

The complaint

Miss K complains about the way Union Reiseversicherung AG (hereafter “URV”) handle claims they made on their travel insurance policy.

What happened

The background to this complaint is well known by both parties. It doesn’t appear to be in dispute and has been well documented by our investigator too, so I’ll not recite it again here. Instead I will provide a very brief overview of what happened and move on to my findings.

Miss K had a travel insurance policy underwritten by URV. When in Japan, they made a number of claims for overseas medical treatment on it and URV paid a claim relating to Miss K’s foot. It didn’t pay another claim because it was less than the policy’s excess. And a final claim remained open. Miss K complained they’d experienced multiple difficulties with URV, and said those had caused them much inconvenience, put them in financial difficulty, and had a knock on effect on other health related matters.

Our investigator agreed Miss K’s overall experience had been lengthy and frustrating and said much of the responsibility for that rested with URV. They said the ongoing impact Miss K had described was too remote from URV’s original mistakes to fairly hold it responsible. But they did think it should let Miss K know what information it required in order to assess the remaining claim, and recommended it pay £250 in compensation too.

URV agreed and said it would await confirmation of Miss K’s agreement before paying the compensation or reaching out with a list of what information was needed for the outstanding claim.

Miss K didn’t think £250 was enough. They reiterated their position and said URV had caused them a multitude of ongoing issues. They said they’d consider the matter settled for about £800 to £1,000 – which they’d use to cover a private medical assessment to initiate their life getting back on track – but agreed to the £250 so as not to sacrifice it.

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.

Both sides should be aware that my findings will not address every single point and argument made, they will focus on those matters I consider central and relevant to the outcome of this complaint. Having considered all of the available evidence and arguments I agree with the conclusions reached by the investigator before me for the following reasons:

- URV has a responsibility to handle claims both promptly and fairly, and to not reject them unreasonably. During the course of Miss K’s claims there were many instances where URV could have done more: such as being clearer and more tailored in its communication and faster in progressing matters. Again, I won’t recite each and every instance of those occurrences here because our investigator has sufficiently

highlighted them. But I agree that in the circumstances of this complaint URV does unfortunately appear to have created a rather lengthy and frustrating period of time for Miss K.

- The above had an understandable impact. Miss K found themselves in the unusual position of having to turn to their broker for assistance in seeking responses or updates from URV. Their claims and a number of their claim related questions were subject to delay and lack of responses. And they were left unnecessarily frustrated, worried, and uncertain about progress. So, I think it is right that URV compensates for this.
- Miss K says a higher award of around £800 to £1,000 would be a fairer reflection of what happened, as they could use that money to fund a private medical assessment to begin to get their life back on track. I thank Miss K for setting out all of the things they feel URV are responsible for. But despite the wide range of impact described, I'm not persuaded I can fairly hold URV responsible for all of Miss K's experiences.
- For example, Miss K says their toe suffered permanent damage as they didn't get any support in arranging treatment. They say they needed to return home to have their coil removed too, because it was an expensive procedure in Japan and given their prior difficulties they didn't know if it'd be reimbursed by URV. They also say that had it not been for URV's actions they wouldn't have needed to return home, nor been caused financial difficulties and would still be in Japan which was a country they loved and had dreamt of staying in.
- I am of course sorry to hear Miss K feels that way, but URV does not appear to have been aware of Miss K requiring any urgent treatment. The onus would have been on Miss K to arrange any treatment they'd been advised was medically required at the time. And despite deciding to return home in 2019 Miss K does not appear to have undergone their coil treatment until 2022. So, as I think our investigator rightly explained, the impact Miss K has relayed is too far removed from URV's actual failings to fairly hold it liable.
- Miss K also says that the delays in getting their coil removed led to a separate and subsequent delay in a diagnosis of ADHD. In turn they say this condition caused them difficulties with a Japanese language exam and their subsequent ability to find employment in Japan. Again, I am sorry to hear of the difficulties Miss K has described, but there just isn't sufficient evidence in this complaint to corroborate their position or sufficiently place causation with URV. So, I cannot fairly hold it liable.
- That Miss K was at times caused frustration, worry, and uncertainty as a result of URV's actions is fully accepted and the above is in no way intended to detract from that. I think it would certainly be helpful of URV to let Miss K know what information it might still require in order to assess the open claim, especially given its prior handling of matters if it hasn't already done so. But any compensation I award needs to be a fair and proportionate reflection of the impact of the failings URV is accountable for. It should not be a punitive measure and for all of the reasons given above I too find that £250 represents a fair and proportionate reflection here. So, I will not be directing an increase to that amount.

Putting things right

To put things right URV should pay £250 compensation.

My final decision

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint. Union Reiseversicherung AG should put things right in the way I have set out above.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss K to accept or reject my decision before 12 January 2023.

Jade Alexander
Ombudsman