

## **The complaint**

Mrs B is unhappy because UK Insurance Limited (UKI) sent her motor insurance documentation to an incorrect address.

## **What happened**

Mrs B contacted UKI to both change the vehicle and amend the address on her motor insurance policy. Following this contact, the vehicle details were changed, but UKI failed to amend the address. So, the new insurance documentation was inadvertently sent to Mrs B's old address.

Mrs B says the documentation was opened by the current resident at this address. And as there had been previous personal issues between Mrs B and the current residents, she became concerned for both her and her partner's safety because - the current residents at her old address now had personal and identifiable information about her. So, Mrs B sold her vehicle because she felt it could be traced to her new address and she complained to UKI. Mrs B said UKI's actions had compromised her and her vulnerable partner's safety.

UKI acknowledged it had made an error, and it paid Mrs B £50 in compensation for the distress caused. But Mrs B said UKI hadn't done enough so she brought a complaint to this service. An investigator reviewed the complaint and said UKI should pay Mrs B a further £250 (£300 in total) in compensation for the distress and inconvenience caused.

UKI says £300 (in total) is too much, so the complaint is now with me for a final decision.

## **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'm upholding this complaint. I'll explain why.

There's no dispute around the circumstances of what happened here. UKI says the address wasn't updated due to an administration error on its part. Mrs B made UKI aware that she and her partner had to move many hundreds of miles away from abusive family members. She says that in her call with UKI, the agent who was changing her address empathised with her because he said he had a partner or a friend who had experienced a similar situation.

UKI says that at the time of the complaint it felt £50 was sufficient compensation, because the new address wasn't on the letter that was sent. UKI said the new address for Mrs B couldn't be obtained from the documentation issued. UKI says it wasn't aware the consumer had to sell her vehicle for fear it might be traced.

However, aside from the fact that UKI says it didn't know Mrs B was selling her vehicle, I don't think UKI fully took into account the other identifiers in the documentation and how they could be used to Mrs B's detriment. Mrs B had bought a new vehicle. So now a third party had access to her new registration number. And even though it might be difficult to obtain an

address from a registration number alone, there were other things a third party could do to make things difficult. I note there's a QR code on the documentation, linked to a Whatsapp number. There are also direct dial numbers to call UKI. Who's to say that a third party, who may be a threat to Mrs B, wouldn't contact UKI and pretend to be her? With access to a new vehicle registration, a correct policy number and knowledge of possible security answers such as email addresses or a date of birth (that most family members would know) who's to say they wouldn't amend Mrs B's insurance policy details or worse cancel the policy itself?

I feel that UKI hasn't taken into account the full impact of its error, and the fear and distress that this must've caused Mrs B and her vulnerable partner. Yes, it's a simple admin error, an error that in most cases would not cause any issues. But in this specific case, with these specific circumstances, the impact on Mrs B has been far greater than normal. It's not solely about the address. It's about a specific third-party having access to identifiable and otherwise inaccessible personal details, that could at any time be used with severe consequences for Mrs B's day to day living or livelihood, and the impact this has had on her mental health.

I don't think UKI fully considered the impact its error has had on Mrs B. As such I agree with our investigator and I think an additional £250 is a more appropriate compensatory reflection of the distress caused by this error.

### **My final decision**

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint. I require UK Insurance Limited to pay:

- An additional £250 in compensation (£300 in total) for the distress its error has caused.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs B to accept or reject my decision before 18 May 2023.

Derek Dunne  
**Ombudsman**