

## The complaint

Miss S has complained that deductions were made without warning, when she booked two currency transfers through Wise Payments Limited.

## What happened

In February 2025, Miss S booked two currency transfers with Wise. To fund the transfers, Miss S sent 250 CHF and \$3,500 USD from a currency account in the UK to Wise. However, when Wise received the two transfers, it received less money than Miss S had sent. The bank Miss S had sent the money from told her that it hadn't applied any charges, so Miss S complained to Wise.

Wise issued its final response to the complaint on 14 March 2025. It explained that the amounts received were likely to be less than the amounts sent due to the transfers being processed via the SWIFT payment system. Wise explained that correspondent banks deduct their own fees from SWIFT payments. Wise also said it had sent links to Miss S to top up the amounts, to ensure the full amounts she originally wanted to send could be. But Miss S wanted to unwind the transactions as she was unhappy that charges had been applied without her knowledge.

To resolve matters Wise cancelled the USD transfer, and the money was credited back into the account it had been sent from. However, a further \$50 USD had been deducted from the amount sent. This resulted in Miss S having a total of \$70 USD less than she'd started off with.

Wise offered Miss S the opportunity to pay the CHF into a Swiss or Lichtenstein registered bank account, or failing that, said it could be sent to an account by SWIFT, or Miss S could use the CHF funds for a new transaction.

Unhappy with the response to the complaint, Miss S referred her complaint to this service. One of our investigators assessed the complaint and they didn't uphold the complaint.

As Miss S disagreed with the investigator's conclusions, the matter was referred for an ombudsman's decision.

I issued a provisional decision on 15 September 2025 explaining why I was minded to uphold the complaint. I have included extracts of my provisional decision below and it forms a part of this complaint.

*"Having reviewed everything, I'm currently minded to uphold this complaint. I will explain why.*

*Miss S has complained that \$20 USD was deducted from transferring the 3,500 USD (and a further \$50 USD was deducted when it was sent back), and 9 CHF was deducted from the 250 CHF she'd sent to Wise.*

*Miss S has provided evidence from the bank she sent the money from that it didn't charge her any fees for the transfer. And equally, Wise said that it didn't apply the charges either, it says that it only received \$2,480 USD and 241 CHF. Wise says that the charges must've therefore been deducted by correspondent banks. This does seem the most likely explanation as to why Wise received less than the amount that Miss S had sent.*

*To understand on whose behalf the correspondent banks were acting for, we asked Wise to review the SWIFT payments to determine at what point in the chain, and by whom, were the deductions made. However, Wise says that Miss S should trace the payments through the sending bank, and says it can't do this because the USD transfer was cancelled (although it didn't comment on the CHF transfer).*

*However, I think this is information that Wise should have and if it doesn't have it on file, is something it should be able to obtain. And, given that the sending bank has already provided evidence (via Miss S) that it hadn't charged Miss S anything to make the transfers, then with the evidence I have been provided with so far, on balance, I think that the correspondent banks that made the deductions were more likely than not acting on Wise's behalf to receive the funds. I say this because, if the correspondent banks (that made the deductions) had been acting on behalf of the sending bank, I think this likely would've been stated as a charge, when Miss S set up the transfers.*

*As such, given that the charges applied have more likely than not been applied by a correspondent bank acting on behalf of Wise, and Miss S wasn't made aware of those charges when she set up the transfers, I don't think it's fair that those charges were applied to the transfers. Had Miss S been made aware of what the charges would've been, I don't think she would've continued with the transactions – given that when the money did arrive with Wise (after the deductions had been made), she asked for the money to be returned to the sending accounts.*

*I note that, after Wise sent the USDs back to the sending account, a further \$50 USD had been deducted. But, had things gone as they should've, I don't think that the Miss S would've made the transfer in the first place. So, I think it is fair that Wise reimburse Miss S for both the sending and returning charges.*

*In terms of the CHF, Miss S says she doesn't have a Lichtenstein or Swiss bank account. Therefore, it seems that to return the CHF to Miss S, it will need to be converted into GBP, and/or transferred back to her via a SWIFT payment. This will no doubt incur further costs and so I think an award (which I have set out below) should be made to cover the likely costs to return the 241 CHF back to Miss S.*

...

*To put matters right, I'm currently minded to say that Wise should pay Miss S:*

- The \$70 USD she lost in sending the \$3,500 USD to Wise and then returning it back to the account it had been sent from.*
- The 9 CHF that Miss S lost when she sent the 250 CHF to Wise; and*
- A further £50. This is partly to cover off any additional costs Miss S may incur in converting and/or sending the above CHF amounts in GBP to a UK bank account, and any remaining amount left over to be compensation for the inconvenience caused to Miss S by this matter."*

After I issued my provisional decision, Miss S and Wise responded.

In summary, Miss S said that she would prefer that the 241 CHF is not converted into GBP, as she wants to transfer the money back into a currency account she holds with another provider. She also said that £50 for the distress and inconvenience is not enough and that the award should be £200.

Wise also responded and didn't accept the provisional decision either. It said that only the sending bank could trace the payment. It said sometimes payments in USD can be traced by the receiving institution using a GPI tracker, but said it can't do that in this case as it wasn't provided a UETR number from the sending bank. Wise also said that, it has no control or say over which correspondent banks are involved in an inbound SWIFT payment and says it did warn Miss S about potential charges.

### **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 reconsidered this complaint, I remain of the view that it should be upheld.

In this case, Miss S had set up two currency transfers with Wise, and a part of that process was that Wise instructed Miss S to fund the two transfers. However, when Miss S did that, charges were deducted. Previously, I'd said that Wise should trace the payments to determine who exactly applied the charges. But Wise said it can't do that with either of the payments. But based on the evidence provided, I'm satisfied that those charges were not applied by the sending bank, or the sending bank's correspondent bank. As such, the evidence provided indicates that the charges were most likely applied by a correspondent bank acting on behalf of Wise.

However, as neither Wise nor the sending bank informed Miss S of the charges, then Miss S had no way of knowing that she would be charged or indeed, how much extra she'd need to send to cover the charges. In my view this is unfair. After all, if Miss S then made secondary payments to Wise, to fully fund the currency transfers (and she was only made aware of how much would be deducted until after making the payments), she would've still not have sent enough money to fund the currency transfers because she wasn't aware of how much extra she needed to send to cover the costs.

As such, in the circumstances, I don't think it's fair that the charges were applied. As it seems most likely that the charges were applied by a correspondent bank acting on behalf of Wise to receive the payments (and neither the information from the sending bank that Miss S has provided, nor anything that Wise has provided suggests otherwise), I think it's fair in the circumstances that Wise reimburse Miss S the fees she incurred.

I note that Miss S says that she doesn't want the CHF that she'd sent to Wise to be converted back into GBP. However, I'm not saying that Wise should do that. Ultimately, other than reimbursing Miss S with the 9 CHF charge, it would then be up to Miss S to decide what to do with the 250 CHF that is with Wise.

I also note that Miss S would like more compensation for the distress and inconvenience caused, especially as it has taken some time to reach this stage with this service. However, although Miss S wasn't aware that the charges would be applied, at the same time she wasn't prevented from continuing with the two currency transfers if that is what she wanted to do (albeit at an increased cost). And I can't reasonably say that Wise should pay Miss S added compensation for the amount of time it has taken for her complaint to reach this stage with this service. Therefore, whilst I recognise that £50 may be less than what Miss S wants, in the circumstances, I think it is fair.

## **Putting things right**

To put matters right, I require Wise to pay Miss S:

- \$70 USD to cover the amount she lost in sending the \$3,500 USD to Wise and then returning it back to the account it had been sent from.
- 9 CHF to cover the amount Miss S lost when she sent the 250 CHF to Wise; and
- A further £50. This is partly to cover off any additional costs Miss S may incur in converting and/or sending the above CHF to another account, and any remaining amount left over to be compensation for the inconvenience caused to Miss S by this matter.

## **My final decision**

Because of the reasons given above and in my provisional decision, I uphold this complaint and require Wise Payments Limited to do what I have outlined above, to put matters right for Miss S, in full and final settlement of this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss S to accept or reject my decision before 12 November 2025.

Thomas White  
**Ombudsman**