

The complaint

Mr R complains about Wakam's handling of his claim following the loss of his car keys, under his motor insurance policy.

What happened

In November 2021 Mr R lost his car keys. He contacted his insurance broker on 18 November and was advised to contact Wakam, the underwriter for his insurance policy, directly. Mr R says he spent a long time on hold waiting to get through to an adviser. When he did get through, no help was given, and he was passed to various different agents partnered to Wakam.

Mr R says he spent over 60 hours on the phone over the next few days trying to speak to Wakam. He says his car was eventually recovered at 9pm on 22 November 2021, four days after he first reported his loss.

In the time he was waiting for his claim to be dealt with, Mr R says his car was broken into and some items were stolen. He says he wasn't able to go anywhere, including visiting his children without using a bus or taxi, which has cost him over £70. He also says this has been very stressful resulting in difficulty sleeping and has meant he missed an important meeting.

Mr R complained to his broker and his complaint was forwarded onto Wakam. It didn't provide a response, so he contacted our service. We contacted Wakam but received no response either. Our investigator reviewed Mr R's complaint based on the information available. He didn't think Wakam had treated him fairly. He says the claim should've been handled quicker. Because it didn't this caused Mr R inconvenience and the loss of use of his car. Our investigator says Wakam should pay Mr R £250 compensation to put this right.

Mr R accepted this outcome, but Wakam didn't respond. As an agreement wasn't reached the complaint has now 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'm upholding Mr R's complaint. Let me explain.

I've read Mr R's policy terms. The following excerpt is of relevance here:

"The insurer will pay for all the locks to be replaced if one or more is damaged. If car keys, lock transmitters or entry cards are lost or stolen, the insurer will pay for replacement locks and keys – unless they were left unattended in or on your car."

Mr R's policy provides cover should he lose his car keys. This is what happened here and Wakam has covered the cost of replacing the locks and keys. There is no dispute that Mr R's loss was covered. But based on his testimony he had a poor experience registering his claim. In addition, it took several days before his car was recovered and for the locks to be

changed. My consideration of Mr R's complaint centres on these points.

Wakam hasn't provided any records or information for me to consider. So, I have based my decision on the testimony Mr R provided. I have no reason to doubt his account of what happened. I can understand that it must have been extremely inconvenient for Mr R to be without a car as a result of losing his car keys. This situation was made more stressful by the poor standard of service he received when contacting Wakam.

I note Mr R's comments that he made numerous phone calls and was kept on hold for long periods. He also refers to being spoken to rudely by Wakam's agents. We expect Wakam to handle claims fairly and effectively. It shouldn't have been left to Mr R to make multiple calls and be kept on hold for many hours to progress his claim. Based on Mr R's testimony I think it's clear the claim was handled poorly. This resulted in a delay over a number of days and caused him inconvenience and frustration.

I can see that Mr R's policy provides for a temporary replacement vehicle where Wakam's approved repairer is used. I can't see that Mr R was offered this service whilst his locks were being changed, which he also confirms.

I've thought about Mr R's comments that because he was unable to lock his car, a number of items were stolen from it. He says he reported this to the police. The stolen items include a laptop, sports equipment, a silver platinum chain, a blue-tooth headset, trainers, two books, and his V5 logbook and papers. I asked Mr R why his car wasn't left secured prior to him losing his keys. He says he'd mistakenly left it unlocked.

I'm sorry Mr R had items stolen from his car. But he was aware that he couldn't lock his car until the locks were changed. In these circumstances I'd expect a reasonable person to mitigate the risk of theft by removing any items that were left in the car. Had he done this it wouldn't have been possible for these items to have been stolen.

Having considered all this, I don't think Wakam treated Mr R fairly when dealing with his claim. As a result, Wakam should compensate him for the loss of use of his car, the additional travel costs he incurred and for the distress and inconvenience this caused. In these circumstances I agree with our investigator that £250 compensation is fair.

My final decision

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint. Wakam should:

- pay Mr R £250 compensation for the distress and inconvenience it caused him.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr R to accept or reject my decision before 21 June 2023.

Mike Waldron
Ombudsman