong recipient because of incorrect information provided by you.

13.4 What happens if you provide incorrect recipient information. If you have provided incorrect information to us, we may, but are not required to, assist you in recovering your funds. We cannot guarantee that such efforts will be successful as they rely on the policies and practices of other banks and institutions. In addition, Wise may not be able to confirm that your recipient's name and account number match, as the names and other information associated with third party accounts may not be known to Wise. This means that if you provide an incorrect account number, your funds will most likely go to the wrong account."

It's clear from the information provided that the details used by Mr G came up when he started the process to transfer. But as referred to by Wise it is a customer's responsibility to check and ensure the account number is correct before agreeing to the transfer. In this case the details clearly show an account number Mr G didn't want to transfer the money to. He confirmed that in the subsequent telephone call with Wise. Even though the telephone call was shortly after the transfer Mr G was clearly aware in the call that he had sent the money to a different account number to the one he had wanted to use.

It seems Mr G went ahead with the transfer based on the name and the USD element of the account he found online. It's clear that these details came up when Mr G started the transfer. Wise say that's because it was Mr G who set it up, it said it wouldn't link in other accounts that were not connected. The account was saved to Mr G's Wise account only because he set it up originally. Mr G then chose to transfer the money to this account even though it had a different account number to the one he wanted to use and was linked to another bank and not Wise. I don't think it would be fair or reasonable to make Wise responsible for that.

I accept there's dispute about whether or not Mr G had set up the recipient details in the first place. But I've no reason to doubt what Wise said about the specific date and time details when Mr G set it up. However, I don’t think this is crucial. The key consideration in such transfers is the account number used for the transfer and the details shown in the terms and conditions above. It was Mr G’s responsibility to check the account number before completing the transfer.

The terms also refer to Wise’s attempts to get the money recalled. It has attempted this, but the request has been declined by the recipient. I can’t say that Wise is required to do anything more than it already has.

My final decision

I don’t uphold this complaint.

I make no award against Wise Payments Ltd trading as Wise.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I’m required to ask Mr G to accept or reject my decision before 29 September 2025.

John Quinlan
Ombudsman