

The complaint

Mrs S complains that when she made an overseas transfer of money through Wise Payments Limited she was charged excess fees.

What happened

In March 2025 Mrs S instructed Wise to carry out an international transfer. She had made similar transfers before, so knew what the likely fees would be. However, when the transfer arrived in the recipient's bank it was short by \$191. Mrs S queried this with Wise as she hadn't been charged that sort of fee before.

Wise said that for such transfers the SWIFT (money transfer) fee would generally be between \$10 and \$50. It carried out the payment through its intermediary bank and found out that in the course of carrying out the transaction, the intermediary had converted the payment, which had been received in USD (dollars) to the currency of the country where the recipient lived, though they had a USD account. The money had to be exchanged back again which accounted for the difference in the amount received.

Wise said that it hadn't asked the intermediary to do the conversion, and if it had been necessary, could have easily done it itself. It said that it wasn't responsible for the error but that it would contact its partner bank in order to try and recoup the shortfall.

On referral to the Financial Ombudsman Service, our Investigator said that as this error was made by an external third party – and not Wise, they were unable to ask Wise to refund the shortfall.

Subsequently Wise's partner bank agreed to refund the shortfall. I understand that Mrs S has now received this.

The matter has been passed to me for an Ombudsman's review.

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.

I should emphasise that I'm just considering here Mrs S's individual complaint against Wise. So, I can't look at wider issues. In particular I can't, as Mrs S requested, review Wise's policies and communications to ensure greater transparency about possible third-party charges in future transactions.

On carrying out international transfers, the payment service or bank, if it doesn't have a business relationship with the bank receiving the transfer, will use a correspondent or intermediary bank to carry out the payment on its behalf. In this case Wise used its partner bank as the intermediary.

The intermediary sets the fees it will charge and Wise has no control over that. In this case

the excess charges arose after a mistake by the intermediary when it exchanged the money, which it appears had already been converted into USD, into the currency where the receiving bank was situated. A shortfall was created because the money had to be reconverted back into USD. In those circumstances as Wise didn't make the error itself, the only thing it could do was to request that the intermediary make up the shortfall. As it is situated overseas Mrs S wouldn't have been able to complain to us directly about the intermediary.

Fortunately, Wise managed to get the intermediary to pay back the shortfall, and Mrs S has acknowledged receipt of this. As I regard this as resolving her complaint, I don't propose to require Wise to take any other action.

My final decision

I don't uphold the complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs S to accept or reject my decision before 22 October 2025.

Ray Lawley
Ombudsman