

## **The complaint**

Miss W complains that Santander UK Plc delayed in getting her funds back after her application to switch the account couldn't go ahead.

## **What happened**

On 5 February 2023, Miss W made an online application to switch her Santander account to another bank, F. She opened the account with F, but a few days later she was informed that as she already had an account with a bank in the same group she wasn't entitled to the switching incentive. F told her it had closed the account and returned the funds to Santander. Miss W contacted Santander on 16 February and explained the position to one of its agents. She was told the switch would not go ahead providing it was cancelled. But the Santander account was closed on 20 February as it hadn't been told by F in time that the switch had been cancelled. It sent a cheque by post to Miss W for the balance on her account.

Miss W called Santander on 1 March 2023 and was told the position. She was unhappy to receive a cheque and wanted the monies to be put into her account. She was told this wasn't possible as the account had been closed. On 7 March Miss W called into a branch of Santander as she still hadn't received the cheque. On 8 March Santander opened a new account and requested the transfer of the funds into the account. There was a delay in doing this and the transfer wasn't completed until 20 March. In the meantime Santander provided Miss W with £50 emergency funding. After completion of the transfer it paid a further £50 into Miss W's account.

On referral to the Financial Ombudsman Service, our Adjudicator said that as Santander failed to give Miss W correct information at the appropriate time, and as there were then delays in transferring the funds into her account, Santander should pay her a further £100.

Santander agreed with the proposed compensation.

Miss W did not agree and the matter has been passed to me for further consideration.

## **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.

There were delays and errors in dealing with Miss W's switching process. In this decision I shall concentrate on the issues where I consider that Santander was at fault, rather than the other bank involved.

Miss W made the switching request on 5 February 2023. She has explained that she wasn't very concerned about the switch not going ahead. But I see that she contacted Santander on 16 February essentially to ask it what would happen to her money. By that time Santander hadn't received the cancellation notice from F so it was due to close Miss W's account by 20 February. Unfortunately she was not told that and then went through a number of days of

anxiety not knowing where her money was and having no access to it. She was finally able to speak to a complaints adviser on 8 March, who assured her that her funds were with Santander and set about opening a new account for her.

There were then further delays and issues with Miss W's profile on Santander's system which it said it was able to remediate internally. After this, several requests had to be made with the back office and switch teams which caused further delays in transferring the funds to the newly opened account for Miss W.

I can understand Miss W's frustration and distress, especially being concerned for a few days that her money had disappeared. She was, I think, reassured by Santander that the money hadn't disappeared. It was still in its accounts as the cheque it sent hadn't been cashed. As our Adjudicator pointed out, if she had been told on 16 February that her account had to close in four days Santander might have been able to retrieve the situation for her and advise her to open a new account immediately.

I've taken account of Miss W's explanation about how the whole situation made her feel. Our Adjudicator summed that up in his view so I won't repeat all the details here. But I do think that a payment of £200, meaning that Santander will have to pay an additional £100, is fair and reasonable considering how long the matter took to resolve and the distress and inconvenience caused to Miss W in that time. It's also in line with awards we have made in similar circumstances.

### **Putting things right**

Santander should pay Miss W an additional £100 compensation, on top of the £100 it has already paid.

### **My final decision**

I uphold the complaint and require Santander UK plc to provide the remedy set out under "Putting things right" above.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss W to accept or reject my decision before 30 November 2023.

Ray Lawley  
**Ombudsman**