

The complaint

Mr K is complaining that Santander UK Plc hasn't credited his account with a cash sum that he deposited in an Automated Teller Machine (ATM).

What happened

On 4 September 2025 Mr K visited Santander's ATM to deposit some cash. He says he was attempting to deposit £5,000, but the ATM only accepted £3,650 and the rest of the cash was returned to him. He received an email receipt showing £3,650 had been deposited.

Mr K says he realised the funds hadn't been credited to his account around thirty minutes after the transaction. He reported what had happened to Santander via its online chat and also contacted the branch where the ATM was held.

Santander looked into Mr K's dispute, but on reviewing the ATM evidence it found that the ATM had balanced and a mistake hadn't been made. So, it didn't agree to credit the disputed amount to Mr K's account.

Mr K raised a complaint, and when Santander didn't change its position, he brought his complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service. Our Investigator didn't think an error had occurred with the deposit, based on the ATM evidence Santander had provided. But she did think Santander should pay Mr K £50 to reflect that it had made an administration error in sending the email confirming receipt of the funds.

Mr K didn't agree with the Investigator's view and asked for an Ombudsman's review. He said in summary, that he didn't think Santander had met the evidential requirements, under the Payment Services Regulations (PSRs) 2017, to show that no error had occurred. And he didn't think the £50 compensation recommended by the Investigator was enough to compensate him for what had happened.

Mr K's complaint has been passed to me for review and a decision.

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 agree with outcome reached by the Investigator, that £50 is fair and reasonable compensation for what happened here. I'm sorry to disappoint Mr K, but I don't think Santander needs to credit his account with the disputed amount. I'll explain why.

I've reviewed the ATM records, and I can see that they show that Mr K attempted a deposit which was rejected as it was over the ATM limit of 100 notes (which would tie in with his testimony that he attempted to deposit £5,000). After this a deposit of £3,650 was attempted, made up of 100 notes - 55 £50 notes, and 45 £20 notes. Mr K selected to receive an email receipt. The records show this deposit was rejected and that the cash was presented and taken from the ATM around 8 seconds later. Mr K's card was then taken around 25 seconds

later. The daily deposit limit for cash was £2,000 – so Mr K's attempted deposit exceeded this.

I understand that Mr K says the cash that was returned was not the full £5,000 he attempted to deposit. But the ATM was checked and balanced on the morning of 5 September 2025, the day after the disputed transaction. This shows that the cash deposited in the ATM totalled £1,770, which matched its records of successful deposits. So, there was no surplus cash in the ATM, as I'd expect there to be if the ATM had accepted a cash deposit totalling £3,650 but not credited it to an account. It also showed that no notes had been retracted back into the ATM after not being taken. Deposits were made by other customers before and after Mr K's transaction, and Santander doesn't have a record of any other errors being reported. Santander has confirmed that there's no CCTV available to be reviewed.

Where there is a dispute about what happened I must reach my decision on the balance of probabilities – in other words, on what I consider is most likely to have happened in light of the available evidence. And I think the ATM evidence Santander has supplied is sufficient to show, on the balance of probabilities, that all the cash Mr K attempted to deposit was returned to him rather than retained by the ATM but not credited to his account. And I'm satisfied that it fulfils the evidential requirements to prove the transaction was correctly executed, under Section 75 of the PSRs 2017.

This being said, I agree with the Investigator that the email receipt for the funds shouldn't have been issued. But I'm satisfied that the £50 recommended by the Investigator is fair and reasonable compensation for this error and the impact it would have had on Mr K, considering that Mr K was aware shortly after the receipt had been issued that the funds hadn't been credited to his account. This compensation award is purely for the error of issuing a receipt, and it's not compensation for the impact of funds being lost.

I've reviewed Santander's communication with Mr K during its investigation, specifically around his point that he was promised calls he didn't receive. I can see that the investigation notes say that advisers attempted to call him on two occasions, but there was no answer, although I appreciate Mr K said he hadn't had any missed calls. I can't really be sure what happened here, but I can see that Santander did issue its response to the dispute within a reasonable timescale. Overall, I don't think Santander needs to pay Mr K additional compensation for the way in which it communicated with him here.

I'm sorry to disappoint Mr K. But I don't think Santander's conclusion that an error hasn't taken place in relation to this transaction is unreasonable, based on the evidence available. So, I don't think it would be fair or reasonable for me to direct Santander to credit the amount of the disputed transaction to Mr K's account.

My final decision

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint, in part.

To put things right Santander UK Plc should pay Mr K £50.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr K to accept or reject my decision before 22 May 2026.

Helen Sutcliffe
Ombudsman