

The complaint

Mr A complains that Santander UK Plc closed his account, and he'd like it reinstated.

What happened

Mr A had an account with Santander

Between September and November 2023 Santander had several conversations with Mr A to try to obtain information for their Know Your Customer (KYC) checks.

However, by the end of September 2023 Santander weren't satisfied with Mr A's responses, and they issued him with a two month notice to close. With Mr A's account scheduled to close on 29 November 2023.

In November 2023 Santander asked Mr A to provide a copy of his identification, which he did, and proof of ownership of his rental property. But Mr A didn't provide this until 5 December 2023 – by which time his account had been closed.

Mr A complained to Santander about their decision to close his account. However, Santander thought they'd acted fairly mainly because Mr A hadn't provided the required KYC documents until after his account was due to close.

One of our Investigators looked into Mr A's complaint. Having reviewed everything they thought Santander had acted fairly in closing his account by giving two months' notice.

Mr A didn't agree and so the case was 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.

Santander are strictly regulated and must take certain actions in order to meet their legal and regulatory obligations. They're also required to carry out ongoing monitoring of new and existing relationships. That sometimes means they need to request additional KYC documentation from their existing customers, which happened in Mr A's case.

I appreciate that Mr A may have found the request for further documentation inconvenient, but Santander must ensure that they keep their due diligence checks updated at all times.

As part of their review, Santander asked Mr A for proof of ownership of his rental property – which they're entitled to do under their obligations. But Mr A didn't provide this until 5 December 2023 – by which time his account had already been closed. Having reviewed everything, I do think Santander's requests were reasonable in the circumstances. Ultimately it's Santander who decide what information they do or don't require as part of a due diligence review and they have a duty to protect their customer's money and understand where it came from. Because of that, I can't fairly conclude Santander acted inappropriately.

At times, following a review, banks sometimes choose to end their relationship with customers. This can be due to a number of reasons and a bank isn't obliged to give a reason to the customer. Just the same as if Mr A decided to stop banking with Santander, it wouldn't have to explain why. Having reviewed the terms and conditions of Mr A's account and Santander's reasons for closing it I'm satisfied their actions were appropriate in the circumstances.

I realise Mr A will be disappointed in my conclusion, but for the reasons I've explained above I won't be asking Santander to reopen his account or do anything further.

My final decision

My final decision is I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr A to accept or reject my decision before 27 November 2024.

Jeff Burch
Ombudsman