

The complaint

Mr and Mrs H have complained that Travel Insurance Facilities Plc (TIF) delayed in passing on information about how a medical declaration would affect their travel insurance cover.

What happened

TIF were the administrators of Mr and Mrs H's annual travel insurance policy. On 16 April 2023 they contacted TIF to inform it that they were due to go on a cruise on 2 May 2023 and that they wanted to update the medical declaration in relation to Mr H's health condition.

TIF needed to contact the medical team for guidance. Although it received a response within a few days explaining that the underwriter was unable to provide cover for the condition, TIF didn't inform Mr and Mrs H of that until 27 April 2023. Due to the bank holiday, this effectively left Mr and Mrs H only one working day to try and find alternative cover. They were unable to source affordable alternative cover and so reluctantly cancelled the holiday.

Our investigator thought the service provided by TIF fell well short of what they had the right to expect. She therefore upheld the complaint and recommended that TIF should pay £200 compensation.

TIF agreed with the investigator's view. Mr and Mrs H disagree because they feel that £200 is insufficient to compensate them for the distress and inconvenience caused to them. Therefore, the complaint has been passed 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.

Mr and Mrs H were able to make a claim under the policy for cancellation. The underwriter subsequently paid out for the cost of the holiday. Mr and Mrs H are unhappy that an excess was deducted from the settlement amount. My understanding is that that is being dealt with as a separate complaint against the underwriter.

To be clear, this decision relates only to TIF as the administrator of the policy. TIF accepted that it provided poor service. The matter at hand is whether £200 is an appropriate amount for the errors that occurred and the impact on Mr and Mrs H.

Mr and Mrs H say that the whole experience has been appalling. There's no doubt that the situation would have been very stressful for them, particularly as Mr H was also dealing with bad news about his health. It would have been frustrating having to ring up to try and find out if there was any update. And, given that the start date of their holiday was coming up, the lack of information would have been a worry. And of course, there was the disappointment of having to cancel the cruise, which had been arranged to celebrate a special occasion.

Mr and Mrs H would like to be compensated for the time they have taken in pursuing the matter. They have commented on what the cost might have been had they appointed a

solicitor. However, when looking at how someone has been inconvenienced, we wouldn't routinely consider it in terms of an hourly rate, or time taken off work. Instead, we look at the overall impact that TIF's poor service has had.

I have a great deal of sympathy for Mr and Mrs H's situation. I can certainly appreciate why they feel they should receive a higher amount than recommended by our investigator. But in recommending that amount, the investigator was in no way playing down their experience. Rather, she was following this service's approach to awards of this kind. As an informal dispute resolution service, our awards are more modest than they might expect, and different to what a court might award.

I've thought very carefully about what Mr and Mrs H have said about the physical and emotional impact of TIF's poor service. But, whilst I know it will be disappointing to them, overall, I consider that £200 is an appropriate amount for the distress and inconvenience caused.

My final decision

For the reasons set out above, I uphold the complaint and require Travel Insurance Facilities Plc to pay Mr and Mrs H £200 compensation.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs H and Mr H to accept or reject my decision before 12 March 2024.

Carole Clark

Ombudsman