

## **The complaint**

Mr and Mrs D are unhappy with the way Highway Insurance Company Limited (HIC) handled their claim under their home insurance policy following an escape of water.

Mr and Mrs D had buildings insurance with HIC, which included home emergency cover as standard. The policy was in joint names but, for ease of reading, I'll refer only to Mr D throughout my decision.

## **What happened**

In summary, Mr D claimed under his home emergency policy after finding water leaking through his ceiling. HIC arranged for an engineer to attend, but Mr D said the first contractor couldn't deal with plumbing leaks. Over the following weeks, Mr D had numerous visits, but the leak and damage got worse each time.

HIC fixed the leak more than two months after Mr D first reported it.

Mr D complained to HIC about the ongoing leak during this time. Once the leak was fixed, HIC issued a final response to his complaint apologising for the delays. HIC offered £30 by way of apology. By this time, Mr D had already brought his complaint to us.

Our investigator didn't think HIC had offered enough given the distress and inconvenience Mr D experienced. She thought HIC should pay a further £250 compensation.

Mr D accepted the recommendation but HIC didn't respond. So the complaint was 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've decided to uphold Mr D's complaint for broadly the same reasons as our investigator.

When Mr D first brought his complaint to us, the claim hadn't been settled. I'm satisfied that the claim itself is now concluded, so I won't repeat the detail here. Instead, I'll focus on the service shortfalls to explain why I don't think HIC's offer of £30 compensation was enough in the circumstances.

I've taken into consideration the following:

- The contractors who attended didn't stop the leak.
- HIC was unable to source parts for months but Mr D felt the delays were unreasonable because he identified the parts locally within days.
- The delays fixing the leak meant that further damage was caused within Mr D's home for which he needed to make a claim under other insurance policies.
- Mr D and his family were without water for nine days before HIC provided alternative accommodation.
- Mr D repeatedly chased progress on the claim.
- Overall, more than two months passed before the leak was fixed.

Having considered that HIC's responsibility under the policy was to stop the leak in order to prevent further damage, I find that its service fell short of that which Mr D could reasonably expect. I've thought about the distress and inconvenience Mr D described that he and his family experienced during this time, and I don't think HIC's £30 compensation offer was enough.

So, in light of the shortfalls identified, I'm satisfied that HIC should pay Mr and Mrs D a further £250 compensation.

### **My final decision**

For the reasons given above, my final decision is that I uphold the complaint and Highway Insurance Company Limited must:

- pay Mr and Mrs D £250 compensation in addition to the £30 it offered.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr D to accept or reject my decision before 19 July 2023.

Debra Vaughan  
**Ombudsman**