

The complaint

Mr W complains Astrenska Insurance Limited caused unnecessary delays in handling his claim for property lost abroad.

What happened

Mr W travelled on holiday abroad in June 2023 to a country I will refer to as 'S', and while he was away, had several items stolen including cash. He held a single trip travel insurance policy underwritten by Astrenska, and made a claim for his losses.

Mr W raised his claim with Astrenska on 7 June 2023. And Astrenska first got in touch with him about the claim on 20 August 2023.

Mr W was unhappy with the time taken to progress his claim and the lack of updates, and he complained.

Astrenska accepted it had caused a delay in handling Mr W's claim and hadn't provided him with updates. And it apologised for this. It said it was still waiting to receive Mr W's proof of address, and was unable to accept the credit card statement he'd provided. It apologised for not informing him of this sooner and offered £30 in compensation.

Unhappy with the response, Mr W brought his complaint to this service.

An investigator here looked into what had happened and said they thought Astrenska hadn't done enough to put things right. They recommended Astrenska should pay Mr W £100 in compensation.

Astrenska accepted the investigator's view. However Mr W disagreed. In summary he said his claim took 29 weeks in total to be settled. He said he had been ignored and lied to for months. And he said the level of compensation didn't recognise his distress and inconvenience.

As Mr W disagreed, 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.

Firstly I should clarify that Mr W has brought other complaints about Astrenska to this service. Mr W complained to Astrenska at the end of August 2023 about having not received any contact since submitting two claims at the end of June 2023. Astrenska treated the complaints about the two claims separately and issued two final decision letters.

In this decision I will be focusing on the delays in handling the claim Mr W made following his trip to 'S' only. And I can only consider what happened during the period up until Astrenska's final response letter sent on 18 October 2023.

I've looked at the relevant rules and industry guidelines, which say an insurer must handle claims promptly and fairly and shouldn't unreasonably reject a claim. And it should provide reasonable guidance to help make a claim with appropriate information on progress.

Mr W submitted his claim on 7 June 2023. And based on the evidence Astrenska has provided, I can't see that it made any contact with Mr W about his claim relating to his trip to 'S' until after he emailed asking for an update on 14 August 2023. Following this, Astrenska responded on 20 August 2023 advising on what needed to happen next.

Astrenska has accepted that it caused an unnecessary delay and failed to provide Mr W with any updates. This was over a period of more than two months since Mr W first submitted his claim.

I'm satisfied the delay and lack of information caused Mr W inconvenience and worry. And he had to send a further email to find out what was happening with his claim.

Putting things right

I'm in agreement with the investigator that I don't think £30 is enough to put things right. In the circumstances I think £100 more adequately recognises the distress and inconvenience caused to Mr W by the delay and poor communication.

My final decision

For the reasons I've given, it's my final decision that I uphold this complaint. And I direct Astrenska Insurance Limited to pay Mr W a total of £100, in respect of the overall distress and inconvenience caused.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr W to accept or reject my decision before 22 July 2024.

Gemma Warner
Ombudsman