

The complaint

Miss B complains that Santander UK Plc didn't process cheques she paid into her business account.

What happened

Miss B explains that due to difficulties accessing a branch of Santander she was told she could pay in cheques through a third-party business. She did this without incident for some 18 months and made sure the cheques had cleared. But one deposit of £269 made up of five cheques wasn't shown in her account. And she was told she would have to follow this up herself.

Santander said it hadn't made a mistake. A paying in slip should have been included in the envelope Miss B gave to the third party. It recognised that Miss B had been able to deposit cheques without this for some time and by only writing her sort code and account number on the outside of the deposit envelope. And so, it paid her £50 as a gesture of goodwill. It had provided the details it had of the cheques and although had offered to provide photocopies then told her it didn't have these as the cheques weren't processed. Santander suggested she keep copies herself in future.

Our investigator recommended that Santander pay Miss B a further £50 to make total compensation of £100. He said that the information online about the account set out that a payment slip should have been included in the envelope when paying cheques using this third party. And the recommendation was that a copy of the cheques be kept, and the sorting code and account number written on the back of each. Somehow cheques had earlier been credited without the paying in slip and this hadn't been pointed out to Miss B. But this time that hadn't been possible. He thought that Santander should pay the further compensation as it gave Miss B the impression a copy of the cheques would be available and didn't promptly tell her this wasn't going to be the case. He said that Santander had agreed to pay this.

Miss B didn't agree and wanted her complaint to be reviewed. She explained that sometimes she didn't see clients again. She had been able to obtain a replacement payment from one, but she stressed the embarrassment involved. She had no way of tracing other cheques having only been given the sort code and she'd wasted time going to the relevant banks only to be told that they couldn't help her due to data protection requirements. Miss B had made numerous phone calls and didn't think that this outcome was fair.

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 these cheques weren't processed. As there was no paying in slip with the cheques I'm not able to find that this was an error by Santander. Our investigator has referred to the guidance about paying in cheques to the third party. And although a copy of the relevant envelope hasn't been provided here, information available online indicates such

envelopes would typically also refer to the need for a paying in slip.

It's unfortunate that despite her efforts Miss B has only been able to recover one of the payments. In an attempt to assist her Santander said it would provide copies of the cheques, but these weren't available. Miss B didn't have other business records to help trace the payments with her clients.

I don't consider Santander is fairly responsible for her loss here. But I do think that it could potentially have done more to alert her when previous credits had somehow been processed without a paying in slip. And to have given her better information about what it would be possible to provide her with this time. I've taken into account what she's said about her calls and visits to other banks and our published guidance about compensation. Having done so I know I going to disappoint Miss B when I say that total compensation of £100 is fair.

My final decision

My decision is that I uphold this complaint and I require Santander UK Plc to pay Miss B a further £50 making total compensation of £100.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss B to accept or reject my decision before 5 May 2023.

Michael Crewe
Ombudsman