

The complaint

Mr H complains about Medicash Health Benefits Limited's handling of a claim made under a group cash plan.

What happened

I issued a provisional decision on 7 August 2023. Here's what I said:

"The policy covers the cost of prescribed contact lenses. It says the insured must give information or proof needed by Medicash to support the claim. And that a claim will not be paid if Medicash does not have enough supporting evidence.

The policy says Medicash requires an original receipt which should show: - the name, address and qualifications of the practitioner; the date of treatment; the name and address of the person receiving the treatment; and a breakdown and description of the treatment.

It seems to me that not all of the above would be available when ordering contact lenses online. But Medicash says it wanted to know the date of purchase, which wasn't unreasonable. This information wasn't contained in the information included with the claim that Mr H submitted via the app.

Medicash says that the later email Mr H sent it didn't show the date of purchase, only the date the email was sent by the supplier. However, confirmation emails, such as the one Mr H provided, are usually sent as soon as an online order has been placed. I don't know how else Mr H would be able to show the purchase date. I understand that Medicash has previously accepted claims from Mr H with this information.

Medicash later asked Mr H for a copy of the dispatch note. But this would have also been sent by email, and so it's not clear why Medicash would have been willing to accept this, but not the order confirmation email.

Medicash also said the email from the supplier didn't show a letterhead or logo which helps it to validate a supplier or practitioner. But it didn't tell Mr H this, so he wasn't able to address this point. I note that by right clicking on the image, the logo can be downloaded. If Medicash couldn't do this on its systems, Mr H could have done this and resent it.

I do think it would have been helpful if Mr H had included the confirmation email with his submitted claim on the app, rather than a separate email (as the email wasn't seen by the initial claims handler). But after Medicash became aware of the email, I think it ought to have accepted the claim at that time.

I'm pleased to see that Medicash did later accept Mr H's claim, and I think this was done in a reasonable timeframe. Nonetheless I think it caused Mr H some unnecessary frustration during its assessment of his claim. I intend to require Medicash to pay Mr H £25 compensation by way of apology for this."

I asked both parties for any further comments they wished to make before I made a final decision.

Mr H responded to say he mostly agreed with my findings. Though for the sake of clarity, he's confirmed that he uploaded the claim via the app at the same time as he sent the receipt by email. So he thinks I should reconsider Medicash's initial rejection of the claim.

Medicash responded to say it disagreed with some of the points made in my provisional findings. It says that the date of an email cannot be used as proof of purchase date because this can be altered, and says that a dispatch note will usually contain the date of purchase within the body of the email. It said its reference to a letterhead or logo was in relation to what was required for future claims. Finally, it said it paid the claim within six days of submission.

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.

Mr H has confirmed that he submitted his claim via the app at the same time as sending the receipt by email to Medicash. However, Medicash requires claims to be submitted via its app, and I would assume that would include all supporting documentation. Medicash has confirmed that the initial claims handler assessed the claim based on the information submitted on the app, as that is its process. Medicash did consider the information Mr H sent by email later, but the delay would not have happened if Mr H had submitted the receipt via the app rather than email.

I'm aware that Medicash paid the claim within six days, and I recognised in my provisional decision that the claim was paid in a reasonable timeframe.

Medicash says that an email date can be altered, and it will accept the dispatch email as this usually contains the date of purchase. However, Medicash didn't explain this to Mr H, it simply told him that it couldn't see the date of purchase and he should send it the dispatch note. But as far as Mr H was concerned, he'd already provided this evidence when he'd sent Medicash the confirmation email. Medicash also later made it seem that it hadn't wanted to accept the confirmation email because this had no letterhead or logo. I addressed this in my provisional decision.

I remain of the view that Medicash should pay Mr H £25 compensation for the frustration it caused him after he made the claim.

My final decision

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint. I require Medicash Health Benefits Limited to pay Mr H £25 compensation.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr H to accept or reject my decision before 13 September 2023.

Chantelle Hurn-Ryan
Ombudsman