

The complaint

F, a limited company, complains that Santander UK Plc closed its account and sent the balance to the Crown.

What happened

The director of F explains that it had kept a savings account after its current account had been closed in 2018. When she tried to access this in 2022 she found that the account had been closed and the money wasn't available. She says she didn't receive any communication from Santander at the time that happened. F had been dissolved and it would be very costly to get the money back.

Santander said it hadn't made a mistake. It received a notification that F had been dissolved. It said it wrote to F to say that the account would be blocked, and the money sent to the Crown. The account was closed after 30 days as F hadn't been reinstated. And it said that the director would need to pursue this with the Government Legal Department to reclaim the money.

Our investigator told the director that we wouldn't be able to consider a complaint if F didn't exist. F was subsequently reinstated. He said that Santander had provided a copy of a letter it sent in October 2021 explaining the position. He appreciated that the director said she didn't receive this and that it wasn't provided to her when she raised a complaint. This letter stated that Santander would be passing the funds in the account to the Crown as '*ownerless property*'. And that it would have to follow this procedure unless the company was restored. It said that the account would be closed, and no further transactions could be accepted. He didn't think that Santander had acted outside the terms and conditions of the account in closing it and there was no requirement for it to provide notice in these circumstances. He appreciated that F was dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled but said that wasn't a separate regulated activity.

F didn't agree and wanted its complaint to be reviewed. The director maintained that Santander's complaint team should have gone through all this at the time with her. She has spent needless time and energy and she thought that under the terms and conditions of the account Santander should have helped recover the money.

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.

I can see that F has provided information about the background to its dissolution and that this hadn't been expected in October 2021. And about the costs of now addressing this. I appreciate that this was a potentially confusing and complex process especially given what F

says about the limited scale and purpose of its business.

I'm only able to look here at what Santander did. It received a notification that F was dissolved. From that point it wouldn't be able to allow access to the account. I wouldn't expect it to do more than tell the director of F that and what would need to happen to access the money and why. That was set out in its letter of October 2021 which it says was correctly sent. I can't account for why F says that it wasn't received. In any event the position was that F didn't exist. And there would always then have been costs of dealing with the recovery of the money. Given this I don't consider that Santander acted unfairly in closing the account. It couldn't do anything more to assist the director in recovering the money. And I wouldn't expect it to provide any specific advice about how to go about that.

The final response letter in my view gave a broadly similar explanation of what happened. I understand how frustrating it was for the director then to be told that the original letter wasn't kept. And to later find that this service was given a copy as soon as F had been restored. But I'm afraid I don't think that this materially changed the position for the director. Or highlighted any mistake that Santander had made in 2021 when it sent the money to the Crown and closed the account in line with its terms and conditions.

So, I know that the director of F will be very disappointed when I say that I won't be asking Santander to do anything further including to refund the money that I understand was over £10,000 or to cover the costs incurred in restoring F and further pursuing 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 F to accept or reject my decision before 1 November 2023.

Michael Crewe
Ombudsman