complaint

Mrs C complains that Santander UK Plc told her her credit card and debit card could be used anywhere in the world but they were declined while she was on holiday.

background

Mrs C told us she took out a Santander credit card specifically to use on holiday. She said she was told all of her Santander cards could be used anywhere in the world. She called Santander to activate the credit card in July 2015. But when she tried to use the cards abroad, they were all declined. So she had to use her limited supply of cash instead. This spoilt her holiday.

She called Santander several times to sort things out. And she confirmed she didn't send an email with identification but waited for Santander to call her instead. Mrs C wants her hotel costs repaid to her.

Santander said Mrs C probably misunderstood when she was told the cards could be used anywhere in the world. This could happen but only after prior arrangement with Santander – and not simply by telling staff at a branch.

Santander said it had no record of Mrs C calling in July to let staff know the card was going to be used abroad – it only had a record of her call to activate the card. Santander tried to contact Mrs C and went through the only available security procedures to make sure it was Mrs C who was using the card, but she couldn't give the right answers to the security questions. And she didn't email a photocopy of both sides of the card along with her passport photograph as requested. So the cards were declined.

Santander apologised to her for the impact this had on her holiday. But it said it was right to go through its security procedures. And it paid her £325 for being misinformed by the branch.

Mrs C complained to us. Our adjudicator thought Santander had dealt fairly with the complaint. Mrs C disagreed with the adjudicator's view and asked for the matter to be looked at again.

my findings

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've decided that Santander has suggested a fair way to settle this complaint. And I'll explain why.

First of all, I'd like to say that I do appreciate how these events must have spoilt Mrs C's holiday abroad. She was left having to rely on a limited supply of cash which she'd taken with her. And I can see she had to call Santander from abroad twice in an evening to try to sort things out. So I do note this caused her inconvenience.

She'd used the card outside the UK while on route to her final destination. And as the card was accepted, she thought there was no problem. So it might be that Mrs C didn't realise she had to call Santander to let it know she was going to use the cards abroad. Santander said it only had a record of a call to activate the card. So when the new credit card and other cards were used at her holiday hotel, they were all declined.

Santander couldn't be sure who was using the card, so it tried to contact Mrs C. When it made contact, Mrs C couldn't answer the security questions. So staff asked her to email a photocopy of both sides of the card and her passport photo. Mrs C said she didn't do this but waited for Santander's call instead. It's difficult to see what else Santander could do here because Mrs C was out of the UK at the time – and she couldn't simply walk into a branch to prove her identity. So I don't think it could've accepted the card transactions from abroad when Mrs C couldn't get through its security procedures.

Taking everything into account, I think Santander has suggested a fair way to settle the complaint. And I don't think it needs to do anything more.

my final decision

My final decision is that Santander UK Plc has suggested a fair way to settle the complaint and I don't require it to do anything more.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs C to accept or reject my decision before 5 February 2016.

Amrit Mangra
ombudsman