

The complaint

Mr W complains that a transfer he made from his account with Wise Payments Limited trading as Wise to an account in his name with another financial institution didn't credit the account although he was told it had. Mr W wants compensation between £100 - £150.

What happened

Mr W sent a payment of £5 from his Wise account to an account he held with another financial institution which I'll refer to as C. Mistakenly, he input the account number for an account he no longer used. Wise sent a message to say the transfer had been successful very quickly. Mr W discovered the error and contacted Wise on 3 September 2025. Wise said its notification that the money had arrived was correct in so far as the money had arrived with C. But it couldn't say whether the money had landed with the account because it couldn't see what went on with another bank's accounts. C said it couldn't locate the funds which left Mr W distressed.

Wise sent a final response to Mr W's complaint reiterating the points I've shared above. Mr W escalated his complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service where one of our investigators considered Mr W's concerns.

The investigator concluded that there had been no error in Wise's processing of the payment instruction. But they did say the message received regarding the money having arrived could be construed as misleading. They didn't find that Wise's policy for not chasing payments under £25 was unreasonable. Mr W disagreed and said Wise's technology should have detected the closed account status.

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.

It's my role in this matter to look at what should have happened, what did happen and, if there was a mistake on Wise's part – what it should do to put things right.

The first stage is what should have happened. It's not in dispute that Mr W entered an old account number when he requested the online transfer. So should Wise have detected it was an old account number and if so what should it have done?

Mr W says that Wise does have the technology. I'm aware that in common with other banks, Wise can check if the account name and number match when a new transfer is set up. But that's only if the recipient bank has signed up to take part. It doesn't have to. But I'm not aware of technology that allows one bank to check if an account at another bank is open or closed. That to me doesn't seem appropriate as it's giving access to another bank to the internal systems of another bank.

I think the obligation on Wise was to process the payment it was asked to. It did this. Unfortunately, this led to a problem. But I don't find that problem was of Wise's making. I think it dealt with Mr W appropriately when he raised his concerns and paid him £100 compensation for delaying the escalation of his complaint. I can't comment on that payment because complaint handling is not a regulated activity and so isn't covered by this service's jurisdiction.

With regard to the notification Mr W received, I accept that this could be misconstrued. But even if I do accept that, any compensation I award must be based on the impact of the error. Whilst all situations are different, we do publish on our website an indication of what awards we might make in different situations. In the category "An apology or small monetary award" it says:

Using financial services won't always be totally hassle free and we wouldn't award for things that aren't more serious than the normal nuisances of everyday life. So just because there's been a mistake it doesn't necessarily follow that we would always award compensation – especially when the impact is minimal.

To reiterate, I don't think Wise did anything wrong in the way it processed Mr W's request to transfer money. So the question is, did the notification lead Mr W to believe money was in his other account and did the fact it wasn't have more than a minimal impact on him.

I've already said the notification may have led him to that conclusion. But the transfer was for £5 to a savings account. Had it been to another current account for a more significant sum of money where food or other essentials bills came out of, I may have thought differently. But Mr W has said this is a savings account. And the fact it was being put to savings indicates there wasn't an immediate need for the money. And so I'm not persuaded that not having access to that money had a significant impact on Mr W. For that reason, I don't consider that a compensatory award is required.

My final decision

For the reasons given above, my final decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr W to accept or reject my decision before 12 January 2026.

Stephen Farmer
Ombudsman