

## **The complaint**

Mr and Mrs E complain about the service they received from Accredited Insurance (Europe) Ltd (Accredited) after making a claim under their home insurance policy.

Where I've referred to Accredited, this also includes any actions and communication by agents acting on their behalf.

## **What happened**

Mr and Mrs E have a home insurance policy underwritten by Accredited. In July 2023, Mr and Mrs E suspected there was a leak in an underground pipe and reported this to Accredited.

Accredited appointed their specialist to attend to investigate where the leaking pipe was, but they were unable to locate this.

Mr and Mrs E were told to contact their local water company for them to investigate, but they declined to investigate as it hadn't been shown it was a pipe which they were responsible for.

Following ongoing discussions between Mr and Mrs E, various parties including the local council, Accredited and their appointed agents, and additional visits, the pipe works were completed in early September 2023.

Mr and Mrs E complained to Accredited about their handling of the claim, including delays, poor communication and the inconvenience caused. Accredited apologised and offered £75 compensation.

As Mr and Mrs E remained unhappy, they approached the Financial Ombudsman Service.

One of our investigators looked into things and upheld the complaint. He said that whilst Accredited had recognised the service they provided fell short, he didn't think the compensation they'd offered was sufficient. Therefore, he recommended it be increased to £150.

As an agreement wasn't reached, the case was passed to me for a final 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.

Having done so, I've reached the same overall outcome as our investigator.

I don't intend on commenting on everything that occurred throughout the course of the claim, as both parties are already aware, and this isn't in dispute. I don't mean this as a discourtesy to either party, rather it reflects the informal nature of this service and my role within it. Whilst I haven't commented on everything that occurred, I'd like to reassure both parties that I've considered all the information they've provided when reaching my final decision.

Having a claim will always be inconvenient by its very nature, but having considered what happened here, it's clear the service Mr and Mrs E received fell short and beyond any inconvenience that they might reasonably have expected. Accredited doesn't dispute that their handling of the claim fell short, and this is why they offered £75 compensation. But I agree with our investigator that this isn't sufficient for the distress and inconvenience Mr and Mrs E were caused.

Ultimately it took longer than might have been reasonably expected for the claim to be resolved from start to finish - from mid-July to early September 2023 to stop a leaking pipe external to Mr and Mrs E's property. And many of the delays incurred were avoidable. For example, there were issues with the agent's familiarity of equipment that they were using at the initial investigation, which meant the leak couldn't be detected. Mr and Mrs E were directed to their water company because of this, but the water company wouldn't attend as it hadn't been shown it was a pipe which they were responsible for.

When Accredited later authorised works to be completed, Mr and Mrs E were incorrectly told it would be them that needed to obtain public liability insurance and apply for licences to dig up the pavement when this wasn't the case, and this caused delays. Given Accredited (and their agents) were the experts here, it should have been them guiding Mr and Mrs E throughout the claim, whereas they were left to do this on Accredited's behalf at multiple points.

The communication throughout was also poor, Mr and Mrs E needed to chase for updates and explore next steps in order to move things forward. And despite multiple requests for updates either from Accredited or their agents, this didn't happen. And throughout this time, Mr and Mrs E were inconvenienced by having a leak in the system, they had to continually turn on and off the mains water, with a deadline to resolve this from the water company or they could face charges for the leaking water, which all added to what was already a stressful situation.

Like I say, having a claim in itself will always be inconvenient, but here I think it went beyond what would reasonably have been expected. And I don't think £75 compensation is enough for this. Having considered all the information provided, I agree with our investigator that the total compensation should be increased to £150 and this is a fair and reasonable amount in all the circumstances of the case.

### **My final decision**

It's my final decision that I uphold this complaint and direct Accredited Insurance (Europe) Ltd to:

- Pay Mr and Mrs E a total of £150 compensation (including the £75 already offered)

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr E and Mrs E to accept or reject my decision before 3 May 2024.

Callum Milne  
**Ombudsman**