

The complaint

Mr B complains about Aviva Insurance Limited (“Aviva”) for delays in handling his claim after a flood at his home. He wants Aviva to increase the compensation offered to reflect the distress and inconvenience he suffered.

What happened

Mr B insured his home with Aviva via a broker.

In January 2024, Mr B experienced an escape of water in the upstairs of his property. He reported the loss on 9 January 2024.

Aviva sent an assessor to Mr B’s home on 4 February 2024.

The assessor formulated a schedule of works, and this was provided to Mr B.

Mr B challenged this, and Aviva suggested he obtain his own quotes for the work needed.

Mr B did so and provided his own quotes to Aviva on 21 February 2024. Aviva did not update Mr B, so he chased up contact on 1 March 2024.

Aviva then arranged a second assessment of the damage for 14 March 2024.

Aviva made an offer of settlement following this visit. It was for less than the lowest quote which Mr B had obtained.

Mr B rejected that settlement offer.

On 27 March 2024, Aviva offered to settle the claim on the amount of the lowest quote Mr B had provided.

Mr B accepted this, and payment was made to Mr B in early April 2024.

Mr B then complained to Aviva about the delays in dealing with his claim.

Aviva sent its final response to Mr B in late April 2024. It acknowledged some avoidable delays and offered Mr B £150 compensation to reflect the delay.

Mr B was not happy and contacted us.

One of our investigators has looked into this matter and recommended that the compensation be increased to £375 in line with our guidance on compensation.

Aviva has accepted that view. Mr B has not accepted the view and thinks that the compensation ought to be around £1000.

The matter has therefore been passed for an ombudsman 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.

There is little in dispute here and it is common ground that Aviva took too long to handle this claim.

The most notable delay was the period of almost a month to first attend to assess the damage. I appreciate that waiting for this to be done would have been very restrictive for Mr B as he was not able to make changes before the assessment was done.

He has described living and working from home in an environment which smelled of dampness and was unpleasant to be in, and that this understandably had an effect on him.

I also note that after that initial assessment there were further periods of delay when Aviva did not respond promptly, or until chased, before the case was moved on.

I agree with my colleague's view that, looking overall at the timeline of the claim, there was around 6 weeks of avoidable delay, and that Aviva ought to compensate Mr B for that delay.

I also agree with my colleague's assessment of the appropriate level of compensation. I note that this does not reflect the full inconvenience and distress which Mr B suffered, but as my colleague explained there is a level of inconvenience and disruption that is inherent in a loss happening (such as a flood here) and that insurance companies aren't responsible for all of the disruption experienced.

Here I agree that Aviva ought to have progressed matters more promptly and that the delays exacerbated an already stressful and unpleasant situation for Mr B.

He has described the effects he suffered, and I am satisfied that he experienced substantial distress and inconvenience as a result of this delay. I am also satisfied that the compensation recommended by my colleague is in line with other awards we would make in similar circumstances.

I therefore agree with my colleague and endorse his view.

Putting things right

In order to put matters right, Aviva should pay to Mr M a total of £375 compensation for his distress and inconvenience.

My final decision

For the reasons set out above, I uphold Mr M's complaint and direct Aviva Insurance Limited to pay to Mr M a total of £375 compensation for his distress and inconvenience.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr B to accept or reject my decision before 25 November 2024.

Laura Garvin-Smith
Ombudsman