

The complaint

Mr N complains Royal and Sun Alliance trading as More Than (RSA) offered differently priced motor insurance quotes based on the same information when he used an online price comparison site. And when he amended some details it unfairly increased the quote for the cost of the premiums.

What happened

Mr N obtained a number of motor insurance quotes through an online price comparison site ahead of the renewal date for motor insurance cover for his car.

He accessed the price comparison site on different dates and the online quotes returned gave different annual premium prices. Ranging from £466.72 to £716.15.

When Mr N spoke to RSA to understand why there was such a difference in the price of the quotes RSA went through the details provided. It was found the length of time he had been at his address was incorrect. This was changed by RSA.

RSA said it reviewed the quotes it had offered. It said as insurance is based on a live market the quotes to insure can fluctuate each day causing the price to differ. And it said as the type of vehicle had changed and because Mr N wanted to buy the insurance on finance this also changed the price of the policy premium.

RSA concluded the quotes offered were correct given the information it was provided with.

As Mr N was not happy with RSA, he brought the complaint to our service.

Our investigator did not uphold the complaint. They looked into the case and said they were unable to say RSA had acted unfairly when quoting for a motor insurance policy. They said due to motor insurance being a live market prices can fluctuate daily. They said the change in price reflected RSA's view of the change in risk at the time of the final quote.

As Mr N is unhappy with our investigator's view the complaint has been brought to me for a final decision to be made.

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.

It is important to understand that we're not the industry regulator. That means I don't have the power to tell an insurer or broker how much it can charge for its policies. Neither is it my role to tell an insurer what factors it should take into account when assessing risk.

We cannot tell RSA (or any insurer) that it should use, or discount, specific data. That's because the risk is RSA's to take on so it will decide how to assess it and will price the policies it offers accordingly.

Insurers constantly update how they rate the risk of consumers. And their rates continually change. Each insurer will take its own view on how to underwrite. It will decide what factors to take into account and how much weight to put on each of them. Insurance is a live market, and it is not uncommon for prices to fluctuate on a daily basis. But that's not unusual or unfair.

Providing they treat people fairly; insurers and brokers are entitled to charge what they feel they need to in order to cover a risk. So although I cannot tell RSA how much to charge Mr N, I can look at whether it treated him fairly when offering quotes.

In this case RSA said the changes made from the initial quote provided were a change in time at address, change in car details and the policy being purchased on finance. In addition it said changes were also due to obtaining quotes on different dates.

I looked at evidence in relation to these changes.

- Change in car details - Details of the model of car were provided manually for the initial quote and in the second quote the actual car registration number was used enabling RSA to use the exact details of the car.
- The final quote included that the policy was to be bought on finance. The original quote was for an annual payment. Paying in instalments over the term of the policy rather than in full at the start means additional finance costs for the policy holder.
- Quotes were obtained on different dates in October 2022 and November 2022.

I saw Mr N said RSA had incorrectly said his car was on finance despite never being asked this question. I checked this and have seen no evidence that RSA said the premium quotes increased in relation to finance on the car. RSA did say there was a change in price because Mr N wanted to purchase the insurance policy on finance but not that his car was on finance.

I understand Mr N will be disappointed, but I have not seen any evidence that RSA unfairly increased its quotation prices.

Therefore, I do not uphold Mr N's complaint and do not require RSA to do anything further in this case.

My final decision

For the reasons I have given I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr N to accept or reject my decision before 20 September 2023.

Sally-Ann Harding
Ombudsman