

The complaint

Miss D and Mr O have complained about the way Mapfre Asistencia, Compania Internacional De Seguros y Reaseguros, S.A. ('Mapfre') dealt with their claim.

What happened

Miss D and Mr O had a travel insurance policy, underwritten by Mapfre.

They travelled abroad on holiday on 14 March 2020 and were due to return on 28 March 2020. But due to the Covid-19 pandemic, they had to cut their trip short and returned home on 20 March 2020.

Miss D submitted a claim to Mapfre for their unused and additional costs. Miss D says she submitted her documents a number of times but Mapfre kept asking her to provide them again. So she complained and referred her complaint to this Service.

Our investigator looked into the complaint and found that Mapfre had unreasonably delayed in dealing with the claim. Mapfre offered £150 compensation for delays which our investigator thought was reasonable. He didn't think it was unreasonable for Mapfre to request evidence of additional costs such as taxi fares.

Miss D and Mr O disagreed that £150 was sufficient compensation.

And so the case has been passed to me to decide.

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.

Having done so, I agree with the conclusions reached by the investigator. I'll explain why.

The relevant industry rules say an insurer must handle claims promptly and fairly and shouldn't unreasonably reject a claim.

The investigator has set out a detailed account of what happened in his view and so I won't repeat all the facts again. Instead, I will summarise the key points.

The policy says Mapfre can request documents to deal with the claim. This would include invoices and receipts. Miss D says she provided everything Mapfre had asked for but there was a delay in Mapfre receiving the documents as its offices were closed during the pandemic. And any post which was sent wasn't being opened straight away. Mapfre made Miss D aware of this in May 2020 and told her she could email documents instead.

I've seen several emails from Miss D confirming she had already posted her documents. Mapfre reiterated that Miss D could email her documents and also asked her to email her policy certificate as it wasn't able to locate it. Miss D sent her policy number to Mapfre and in August 2020, re-sent her documents by email. Mapfre replied to ask for further information about taxi fares amongst other things. Miss D asked for an update in mid-August and in September 2020, she made a formal complaint.

In October 2020, Mapfre asked Miss D for further details including her bank account details. In November, it said it wasn't able to respond to the complaint in time and referred Miss D to this Service.

In January 2021, Mapfre acknowledged receipt of the documents Miss D had posted but said it didn't have taxi receipts and asked for these to validate the claim. It also asked Miss D for her bank details.

During our investigation, Mapfre offered Miss D £150 compensation for the delays in dealing with the claim. And it confirmed it needed Miss D's bank details to partially pay the claim based on the documents it had. Miss D doesn't think £150 compensation is sufficient. And she explained she hadn't been able to obtain taxi receipts from the driver abroad due to a language barrier.

Based on what I've set out above, I think £150 compensation is appropriate taking into consideration that Mapfre explained its offices were closed due to the pandemic and so any documents posted to its office, wouldn't be opened straight away. But it did explain documents could be emailed. So I think it tried to mitigate the impact of its office closure by offering an alternative. In addition, it didn't respond to the complaint within 8 weeks but did refer Miss D to our service. So Miss D has been able to have her complaint investigated.

In relation to the claim, Mapfre has indicated that it needs receipts for the taxi fares being claimed. I don't think this is an unreasonable request. I appreciate Miss D says she doesn't have the receipts. But Mapfre does not have to pay a claim without reasonable evidence of costs. So if Miss D doesn't have receipts for the taxi fares, I don't think it's unreasonable for Mapfre to refuse to pay those costs. It has said it will pay other elements of the claim and has asked Miss D to provide her bank details to enable it to do this. I think that is reasonable.

My final decision

For the reasons set out above, I agree that Mapfre delayed in dealing with the claim but I think its offer of £150 compensation is reasonable.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss D and Mr O to accept or reject my decision before 22 March 2022.

Shamaila Hussain
Ombudsman