

## **The complaint**

Mr K complains that Santander UK Plc applied blocks to his credit cards in error and failed to reinstate them.

## **What happened**

Mr K holds a credit card account with Santander with two cards – one for him and one for an additional authorised cardholder. In November 2024, Santander placed a block on Mr K's accounts in error. This was caused by branch staff mistakenly actioning a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA). Santander acknowledged its error and said it would arrange to reinstate Mr K's accounts. It paid him a total of £150 compensation to apologise for the mistake.

In January 2025 the additional cardholder reported that her wallet had been stolen, and a block was applied to her cards.

In April 2025, both Mr K and the additional cardholder attempted to use their cards abroad, but both were blocked. It transpired that Santander didn't unblock Mr K's card after reinstating his accounts. It said the additional card was blocked after the wallet was stolen – but it hadn't issued a new one as it ought to have done. It was eventually able to remove the block from Mr K's card, but not the additional card. Mr K made a complaint. He said the cards being blocked had caused significant stress and embarrassment which had affected their holiday. He said they had to rely on an alternative card which carried charges and less favourable exchange rates. He didn't think the additional card should have been blocked to begin with – as it wasn't in the cardholder's wallet when it was stolen. Santander apologised and offered Mr K £100 to recognise the distress and inconvenience caused – and to cover any expenses caused by being without the cards.

The complaint was referred to this service. To resolve things, Santander offered an additional £100 – which it later increased to £200. Our Investigator thought this was fair in the circumstances taking everything into account. They noted that although the additional cardholder may have been inconvenienced by what happened, the account is in Mr K's name only so they could only consider the impact caused to him. Mr K didn't agree. He said he'd spent a significant amount of time chasing the matter up with Santander – and that the offer failed to reflect the considerable stress, inconvenience and embarrassment caused. He asked for the complaint to be referred to an Ombudsman for a final decision. So, it's been 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.

If I haven't commented on any specific point, it's because I don't believe it's affected what I think is the right outcome. Where evidence has been incomplete or contradictory, I've reached my decision on the balance of probabilities – what I think is more likely than not to have happened given the available evidence and wider circumstances.

I can understand why Mr K feels let down by Santander – and it's not disputed that it made multiple errors. Although it took steps to rectify its initial mistake with Mr K's LPA, it failed to correctly unblock his credit card. Because Mr K doesn't use the card often, this wasn't discovered until he was on holiday. Santander also didn't reissue the additional card when it should have done. As outlined by our Investigator, I can only consider the impact Santander's errors had on the account holder – in this case Mr K.

I've considered whether Santander's offer goes far enough to put things right for Mr K – considering the impact its errors had on him. Mr K had already been inconvenienced by previous errors made by Santander when it registered his LPA in error, and it would have come as a shock to discover several months later that the situation hadn't been fully rectified as promised. And because the additional card was separately blocked and not reissued, neither Mr K nor the additional cardholder could use their cards while abroad. Santander was eventually able to remove the block on one of the cards, but this was more than two weeks after Mr K reported the issue. I don't doubt this caused avoidable stress, inconvenience and embarrassment for Mr K. I can also see from the contact notes and chat transcripts that Mr K spent some time trying to sort the issue out with Santander – which naturally affected his holiday. I agree with Mr K that Santander's initial offer of £100 didn't fully reflect the impact of its errors.

I've also considered that Mr K had access to another card – so he was still able to make purchases abroad. I understand his preference was to use his Santander card as it didn't carry a fee for non-sterling transactions. Santander told Mr K its initial offer was intended to cover any additional costs Mr K incurred because he couldn't use his cards – and to recognise the distress and inconvenience caused.

Mr K provided some statements showing non-sterling transaction fees totalling £30.59 on an alternative card while he was away. Mr K says his Santander card also carries a preferable exchange rate, but I haven't seen clear evidence to show what difference – if any – this would have made to his overall expenditure. Based on Mr K's spending, even if there was a slight difference to the exchange rate between the two cards, the overall impact of this was unlikely to have been significant.

Taking everything into account I'm satisfied Santander's offer of £200 – in addition to the £150 originally paid for the LPA issue and the £100 paid for the credit card issue – is more than fair in the circumstances considering the distress and inconvenience caused to Mr K and any additional costs he incurred. So, Santander should pay him that amount if it hasn't already done so.

### **My final decision**

Santander UK Plc has already made an offer to pay an additional £200 to settle the complaint, and I think this offer is fair in all the circumstances.

So, my decision is that Santander UK Plc should pay Mr K an additional £200 if it hasn't already done so.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr K to accept or reject my decision before 25 February 2026.

Stephen Billings  
**Ombudsman**