

complaint

Miss K complains that she received poor customer service from Santander UK Plc, as a result of which she lost the opportunity to recover money she had accidentally transferred to the wrong account.

background

On 3 November 2015, Miss K accidentally entered incorrect details and transferred £500 to the wrong account at a third party bank. She complains that when she phoned Santander to ask it recover the money, the bank passed her call from one department to another and made a series of mistakes which unnecessarily delayed contact with the third party bank. She says this delay allowed the bank account holder to withdraw nearly all her money, which she can no longer recover.

The adjudicator did not recommend the complaint should be upheld. He said Santander had agreed it should have given Miss K clearer information about what was happening to try to get her funds back, which would have stopped her having to call repeatedly to ask for updates. Santander credited Miss K's account with £50 to reflect the inconvenience and frustration this caused, the adjudicator said he felt this was fair.

The adjudicator did not recommend Santander should repay the remainder of the £500 which Miss K has lost. He said that Santander had made an error when it did not contact the third party bank until 9 November and if it had followed its internal procedures, it would have done so within 48 hours. However, he said that the account holder removed the funds before that 48 hours had passed, so even if Santander had contacted the third party bank 48 hours after Miss K had called, the money would not have been available.

Miss K does not agree, she says Santander's policy was so confusing even its own staff did not understand it. She says she was treated rudely and should be paid compensation.

my findings

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

I am satisfied that at approximately 23:30hrs on 3 November 2015, Miss K incorrectly transferred the £500 funds to the wrong account. Miss K realised she had made the mistake almost immediately and tried to telephone and email Santander but was unable to speak to anybody and was told to recall in the morning.

Miss K called just after 7am on 4 November 2015 to report her mistake. She says when she spoke to staff she felt she was treated rudely and felt she was being blamed for the mistake, having to make numerous calls to different departments. Miss K was not told what efforts were being made by Santander to assist her in rectifying her mistake and had to recall over the next few days. Santander agrees it made an error when it did not immediately send this incident to its helpdesk, which is the department responsible for requesting recovery of the funds and when it did not explain to Miss K what procedures would be followed. Miss K initially complained that she was treated rudely and made to feel that the mistake in transferring the money to the wrong account was her own fault, I understand that Miss K does accept it was her own mistake that led to the funds being paid to the wrong account.

Following Miss K's repeated calls to ask what action was being taken, the correct internal department was notified on 6 November 2015 but Santander did not notify the third party bank until 9 November that Miss K had made a mistake and request recovery of the money.

The third party bank acted swiftly, but the account holder into whose account the money had been incorrectly paid had already withdrawn over £465 of Miss K's deposit. Enquires with the third party bank have revealed this money was withdrawn at 10:55hrs on 5 November 2015. The £35 remaining has been repaid into Miss K's account.

I am satisfied that Santander's internal policy of contacting third party institutions within 48 hours, to attempt to resolve the mistakes made by its customers, was reasonable. I am satisfied the bank did not comply with its own policy when it waited over four days before contacting the third party bank. However, this service does not have the power to punish the bank, I have to decide what is fair and reasonable to put Miss K in the position she would have been in had the mistake not been made.

The money was withdrawn by the account holder within 10 hours of Miss K making the mistake. I do not consider it reasonable to expect Santander to have contacted the third party bank within 10 hours of a mistake made by its customer at around midnight the night before. I know it will disappoint Miss K, but I am satisfied that if Santander had contacted the third party bank 48 hours after she called, the funds would already have been withdrawn. In those circumstances I do not consider it fair to ask Santander to refund to Miss K the remainder of the £500 which has not been returned.

Santander has paid Miss K £50 compensation to reflect the errors in the service she received. I agree with the adjudicator that whilst Miss K suffered inconvenience and frustration as a result of the lack of information given to her, I do not find it fair and reasonable to require it to do more to resolve this matter.

my final decision

My decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss K to accept or reject my decision before 29 April 2016.

Charlotte Holland
ombudsman