

Complaint

Mrs P has complained about a credit card Santander UK Plc (“Santander”) provided to her. She says the credit card was irresponsibly provided as it was unaffordable for her.

Background

Santander provided Mrs P with a credit card with a limit of £3,400.00 in June 2022. The limit on the credit card was never increased. However, Mrs P defaulted on the card and a balance was sold to a third-party debt purchaser in October 2025.

One of our investigators reviewed what Mrs P and Santander had told us. And he thought Santander hadn’t done anything wrong or treated Mrs P unfairly when agreeing to provide her with a credit card. So he didn’t recommend that Mrs P’s complaint be upheld.

Mrs P disagreed and asked for an ombudsman to look at the complaint.

My findings

I’ve considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what’s fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

We’ve explained how we handle complaints about unaffordable and irresponsible lending on our website. And I’ve used this approach to help me decide Mrs P’s complaint.

Having carefully considered everything, I’ve decided not to uphold Mrs P’s complaint. I’ll explain why in a little more detail.

Santander needed to make sure it didn’t lend irresponsibly. In practice, what this means is Santander needed to carry out proportionate checks to be able to understand whether Mrs P could afford to repay any credit it provided.

Our website sets out what we typically think about when deciding whether a lender’s checks were proportionate. Generally, we think it’s reasonable for a lender’s checks to be less thorough – in terms of how much information it gathers and what it does to verify it – in the early stages of a lending relationship.

But we might think it needed to do more if, for example, a borrower’s income was low or the amount lent was high. And the longer the lending relationship goes on, the greater the risk of it becoming unsustainable and the borrower experiencing financial difficulty. So we’d expect a lender to be able to show that it didn’t continue to lend to a customer irresponsibly.

Santander says it initially agreed to Mrs P’s application after it obtained information on her income and carried out a credit search on her. And, in its view, the information obtained indicated that Mrs P would be able to make the relatively low monthly repayment that Mrs P could have been required on this credit card. On the other hand, Mrs P says that she shouldn’t have been lent to as she was in a poor financial position.

I've considered what the parties have said.

What's important to note is that Mrs P was provided with a revolving credit facility rather than a loan. This means that Santander was required to understand whether a credit limit of £3,400.00 could be repaid within a reasonable period of time, rather than all in one go. And a credit limit of £3,400.00 required relatively low monthly payments in order to clear the full amount owed within a reasonable period of time.

I've seen records of the information Santander obtained from Mrs P about her income and what was on the credit search carried out. Santander says that Mrs P declared an annual salary of £28,000.00. Mrs P didn't have any significant adverse information – such as defaulted accounts or county court judgments (“CCJ”) – recorded against her either. From what I've been able to see, Mrs P was asked for some information on her main expenditure too. Having considered this information, it does appear that Mrs P was in a position to repay £3,000.00 within a reasonable period of time.

I accept that Mrs P appears to be suggesting that her actual circumstances weren't reflected in the information she provided, or the information Santander obtained. Mrs P has said that she wasn't working and had no income at the time she made her application. While I've thought about what Mrs P now says, in her application she not only stated that she was working, she also said that she had been doing so for over 10 years.

Santander cross-checked Mrs P's declaration of income against information from credit reference agencies on the amount of funds that went into her main bank account each month. As this suggested that Mrs P's declaration was plausible, I don't think that it was unreasonable for it to have relied on this. So while I appreciate that Mrs P may not have been working at the time, her declaration at the time of her application together with its plausibility, means that it simply wouldn't be fair and reasonable for me to uphold her complaint on this basis.

For the sake of completeness, I've noted that Mrs P has said that Santander should have reviewed her bank statements as part of her application and this would have shown she couldn't afford this credit card. However, there isn't a requirement for a lender to obtain bank statements before lending to a borrower. It is up to a lender to decide on the checks that it wishes to carry out.

In this case, Santander was providing Mrs P with access to a maximum of £3,400.00 and the credit checks carried out showed Mrs P hadn't had any recent difficulty with credit and wasn't overly indebted bearing in mind what Mrs P had led it to believe about her income. In these circumstances, I don't think that obtaining bank statements would have been proportionate. In my view, Santander was entitled to rely on what it had which indicated that the credit card was affordable for Mrs P.

Overall and having considered everything, while I can understand Mrs P's sentiments and I'm sorry to hear about her situation, I'm satisfied that Santander carried out proportionate checks before providing this credit card to Mrs P. So I don't think that Santander treated Mrs P unfairly or unreasonably and I'm not upholding this complaint. I appreciate this will be very disappointing for Mrs P. But I hope she'll understand the reasons for my decision and that she'll at least feel her concerns have been listened to.

My final decision

For the reasons I've explained, I'm not upholding Mrs P's complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs P to accept or

reject my decision before 13 April 2026.

Jeshen Narayanan
Ombudsman