

## **The complaint**

Mr B complained that Hastings Insurance Services Limited (Hastings) treated him unfairly when administering his car insurance policy.

## **What happened**

Mr B took out car insurance through Hastings. After a while Hastings asked Mr B for some further information, so they could check all his details were correct. Mr B wasn't happy with that and said he'd never heard of such a thing before.

Mr B also wanted to change the insurance to cover a different car. Mr B cancelled the policy and took out cover elsewhere that cost a lot more. Mr B complained that someone from Hastings laughed at him during a call about his cover, during which he was transferred to a different department which couldn't help him.

Hastings replied to Mr B's concerns. They said his welcome pack says that they may check details are correct to reduce fraud and keep prices competitive.

Hastings said Mr B's policy was broken because their system stopped working. That's why they couldn't make changes to it. Hastings paid Mr B £50 compensation for this.

Hastings didn't agree their agent laughed at Mr B, but they said he smirked. Hastings said sorry and paid Mr B £30 for this. They also paid him £30 for transferring him to the different departments.

Mr B said this wasn't fair. He wanted Hastings to pay towards his more expensive policy.

An investigator here looked into the matter. They agreed Hastings hadn't paid enough compensation. But they said they wouldn't ask Hastings to contribute towards the more expensive policy. The investigator said a total of £200 compensation would be fair. Mr B doesn't agree, so the case has been 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.

I'm sorry to disappoint Mr B, but I agree the total of £200 compensation is fair. Hastings have told Mr B what went wrong and what didn't go wrong. The explanations Hastings have given to Mr B are reasonable and are backed up by the information they've given to us.

Hastings' request to check information was correct was not unreasonable. It is to help stop honest customers from losing out due to people who don't tell the truth when they buy their insurance. Some people lie about things to try and get insurance cheaper, which isn't fair on those who tell the truth and have to pay more as a result of others lies. Hastings didn't single Mr B out or suggest he was lying.

Hastings gave us a note to show Mr B's policy was broken, so it couldn't be changed.

Hastings paid some money to Mr B as part of a refund for the cancellation, and they paid him £50 compensation. That was fair, for that error alone, because the trouble it caused was minor.

Hastings gave us a recording of the call Mr B said he was laughed at during. I've listened to that call. It's clear Mr B took offence to hearing a laugh. The agent said he agreed it wasn't a laughing matter and he quickly reassured Mr B he wasn't laughing at what had happened to him. The compensation of £30 for that error alone is appropriate because the apology was quick and sounded genuine to me.

Hastings agrees Mr B's call was transferred to a different department when that didn't need to be done. Mr B was transferred back to the correct department afterwards. I know that can be annoying, but the compensation already paid for that error alone is fair because the trouble it caused was minor.

While I've found the compensation for each individual issue would have been fair (if only one had happened), I think the number of issues made things worse for Mr B. So, I agree with the investigator that it should be increased to a total of £200.

And to be clear, I don't agree that Hastings should pay towards Mr B's more expensive policy. It's unfortunate he had to change his car and that it cost more to insure. But the way the cost of insurance is worked out is complicated and small changes can lead to big differences in the cost.

Mr B could have researched this when choosing his replacement car, so I can't ask Hastings to pay for something out of their control. It is also worth noting that Hastings believe the cost of cover with them was a lot cheaper, because of it being broken. And it wasn't their fault Mr B had to change his car.

### **My final decision**

It is my final decision that I uphold this complaint. I require Hastings to pay Mr B a total of £200 compensation for the issues covered in this decision. Mr B has said he hasn't had the full amount yet, Hastings should check whether previous payments were successful.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr B to accept or reject my decision before 16 April 2024.

Will Weston  
**Ombudsman**