

## The complaint

Ms M is unhappy with the compensation Santander UK Plc (“Santander”) has offered her for several banking errors that she feels have had an accumulative effect and impact on her life and wellbeing.

## What happened

The circumstances that led to this complaint are well known to both parties, so I won’t repeat them in detail here. But briefly the events began in October 2021 when Ms M requested her name to be changed on her account. In December 2021 – when she went to notify the bank of a change of address, she discovered her name hadn’t been changed. A new card was then sent to the incorrect (previous) address. When that error was realised, Ms M’s card had to be blocked and so Ms M was unable to access her account for a period of time. In January 2022, Ms M then fell victim to a scam (which has been refunded) but she experienced several issues during the handling of these complaints including misinformation, excessive wait times and poor customer service.

I have broadly summarised the complaint issues with Santander’s reference endings - along with what has already been paid and/or offered in the table below:

reference ending	complaint issue	offered (£)	paid (£)
*****621	name change	150	150
*****819	card address	250	250
*****351	misinformation/service issues	150	150
*****775	card blocked	100	100
*****560	payment blocked for checks	50	
*****171 (**883)	incorrect info/handling of fraud claim	250	

Our investigator felt Santander’s offer of £650 was fair and reasonable. Ms M didn’t agree and felt the investigator had misunderstood what Santander had already offered her as well as underestimating the impact of all this had had on her.

Santander has paid £650 to Ms M already and had offered a further £350 (an additional offer of £50 was made after my involvement) – so £1,000 in total.

I issued my provisional decision explaining why I thought Santander should put things right by paying Ms M an additional £850 on top of the £650 it has paid already. Ms M accepted my provisional decision and Santander confirmed it had nothing further to add.

## 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.

As neither party has provided any further evidence or arguments for consideration, I see no reason to depart from the conclusions set out in my provisional decision. For completeness, I have set this out below.

I'm aware that I've summarised this complaint in far less detail than Ms M has presented to us, but I have read all of her submissions. I'm not responding to every single point made but instead I've concentrated on what I think are the key issues material to the outcome of this complaint.

Deciding on an award of compensation for distress and inconvenience, isn't an exact science. I need to think about the impact the mistakes made by Santander have had on Ms M when considering the amount of any award that might be appropriate, to compensate her for the distress and inconvenience she's been caused. And I don't have the power to make any punitive award against Santander.

As a starting point, I can see why Ms M wanted these complaints dealt with together. It seems to me that one or two basic simple errors - of not changing her name and address - has led to a catalogue of failings and potentially caused Ms M's account to be compromised by a fraudster - as she appears to have clicked on a link in a fraudulent message believing it related to the delivery of her new bank card.

Reading through Ms M's complaint form along with evidence from the business file, it's clear the impact all of these matters have caused her. Ms M has vulnerabilities and she made Santander aware of this early on into the series of complaints; and yet it continued to fail her.

I have looked at the individual issues separately and holistically and agree this matter overall has caused substantial distress and impact. In particular the events have had a compounding effect on a vulnerable consumer. I've also taken into account the period time this all happened over; several months (although I appreciate Ms M is still feeling the impact today) and the frequency of the interactions Ms M had to have with Santander over these issues.

I appreciate Santander has tried to put things right when things went wrong and has paid and offered some compensation. But considering what's already been paid/offered in this case, I think it should pay Ms M further compensation.

Ms M was vulnerable to the extent that there has been a much greater impact on her than the average consumer and I don't think Santander has fully taken this into account. In particular the issues Ms M experienced when her card was blocked. This was an action taken due to the previous error Santander made when it sent a new card to the wrong address. This was just after she had moved to a new house and just after she raised her first complaint about her name not being changed. She explained that she had no food or gas over the festive period as a result of Santander's errors and had no facility by which to access her funds. I feel Santander has underestimated the impact all of this has had on Ms M and what was already a stressful time. And I think it ought to have been reasonably apparent to Santander that the impact caused might be a consequence of its mistakes.

I also feel Santander should pay further compensation when Ms M fell victim to a scam. The sum Santander offered here mainly related to service issues and misinformation as well as the excessive wait times Ms M had experienced. In considering whether more compensation is fair in this case, I've specifically thought about the impact of Santander's actions, rather than the impact of the crime itself. Santander's failure to sufficiently act has had an impact on Ms M not least because she was (until it refunded her losses) facing the very real possibility that she would not get her money back. Santander also had an opportunity to prevent the scam by intervening before processing the payments. But perhaps more than

anything, Santander itself acknowledged that it could have educated Ms M in the run up to the scam. It appears Ms M clicked on a fraudulent link believing it related to the delivery of her new card. This in turn led to a cold call from her 'bank' and a 'safe' account scam (as is often typical in these scams). So, as well as Ms M being more vulnerable to falling victim to this scam due to Santander's previous errors, it also missed an opportunity to educate Ms M on fraud and scams which might have prevented the situation.

I also think Santander has failed to look at these issues as a whole (and I feel this is reflected in its file submission with no overall summary of defence). I appreciate Santander has already offered a further sum of £350 but I don't think it's enough here. Overall, I think there has been considerable distress, upset and worry as well as significant inconvenience and disruption that needed a lot of extra effort for a vulnerable consumer to sort out. There is no doubt in my mind that Santander ongoing actions compounded and amplified the impact and detriment Ms M suffered.

### **Putting things right**

For the reasons above, I think Santander should put things right for Ms M by paying her an additional £850 (so £1,500 in total including the £650 already paid).

### **My final decision**

My final decision is I uphold this complaint and require Santander UK Plc to put things right for Ms M as set out above.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Ms M to accept or reject my decision before 19 October 2023.

Kathryn Milne  
**Ombudsman**