

The complaint

Mr G is unhappy that Starling Bank Limited (Starling) won't reimburse money he lost to a scam.

The details of this complaint are well known to both parties, so I won't repeat everything here. In summary, Mr G has advised he made two payments from his Starling account in October 2025 which he ultimately lost to a scam. Mr G lost a total of £960.67 from his Starling account as a result of the scam.

Mr G raised a complaint with Starling. It investigated the complaint but didn't uphold it. It didn't think it had done anything wrong by allowing the payments to go through. So, Mr G brought his complaint to our service.

Our Investigator looked into the complaint but didn't uphold it. Mr G remained unhappy, so the complaint has been passed to me for a review and 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.

Having done so, I agree with the conclusions reached by the Investigator for the following reasons:

- It isn't in dispute that Mr G authorised the two payments he made from his Starling account. The payments were requested using his legitimate security credentials provided by Starling, and the starting position is that banks ought to follow the instructions given by their customers in order for legitimate payments to be made as instructed.
- However, I've considered whether Starling should have done more to prevent Mr G from falling victim to the scam, as there are some situations in which a bank should reasonably have had a closer look at the circumstances surrounding a particular transfer. For example, if it was particularly out of character.
- I've reviewed Mr G's account statements, and I can't conclude that the payments made to the scam would have looked particularly unusual or suspicious to Starling. I appreciate that the payments lost to the scam may have represented a lot of money to Mr G, but they simply were not of a value where I'd usually expect Starling to be concerned that Mr G was at a heightened risk of financial harm. They were also not unusual when compared to Mr G's recent account activity. So, in the circumstances, it would have been difficult for Starling to identify that he was at risk of losing his funds.
- One of the payments was made to an account in Mr G's own name, and although Starling should, at the time, have been aware of the risk of multi-stage fraud such as Mr G was experiencing, I consider it reasonable that Starling might have taken some

reassurance from this fact in the circumstances. The other payment was being made to a legitimate college so, in the circumstances I wouldn't have expected Starling to be concerned that Mr G was at a heightened risk of financial harm on these payments.

- As I've set out above, I don't think the transactions ought to have indicated that Mr G was at a heightened risk of financial harm given the relatively low value of the payments. So, I don't think Starling would've reasonably been expected to intervene to ask further questions before processing the payments.
- I've also considered whether Starling could have done anything to recover Mr G's payments once the scam was uncovered. Mr G has argued that he made Starling aware of the scam before the payments left his account. Pending debit card transactions cannot be stopped by the cardholder's bank as these are authorised payments that have been promised to be paid, so Starling couldn't have done anything to stop any pending transactions.
- As the payments were made by debit card the chargeback process is relevant, which can sometimes help recover a payment, subject to the relevant card scheme's rules. However, a chargeback wouldn't have been successful in the circumstances. One of the payments was being made to a legitimate merchant which provided the services as intended. The other payment was sent to another account in Mr G's name, and then on to the scam, so I don't think there was any reasonable prospect of Starling recovering his funds. And even if any funds for the second payment remained in the account, they would have been accessible to Mr G. So, I wouldn't have expected Starling to have done anything else.

I appreciate this will likely come as a disappointment to Mr G, however, in the circumstances, I do not consider it would be fair and reasonable to ask Starling to do anything further.

My final decision

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 G to accept or reject my decision before 23 March 2026.

Aleya Khanom
Ombudsman