

## **The complaint**

Miss F complains Wise Payments Limited won't refund the money she lost when she fell victim to a scam.

## **What happened**

The details of this complaint are well known to both parties. But in summary, Miss F was contacted about an investment opportunity in mid-2022. She was put in touch with someone I'll refer to as "H", who allegedly worked for the investment company and offered to support Miss F with her finances. Unfortunately, this was a scam.

Miss F came to see H as a friend, and believed they were acting in her best interests. She was persuaded to download remote access software and grant H access to her Wise account (amongst others, including new accounts she was prompted to set up).

Miss F says H used this access to make payments from her accounts, as well as opening other accounts and loans in her name without her permission. She says she did find out about the loans a few months after they were taken out, but H said they would sort them out – and Miss F agreed to allow H to continue helping her.

In mid-2023, H stopped communicating with Miss F and she came to realise she had been scammed. When she reported the matter to Wise, it ultimately agreed to refund £3,500 of her loss, constituting 50% of two payments made due to the scam – and to pay £150 compensation due to its delay looking into her scam claim. Miss F referred the matter to our service as she wasn't sure if Wise could or should have done more. Our investigator has concluded Wise's compensation is fair. Miss F has asked for a formal decision from an ombudsman.

## **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'm not persuaded Wise ought to do more to resolve this matter. This is because:

- While Miss F may not have made all of these payments directly, I'm persuaded it is fair to treat them as authorised. Miss F granted H access to the account, and the nature of the scam included that payments were being made – allegedly to be invested. I can also see Miss F had some active involvement, such as calling Wise in September 2022 to ask for some flagged payments to be released.
- The starting position under the relevant regulations – the Payment Services Regulations 2017 – is that Miss F is liable for authorised payments. But I have also considered whether Wise ought to have realised Miss F was being scammed and prevented any of her loss when it received the payment instructions.

- However, I'm conscious of the strong influence H was exerting over Miss F. They had built up a lot of trust, and Miss F has told us she believed H was acting in her best interests. She continued allowing H access to her accounts, and helped facilitate further payments, for a significant period of time even after finding out H had taken out £65,000 debt in her name.
- If challenged further about the payments, I consider it likely Miss F would have deferred to H for guidance on what to say. Given this, I'm not persuaded Wise ought to have been able to uncover that the payments were part of a scam – or to have dissuaded Miss F from proceeding.
- I do also agree with the investigator that, even if I were to find Wise at fault in this respect, the picture I have of Miss F's loss makes it hard to see what further, if anything, it might be fair to ask Wise to compensate her for.
- This scam took place across several accounts, with money being sent back and forth. Due to the nature of the scam, we don't have full records for all of these accounts. Miss F has also received relief from other firms in addition to the £3,500 Wise has refunded. For example, her loans have been written off and another firm has reimbursed more than £86,000. This is relevant to determining Miss F's outstanding loss.
- Miss F also received some substantial credits during the scam, such as around £75,000 from cryptocurrency-related merchants. I appreciate this may have been money being sent "back and forth", but it further demonstrates the difficulty in quantifying her loss when we don't have complete records of all the accounts involved. Cash deposits exceeding £50,000 also funded some of the scam payments. I appreciate Miss F says this was from cash she stored at home. But given the very high value, I would expect more detail or evidence to demonstrate this.
- Overall, I don't consider it has been demonstrated that Wise should fairly provide further redress for not preventing this scam. I also don't think it could have successfully recovered Miss F's loss. For those funds transferred to third parties, it's unlikely any sums remained to be recalled; scammers generally move funds on swiftly. For those sent on by card, I can't see there would have been realistic prospects to recover from the merchants paid under the limited protections offered by the chargeback scheme. This is because the payments were authorised, and were sent to genuine merchants who appear to have provided the expected services – even if the accounts they provided were being used by the scammer.
- While I don't think it affected recovery prospects, I do appreciate there was a delay by Wise in looking into this matter which would have caused Miss F further upset and frustration at an already difficult time. However, I'm persuaded the £150 compensation Wise paid Miss F fairly reflects this impact.

In saying all of this, I don't want to diminish that Miss F has clearly lost out significantly due to this scam and was cruelly taken advantage of by H. However, my role here is to look at Wise's part in what happened. Having carefully considered all the circumstances, I'm not persuaded it would be fair to direct Wise to provide further redress to Miss F.

### **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 Miss F to accept or

reject my decision before 16 April 2026.

Rachel Loughlin  
**Ombudsman**