

complaint

Mr E complains that Santander UK Plc didn't handle two transactions on his current account properly and left him in an unarranged overdraft. It then gave him a very poor service.

background

Mr E tells us that Santander approved a transaction but then it bounced back leaving him in an unarranged overdraft. He complained and he said it gave him £43 compensation and a reassurance this wouldn't happen again. A week later it did happen again with another transaction. He complained but he told us the bank said there was nothing it could do and then hung up on him. And he said a member of staff pretended to be a supervisor.

Santander said the type of account Mr E had didn't offer any overdraft facilities. It told us when he phoned to query why his account had gone overdrawn on the first occasion it gave him information about how to manage his account. As a goodwill gesture it credited his account with £40 to clear the overdrawn balance. On the second occasion it tried to explain the process for merchants when a consumer has made a card purchase. It didn't accept it had been rude or disrespectful. And it didn't accept it'd hung up on him. One of the phone calls was with a manager and wasn't recorded but he had given a written statement about the conversation with Mr E. Because Santander couldn't produce a recording of the phone call it paid Mr E an additional £25 compensation. Mr E made a number of further phone calls but Santander said at all times its staff were polite to him.

Our investigator listened to all the phone calls but didn't think Santander had treated Mr E unfairly. She could see that the merchant hadn't requested payment until more than a week after the transaction but she said this was out of Santander's control.

Mr E wasn't happy with this. He said he couldn't understand why he had to pay charges when it was the merchant's fault he was in this situation. And he was still very upset about the level of service Santander had given him.

my findings

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

When Mr E approved a payment to a merchant on his debit card Santander followed its normal policy and earmarked the amount and reduced the value in his available balance in his account so it wasn't available for him to spend. But it couldn't do that indefinitely because the merchant might never claim its money. So after three days it released the money. But in these situations a merchant has up to six months to claim the money. And so when it did this a few days later, Santander had to make the payment even though it took Mr E into an unauthorised overdraft. So I can't find it did anything wrong. And I can only look into Santander's actions so I can't make any findings about the merchant.

Mr E is very upset about the way he says Santander treated him when he tried to find out what was happening and when he then complained. From the phone calls I can hear that Mr E was very frustrated by the situation he found himself in. And he doesn't think Santander has sent us all the calls. But it has sent us a large number of calls from July 2018 and there isn't anything in those calls that would indicate there are any missing. So I know he will be disappointed with my decision. But I agree with our investigator that Santander hasn't acted unreasonably or unfairly towards Mr E during those phone calls.

Mr E says there are charges building up all the time on his account. If this is causing him financial difficulties he may wish to contact Santander. It has a responsibility to act positively and sympathetically in such situations.

my final decision

My decision is that I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr E to accept or reject my decision before 14 January 2019.

Linda Freestone
ombudsman