

## **The complaint**

Mr A complains that Santander UK Plc unfairly restricted his account and denied access to his funds while it did so.

## **What happened**

Around November last year, Mr A complained to Santander after discovering his account had been restricted pending a review by the bank. Mr A says he was denied access to his funds and that Santander's review took longer than it should have.

Prior to the restriction, Mr A requested to withdraw significant funds that he intended to take with him to Russia for a property development. At the time, Santander rejected his request citing sanctions regulations.

Santander issued its response to the complaint while its review was ongoing. The bank explained that it was entitled to put restrictions on the account as per its terms. Santander also referred to the rejected withdrawal request and said that it had acted fairly. As part of its response, the bank notified Mr A that his account would be closed.

Remaining unhappy, Mr A asked this service to review his complaint. He says he was unable to meet financial commitments including direct debits, that he was unable to earn interest on the funds in his account and that Santander caused a delay in the return of his funds. Mr A adds that he wasn't kept updated on the progress of Santander's review and that he experienced a poor level of service when he made contact. Mr A also says that the bank's actions caused him anxiety and stress and he now needs medication.

Our investigator issued their outcome, explaining that Santander had acted fairly. Mr A didn't agree and asked for a final decision – so the complaint has been passed to me for a final review.

## **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'll explain why I'm not upholding this complaint.

I'd like to start by saying that I've considered all the arguments and evidence provided by both parties, but in this decision, I'll be referring to and focusing on what I consider to be the main points. No discourtesy is intended by this. We aim for our decisions to be as concise as possible.

Santander has important legal and regulatory responsibilities to meet when providing accounts to customers. Those obligations are ongoing and don't only apply when an account is opened. They can broadly be summarised as a responsibility to know its customers, monitor accounts, verify the source and purpose of the funds as well as detect and prevent financial harm. Santander may need to review accounts to comply with these

responsibilities.

I've also considered the basis for Santander's review, which I find was legitimate and in line with its legal and regulatory obligations. I can see that Santander asked Mr A some questions regarding his account activity around the time, which I think was appropriate. The bank says Mr A's responses were inconsistent, but didn't provide him more information about its review.

I should add that I don't think Santander is under any obligation to disclose to its customers what triggers a review of their accounts. For this reason, I can't say that it's done anything wrong by not giving Mr A this information. And it wouldn't be appropriate for me to require it to do so.

Although Mr A's complaint doesn't necessarily focus on this point - Santander's terms and conditions say that it can close an account by giving two months' notice or with immediate effect in certain circumstances. Having looked at all the evidence and the terms and conditions, I'm satisfied that Santander was acting fairly and reasonably when it decided to close the account immediately.

Santander has provided some further details of its decision-making process which, unfortunately, I can't share due to its commercial sensitivity. But I've seen nothing to suggest that Santander's decision around closing Mr A's account was unfair.

Furthermore, it's generally for financial institutions to decide whether or not they want to provide or continue to provide banking facilities to a particular customer. Each financial institution has its own criteria and risk assessments for deciding whether to open or close accounts and providing an account to a customer is a commercial decision that a financial institution is entitled to take. Unless there is a very good reason to do so, this service won't usually say that a financial institution must keep a customer or require it to compensate a customer who has had their account closed.

At the time, I can see Mr A understandably wanted to know the reason why Santander decided to restrict and close his account as well as understand what the bank's review entailed. As I said above, Santander doesn't need to give him a reason, as much as he'd like it to.

I appreciate Mr A faced some difficulties given the review spanned over several months and he was left without access to his funds for almost three months. Mr A wants to be compensated because of the impact the bank's actions had on him. But I can only make such an award where I find that Santander has acted unfairly – as explained, I'm satisfied the bank's actions were fair and reasonable. So although I empathise with Mr A because of the issues he experienced, I don't find fair cause to award compensation.

Tuning to the rejected withdrawal request. I can see Mr A requested a withdrawal of £160,000. He informed the bank that he intended to take the funds with him to Russia for a property development. Santander pointed to Russian sanctions regulations as the reason for rejecting the request. Having reviewed these regulations, I'm satisfied Santander acted fairly and in line with its legal obligations.

As explained, I'm satisfied Santander acted fairly when it restricted and closed Mr A's account. And I won't be asking the bank to do anything more regarding this complaint.

### **My final decision**

For the reasons explained, I'm not upholding this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr A to accept or reject my decision before 29 July 2025.

Abdul Ali  
**Ombudsman**