

The complaint

Mr H1 and Mr H2 are trustees of a trust which I'll refer to as H. They complain about a declined application for a high interest deposit account with Santander UK Plc. They also complain about the overall service they experienced, particularly around the information given by the relationship manager.

What happened

H held accounts with Santander and in September 2024 one of Santander's relationship managers contacted H's trustees to discuss alternative accounts. A meeting followed and the trustees report the relationship manager said he saw 'no problem' in opening an account with improved deposit rates. Mr H1 and Mr H2 say they presumed Santander's policy had changed, as H had previously been unable to open better interest-bearing deposit accounts with Santander. They proceeded with the application, but in October 2024 were told the application hadn't been successful.

Mr H1 and Mr H2 have said they'd intended to open fixed term accounts with another provider – which I'll refer to as L – but opted instead to apply to Santander, given its higher rates. However, as the application was declined, they felt H had missed out on around two weeks of interest they say it would have benefitted from, had they instead proceeded with an application with L.

A complaint was submitted to Santander. In its complaint response, Santander acknowledged it had initiated contact with H, but said there was never a guarantee that an application would be successful. It said any information it held, or that it was provided with, was reviewed by its onboarding team before a decision was made on the application. However, to recognise the inconvenience of the time Mr H1 and Mr H2 had spent on the matter, Santander offered them a hamper as a gesture of goodwill.

Mr H1 and Mr H2 didn't accept Santander's response and brought the complaint to our service to be considered. Our Investigator looked into things but didn't uphold the complaint. She didn't think the process took longer than it should have, nor could she identify an error in Santander declining the application. Further, she couldn't see that Santander had ever guaranteed the application would be successful. As a result, she found its offer of a hamper to be a fair one.

H's trustees didn't agree with the Investigator's findings. They said the relationship manager's comments made them think he had looked at H's banking profile in detail. They highlighted an email in which the relationship manager had said 'I look forward to your response so we can start the opening process'. The trustees pointed out they had also queried how long it would take to open the accounts, to which the relationship manager responded it could take up to six weeks. The trustees argued that, in essence, they had been guaranteed account acceptance and, had they known otherwise, they would have instead opened an account with L – which they were later able to do.

As no agreement could be reached, 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.

Having done so, I won't be upholding this complaint. I realise this will likely be disappointing for Mr H1 and Mr H2, so I've explained the reasons for my decision below.

I should first explain that my role here is to think about the individual circumstances of this complaint and whether Santander did something wrong which caused Mr H1 and Mr H2 to lose out as a result. If I think Santander did something wrong, I can then think about what – if anything – it should do to set matters right. To help me with this, I've taken into account all submissions regarding Mr H1 and Mr H2's complaint issues. But if there's something I've not mentioned, it isn't because I've ignored it – I haven't. I'm satisfied I don't need to comment on every individual point or argument to be able to reach what I think is the right outcome. Our rules allow me to do this, and this simply reflects the informal nature of our service as a free alternative to the courts.

Like the Investigator, I'm unable to identify any guarantee given by Santander on the outcome of the application. I note the comments provided by the trustees around some of the language used – particularly that the relationship manager saw 'no problem' in opening the account for them. But this in itself doesn't constitute a guarantee of a successful application. In addition, I haven't been presented with any evidence which persuades me the relationship manager reviewed H's information in detail – or that he told its trustees he had – before making contact. Because of this, I can't fairly conclude the relationship manager had cause to know the application wouldn't be successful.

Given an applicant's circumstances can change over time, I might still have expected the relationship manager to approach H's trustees even if he *had* reviewed the information Santander already held about H in detail. Because of this, whilst I recognise the inconvenience suffered by Mr H1 and Mr H2, and the interest they say H lost out on, I'm not persuaded any loss here results from a failing on Santander's part.

I've considered the overall service provided by Santander and its agents – particularly the timescales. From Santander's first contact with H's trustees, it took just over two weeks to advise them of the unsuccessful application. I don't consider this to be an excessively long period of time for such a process. I also note the relationship manager's comments that account opening could take up to six weeks, and so I don't think Santander acted outside of what it itself would deem acceptable in the circumstances.

I understand why the complainants here will feel dissatisfied with their experience, and I accept that H may have lost out on interest elsewhere during the application process. But for me to direct Santander to compensate Mr H1 and Mr H2 (or by extension, H), I must be satisfied that the losses they've described were caused because Santander – more likely than not – made a failing. While I note the positive language used by the relationship manager, I'm mindful that the nature of an application means access to a product or service may not be given as an outcome. And, as I don't think a positive outcome was *guaranteed*, I won't be upholding this complaint or directing Santander to do anything further.

I appreciate Mr H1 and Mr H2 might feel differently, but I will leave it to them to decide whether, on reflection, they now feel able to accept the hamper offered by Santander as a resolution to this complaint, or pursue matters elsewhere. Either way, my decision now completes our consideration of this complaint.

My final decision

My final decision is I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask H's trustees to accept or reject my decision before 17 November 2025.

James Akehurst
Ombudsman