

The complaint

Mr R has complained that HSBC UK Bank Plc (trading as first direct) won't refund money which he says he lost in a scam.

What happened

In summary: in summer 2021, Mr R made a payment of around £7,500 to a friend.

In late 2025, Mr R reported this payment to first direct. He said he'd sent the money to his trusted friend, so they could help him convert it into cryptocurrency, and then send it to an investment scheme. But he said the scheme turned out to be a scam.

First direct didn't think they were liable for Mr R's stated loss. The complaint was brought to our service.

Mr R was unable to provide any supporting evidence that this payment related to a scam.

Our Investigator looked into things independently and didn't uphold the complaint. Mr R asked for an ombudsman's final 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'm sorry to hear that Mr R might have possibly fallen victim to a scam. I appreciate that such scams are not easy matters to face, and I appreciate why Mr R would want to try to get his money back if it was lost to a scam. We must keep in mind that if Mr R was scammed, it'd be the scammers who'd be primarily responsible for scamming him, and it'd be the scammers who'd really owe him his money back. But in this case against first direct, I'm just looking at what first direct might be liable for.

In order to potentially hold first direct liable for this claimed scam loss, I'd first need to be reasonably satisfied that the money was actually lost to a scam.

Unfortunately, Mr R has been unable to provide any evidence which might reasonably show or substantiate that this payment was lost to a scam. For example, we've not been given any communication records where the scam or payment were discussed, nor any documents or invoices or receipts from the alleged scam, nor any records from the cryptocurrency account he says his friend helped him forward the money to, nor anything which substantively links this payment to a scam. All I can see is that Mr R paid his friend. For all I can know, that could've very plausibly been a legitimate payment.

I'm not saying I've actually concluded that Mr R made a false claim. But I cannot fairly hold first direct liable for an alleged scam loss when there's not evidence which reasonably substantiates that the money was ever lost to a scam. I'm afraid I can't just take Mr R's word for it in the way he suggested. If we were to follow that approach, it would allow others to rather easily make illegitimate claims.

So while I'm very sorry to hear Mr R's allegations about what scammers might have done to him, I cannot reasonably hold first direct responsible for his claimed loss. And so I can't fairly tell first direct to reimburse Mr R 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 Mr R to accept or reject my decision before 13 April 2026.

Adam Charles
Ombudsman