

The complaint

Mr Z complains that Hastings Insurance Services Limited have treated him unfairly in respect of his motor insurance policy.

What happened

Mr Z applied for motor insurance through a price comparison website (PCW). That led him to Hastings (an intermediary) who arranged a policy for him with an insurer.

Hastings decided to contact Mr Z to double check a few things on his application, and to make sure his policy was valid.

Once Hastings had done their checks with Mr Z, they found some of the details needed to be amended – and that led to additional costs in relation to his policy. An admin fee for updating it and an additional premium charged by the insurer.

Mr Z didn't think that was fair. He felt he'd been singled out for additional checks, and he believed the amendments Hastings had made weren't correct. So, he was worried his policy still might not be valid.

An investigator here looked into the matter, they felt Hastings had been fair in making verification checks on the policy and they didn't find any concerns with how it had been updated. So, they thought the additional charges were appropriate.

Mr Z disagreed, for much the same reasons he'd made before. Because of that, the matter was 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.

Having done so, I've reached the same conclusion as the investigator, I'll explain why.

The details that Hastings wanted to double check were in relation to the date Mr Z purchased his car and the date he first moved to the UK. Mr Z provided a copy of his driving licence which showed when and where he was born. He also provided a copy of the V5C (an ownership document) to show when he purchased the vehicle.

Hastings found the details on those documents weren't the same as those that had been input on the PCW, so they needed to be updated. When Hastings passed the correct details on to the insurer, the insurer said the premium should have been greater, so they said he ought to pay more.

Mr Z's licence showed that he was born in India in 1985, but his application said he'd been a UK resident since birth. Hastings asked him about this, and he explained that he moved to the UK at the age of around two, so they amended the policy to reflect that – and the insurer decided it meant he should pay more for his policy.

Mr Z's V5C showed that he'd acquired the vehicle on 1 May 2022. Hastings asked him about this too, because his application said 1 April 2022. Mr Z explained that he'd bought the vehicle before ownership was formally transferred, and therefore he considered the date he had given was accurate. That's understandable, and I wouldn't necessarily hold that against Mr Z but given this change was of no consequence it doesn't need any further consideration.

Overall, I'm satisfied Mr Z wasn't singled out for additional checks. Hastings say he was selected at random, and I've seen nothing to make me doubt that is true. Furthermore, had the checks not been done, Mr Z's policy may well have been invalid in some way – and that can have very significant consequences in the event of a claim.

So, in a sense, what Hastings did was for his benefit, even though I understand why he doesn't see it that way due to being asked to pay more.

My final decision

It is my final decision that I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr Z to accept or reject my decision before 18 April 2024.

Will Weston
Ombudsman