

The complaint

Mr C and Ms W complain about how Santander UK Plc dealt with a new account application.

What happened

Ms W says she tried to open a new Santander joint account. She says she is an existing Santander customer but was required to provide documents to open the account. Ms W says she provided a council tax letter, but her application was rejected. She would like compensation for stress she has been caused and for the footprint on her credit file to be removed.

Santander says it was entitled to ask for the identification document but the address on it was different to Ms W's registered address on its systems. It also says Ms W provided a different version of her name and was entitled to reject the application. Santander has explained how the account can now be opened.

Mr C and Ms W brought their complaint to us, and our investigator didn't uphold it. The investigator thought the address on the council tax letter didn't match Santander's records and that there was an issue with Ms W's name. The investigator explained that he couldn't ask Santander to change its processes about account opening.

Mr C and Ms W don't accept that view and Ms W says the name issue was never brought up. She says there has been negligence and doesn't want the new account. She also says she would like the credit search footprint removed.

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.

Having done so I have come to the overall view that I don't uphold this complaint.

I have looked at Santander's records and am satisfied it's entitled to ask an existing customer for additional evidence about identification as well as evidence of an address. So, I don't think Santander made a mistake by asking for evidence of Ms W's address when she and Mr C applied for the new account.

I can see that the council tax letter and the registered address on Santander's systems were different. So, I don't think Santander made a mistake or acted unfairly by rejecting the application. I think it's Mr C and Ms W's responsibility to ensure when they opened the account, that the address was recorded accurately. I'm satisfied the council tax letter address was materially different from the address Santander held.

I appreciate Ms W says she was an existing customer, but I think it's up to Santander, when it exercises its commercial judgement, to decide what evidence it requires in these circumstances. I can also see that Ms W provided a slightly different version of her name when applying for the new account which again I think could have caused the application to

be rejected. Again, I think it's Ms W's responsibility to provide accurate information and that any inaccuracies in the application were likely to mean it was rejected. I appreciate Santander did not make mention of the name issue in its final response letter but has told us that it was different which I can see from the evidence provided.

I have not seen either Ms W's or Mr C's credit file and so have no way of knowing what if any information has been recorded on their credit files. If Santander has recorded the account application, then I can't see that it would have made a mistake as the application process would have made that clear. And it was Mr C and Ms W's decision to apply for the account. It follows that, as I don't think Santander made a mistake by rejecting the application, I can't fairly direct it removes any information from a credit file.

I appreciate Ms W says Santander staff could have changed the address as she was unable to do so online. I think it likely that issue arose after the initial application in any event and so I don't consider it relevant to my decision. I can see Santander has explained how the issue could be resolved in order to progress a new application but that is not something Mr C and Ms W now want.

Overall, I find Santander was reasonably entitled to reject this account application where there were clear differences in the information provided compared with existing records. I can't in those circumstances direct Santander either pay compensation or remove information correctly recorded from credit files.

My final decision

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

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr C and Ms W to accept or reject my decision before 11 May 2024.

David Singh
Ombudsman