

The complaint

Mrs B has complained that Monzo Bank Ltd won't refund the money she lost after falling victim to a scam.

What happened

Both sides are most familiar with the case and we must anonymise decisions, so I will summarise what happened relatively briefly.

In late 2024, Mrs B was contacted by scammers posing as recruiters. They offered her a fake job doing easy flexible remote tasks for high pay, with no qualifications or experience required and no contract, paid through cryptocurrency.

Mrs B completed tasks on the scammers' platform, but had to pay her own money in to continue. She made two payments from her Monzo account to her own account at a cryptocurrency exchange, totalling around £1,000. She then bought crypto and sent it from her crypto account to the scammers.

Mrs B then attempted a third payment for around £4,700, but Monzo stopped it and restricted her account, explaining their scam concerns. They warned Mrs B about this sort of job scam. Mrs B then made further scam payments from her other bank account instead.

Mrs B has explained that in the end, the scammers kept asking her for even larger amounts, and wouldn't pay her the earnings. She reported the scam to Monzo.

Monzo contacted Mrs B's crypto account provider to see if any funds could be recovered. But the exchange confirmed that no funds remained. Monzo didn't think they were liable for Mrs B's loss.

Our Investigator looked into things independently and didn't uphold the complaint. Mrs B asked for an ombudsman's decision, so the complaint's been passed to me to decide.

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 understand that Mrs B fell victim to a scam, for which she has my sympathy. I appreciate this cannot have been an easy matter for her to face, and I appreciate why she would like her money back. It's worth keeping in mind that it's the scammers who are primarily responsible for their own scam, and it's the scammers who really owe Mrs B her money back. But I can only look at what Monzo are responsible for. Having carefully considered everything that both sides have said and provided, I can't fairly hold Monzo liable for Mrs B's loss. I'll explain why.

It's not in dispute that Mrs B authorised the payments involved. So although she didn't intend for the money to end up with scammers, under the Payment Services Regulations she is liable for her own payments and the resulting loss in the first instance. And broadly speaking, Monzo had an obligation to follow her instructions – the starting position in law is that banks are expected to process payments which a customer authorises them to make.

Mrs B made arguments about the CRM Code. But as these were payments to Mrs B's own crypto account, they were not covered by the CRM Code, nor the ASR rules.

Monzo should have been on the lookout for payments which could be the result of fraud or scams, to help prevent them. But a balance must be struck between identifying and responding to potentially fraudulent payments, and ensuring there's minimal disruption to legitimate payments. I've thought carefully about whether Monzo should have done more in Mrs B's case.

However, I don't think Monzo needed to intervene any earlier than they did. The initial payments were relatively small, and it was just the two of them – not, for example, a series of large or many rapid payments. They were going to an account in Mrs B's own name, and she had sent money to her crypto account before this. So the initial payments were not so remarkable that Monzo needed to intervene. I think Monzo intervened at the right point.

Further, even if Monzo had intervened even earlier, it seems most likely that this would not have stopped the loss. I say this because both Monzo and the other bank intervened here and asked appropriate questions. But the scammers instructed Mrs B on how to mislead her banks, and she did so. Across the various calls involved, Mrs B stuck to a cover story that she was just investing in cryptocurrency of her own accord. She told her banks that she was storing money in her crypto account for long-term investing that she'd do over time in small increments to mitigate risk. She confirmed that no one had approached her, there was no other company involved, there was no job opportunity involved, no one had told her what to say, no one else was involved at all, she'd done her own research and knew quite a bit, and she was very aware of scams – saying she would cut off anyone who contacted her out of the blue about things like earning money through crypto. It's clear from Mrs B's messages with the scammers that she trusted them – she reaffirmed her trust to them even after being warned about scams just like this one. Indeed, both banks gave Mrs B detailed warnings about job scams that matched up to her very situation; but she didn't heed these, and went ahead anyway. Even when Monzo blocked Mrs B's scam payments outright, she complained about the block and simply made the payments from her other bank instead.

So between the two banks involved, I think Mrs B received appropriate intervention here. I'm afraid I find that the primary reason why it didn't work is down to Mrs B's actions. And given what I went through above, it's not likely that earlier reasonable, proportionate intervention would've stopped the loss in this case. It's more likely that Mrs B would've gone ahead anyway. So I cannot fairly or reasonably hold Monzo liable on those grounds.

I've then considered what Monzo did to try to recover the money after Mrs B told them about the scam. Unfortunately, it wasn't possible for Monzo to recover funds that Mrs B had already sent on in crypto from her account at the crypto exchange. And any money still remaining in Mrs B's own crypto account would've still been hers, so there was nothing more for Monzo to do there. Monzo did try contacting the exchange anyway, but they confirmed no funds remained. And I'm afraid there was nothing more that Monzo could've reasonably done to get the money back here.

So while I'm very sorry to hear about what the scammers did to Mrs B, I don't think Monzo can fairly be held responsible for her loss. And so I can't fairly tell Monzo to reimburse Mrs B in this case.

My final decision

For the reasons I've explained, I don't uphold this complaint.

This final decision marks the end of our service's consideration of the case.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs B to accept or reject my decision before 29 December 2025.

Adam Charles
Ombudsman