

The complaint

The estate of the late Mr P complains about the time taken by Zurich Assurance Ltd to settle a claim on his investments.

What happened

Zurich were notified of Mr P's passing in June 2021, and funds from the investment were paid to the estate in March 2023.

Because of the time taken the estate complained asking to be compensated for the delays.

Zurich didn't think there were any delays on their part, so didn't agree to cover any financial loss. They did however offer the representative of the estate a payment of £500 to resolve the complaint.

The estate didn't agree to the offer and brought the complaint to our service where one of our investigators looked into what happened. Whilst appreciating the time it took, they thought Zurich had settled the claim as quickly as possible after receiving the necessary documents.

The representative of the estate remained unhappy with the outcome so the complaint has come to me for a 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.

The representative of the estate has provided a lot of information and it's clear how strongly they feel about what happened. I want to assure them that I've read and considered everything that has been provided even if I don't mention it all in detail. I've summarised some things which reflects the informal nature of our service.

When Zurich were made aware of Mr P's passing in June 2021 they told the estate that both a grant of probate and a claim form would be required.

Both of these requirements are fairly standard business practice given the size of the claim which was over £300,000. So I think Zurich acted fairly when asking for their requirements.

In July 2021, and again in June 2022, Zurich sent the estate the required claim form.

Zurich were provided with the grant of probate, but not a claim form for this investment, in early February 2023. They wrote to the estate saying it had been received and explained there was around a 40 day process turnaround time.

A claim form was sent to the estate on 13 March 2023, which was received back nine days later, with the claim being paid on 28 March 2023.

In this type of situation, I can only hold a business responsible for a financial loss if I think they caused a delay. And looking at what happened I don't think that's the case here.

Zurich made the estate aware that a claim form was required on two different occasions in 2021 and 2022.

I'm satisfied Zurich made the estate fairly aware of the requirement for a claim form, however this wasn't supplied with the grant of probate. Once the claim form was supplied the investment was paid out quickly in less than a week. I think this is a reasonable time frame to check and agree a payment of this size.

I also can't hold Zurich responsible for the time it took for the estate to obtain a grant of probate. I know this took some time and the delays caused concern for the representative of the estate, but this was not in the control of Zurich.

Zurich has made the representative of the estate an offer of £500 to resolve the complaint. Our rules don't allow us to consider compensation payments to third parties such as the representative of the estate in this complaint, so this isn't something I can comment on. The representative should contact Zurich directly to discuss this offer.

Having carefully considered everything that happened I'm satisfied Zurich acted fairly and reasonably when processing the claim and action was taken in a timely manner. I don't think there were any unnecessary delays on their part, so I won't be asking Zurich to take any further action to settle the complaint.

My final decision

For the reasons I've explained above, my decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask the estate of Mr P to accept or reject my decision before 28 March 2024.

Warren Wilson
Ombudsman