

The complaint

Mr M has complained Santander UK plc did not properly count his money when he deposited £179,730 in cash into his savings account. He believes £40,000 was missing.

What happened

In early January 2024, Mr M went into his Santander branch just to check that they would be able to accept a large cash deposit. He had nearly £180,000 to pay into his savings account. Some of it was in old notes and Mr M wanted reassurance there would be no problems.

A few days later he went in and handed over a carrier bag full of cash. This was counted by two cashiers, who counted this in full view of CCTV. The money was counted twice as Mr M didn't accept the initial count. Mr M's savings account was credited with £139,730.

Mr M was concerned that this was the incorrect amount and wrote three letters to Santander. He never got a response so raised a formal complaint in November. At this stage the CCTV was reviewed and Santander was satisfied that the correct amount was counted and deposited into Mr M's account.

Mr M brought his complaint to the ombudsman service.

Our investigator reviewed the testimony of the branch staff along with what Mr M told us. He felt that it was most likely Santander had counted the money properly, and had offered Mr M the opportunity to see what was going on. He wasn't going to ask them to do anything further.

Unhappy and feeling fobbed off, Mr M has asked an ombudsman to consider his complaint.

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've reached the same outcome as our investigator. I'll explain why.

Where there is a dispute about what happened, I have based my decision on the balance of probabilities. In other words, on what I consider is most likely to have happened in the light of the evidence.

When considering what is fair and reasonable, I'm required to take into account: relevant law and regulations; regulators' rules, guidance and standards; codes of practice; and, where appropriate, what I consider to have been good industry practice at the relevant time.

To help me come to a decision, I've reviewed the evidence Santander provided as well as what Mr M has told us. We've also asked whether any CCTV was still available but we are talking about something that happened in January 2024 so it has not been retained.

Santander has been able to provide the testimonies of the two staff members who counted

Mr M's money, as well as the branch manager who spoke to Mr M when he went into the branch a couple of days earlier. These testimonies all match up.

Two staff members counted the money Mr M had brought in. Because of the amount involved, this was completed in full sight of CCTV. This did mean both staff members had to turn their backs on Mr M but they kept him informed about what was happening and asked him to stay close so he could view as much as possible what was happening.

Both women have said Mr M was wandering around and didn't stay by the desk as they counted. Obviously the counting would have taken some time.

Mr M firmly believes he was denied the opportunity to see what was going on. This may be because the money had to be counted in view of the CCTV so the two women involved had to turn their backs on Mr M. However, I'm sure both will have been insistent that he stay around as all parties will have been aware that a good deal of money was being counted.

The technical data shows that 23 £10 notes, 100 £20 notes and 2,750 £50 notes were counted. This totals £139,730, I believe this was counted twice and both times, the figure was the same. I appreciate Mr M questioned this amount at the time but he will have been able to see there was no more money.

I'm also aware that the branch manager subsequently checked the CCTV and has told our service that he was satisfied everything was done as it should and Mr M's account was credited with the correct amount of money. I note that some of this was in old notes, so the cash would have been retained by Santander rather than it being re-circulated through the cashiers.

I appreciate Mr M doesn't believe this and doubts our service's role in accepting what Santander has said. I'm not sure what Mr M thinks happened or perhaps he believes the staff members stole his money. But I can't see how this could have happened. One of the key facts here is that nobody would have been able to hide £40,000 if the money had been handed over by Mr M.

I know there has been some suggestion Mr M delayed bringing his complaint to Santander. I don't agree with this as he wrote letters practically as soon after. Unfortunately Santander has no record of receiving these. That explains why Mr M didn't formally complain to later in 2024.

I know Mr M feels he's been badly treated. And I'm sorry to disappoint him but I believe all the evidence I've considered shows his account was credited with the money he brought in to be deposited.

My final decision

For the reasons given, my final decision is not to uphold Mr M's complaint against Santander UK plc.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr M to accept or reject my decision before 14 January 2026.

Sandra Quinn
Ombudsman