

The complaint

Mr R is unhappy with the currency exchange rate provided to him by HiFX Europe Limited.

What happened

To briefly summarise: On 31 December 2023, Mr R instructed four currency transfers with HiFX. Mr R expected to receive a 'friendly' exchange rate from HiFX, but he later discovered that the rate provided to him by HiFX wasn't as favourable as he felt should have been the case. Mr R wasn't happy about this, so he raised a complaint.

HiFX responded to Mr R and said that they hadn't 'marked up' the exchange rate as Mr R believed. HiFX also noted that the rate that would apply to the transfers had been displayed to Mr R when he instructed the transfers, and that Mr R had accepted this rate when he confirmed the transfers. Mr R wasn't satisfied with HiFX's response, so he referred his complaint to this service.

One of our investigators looked at this complaint. But they didn't feel HiFX had acted unfairly in how they'd managed the situation and so didn't uphold the complaint. Mr R remained dissatisfied, so the matter was escalated to an ombudsman for a final 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.

Mr R has explained that HiFX applied what he has calculated as being a 1.5% mark up on the exchange rate he expected HiFX to have obtained for him on his transfers. However, HiFX have provided information and screenshots to this service which I feel confirms that this wasn't the case. Indeed, I'm satisfied from the information provided to this service by HiFX that Mr R's transfers only incurred a mark up of 0.2% - which I feel does qualify as 'friendly pricing'.

Specifically, HiFX have confirmed that the exchange rate they obtained was 1.987914, and that the rate Mr R was charged was 1.983700 – which equates to a 0.2% spread.

As such, it seems that Mr R's expectation about the exchange rate that HiFX would obtain for him was incorrect. But this isn't HiFX's fault. And HiFX displayed the rate that would be applied to the transfers to Mr R when he instructed them.

Mr R has said that he didn't check the rate because he trusted HiFX to provide a 'friendly' rate to him, as they'd confirmed to him a few weeks previously that they would. But as I've explained, I'm satisfied that HiFX did apply 'friendly pricing' to Mr R's transfers. And it isn't HiFX's fault if Mr R chose not to check that the rate that would be applied to his transfers was in line with what he was expecting to receive.

Mr R is also unhappy that HiFX's agent told him that HiFX couldn't amend the exchange rate prior to the completion of the transfers, and he feels that HiFX should have said that they

'wouldn't' amend the exchange rate, rather than that they 'couldn't'. But if HiFX's agent was speaking with HiFX's terms and conditions in mind, then I can understand the language that they used. And, regardless of the semantics, the result was always going to be the same – that Mr R's transfers would be made using the exchange rate which had been given to him when he instructed the transfers, and to which he had agreed when confirming them.

I realise this won't be the outcome that Mr R was wanting, but it follows from all the above that I won't be upholding this complaint or instructing HiFX to take any further or alternative action here. I hope that Mr R will understand, given what I've explained, why I've made the final decision that I have.

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 R to accept or reject my decision before 23 April 2024.

Paul Cooper
Ombudsman