

The complaint

Miss B and Mr T have complained about a quote for a home insurance policy provided by Saga Services Limited trading as Saga Services (Saga).

As Miss B mainly seemed to deal with the quote and complaint, for ease, I will normally only refer to her.

What happened

Miss B went online to obtain a home insurance quote from Saga. Saga provided Miss B with a quote and emailed her some documents. Miss B wanted to accept the quote. However, before doing so, she wanted to check details about the payment because she wanted it to be taken closer to the date on which the policy started. Miss B tried to phone Saga but there was a wait for calls to be answered. So, she emailed Saga shortly after to say she accepted the quote, but wanted further information on payment options.

Miss B didn't hear anything further. So, the next day she phoned Saga for information about paying for the quote. The call handler retrieved the quote and the price increased. The call handler spoke to a manager and told Miss B the price was only guaranteed on the date of the quote. Miss B said that Saga's documents didn't say the price was only guaranteed on the day of the quote.

The call handler spoke to a manager again. She told Miss B the policy could only now be for the new amount in the quote. However, if Miss B paid for the policy, Saga would then refund Miss B the difference between the two quotes. Miss B said she wanted to raise a complaint because she thought Saga should be much more upfront about how long its quotes were valid.

When Saga replied to the complaint, it said the quote documents had said the quote wasn't guaranteed. By the time, Miss B emailed about the quote, it had expired. It said that, at times, Saga experienced a high volume of calls, which meant callers were placed in a queue for an advisor. When Miss B spoke to Saga, the call handler had correctly referred Miss B's concern to a manager, who had offered to refund the difference between the quotes once Miss B had made the payment.

Miss B continued to raise concerns with Saga. When it replied, Saga said its policy documents said quotes weren't guaranteed. However, quotes were guaranteed until 11.59pm on the day cover was due to start on the quote, not just the day it was generated, providing no changes were made to it.

Miss B brought her complaint to this Service. Our Investigator didn't uphold the complaint. She said Saga had clarified that quotes were valid until the date on which cover was due to start and so should have been available to purchase. However, because the call handler retrieved the quote and amended the payment terms, this changed the quote. The Investigator said Saga could have been clearer about the risk of the premium changing. However, Saga had acted fairly by offering to refund the difference in premiums, which put Miss B back in the same position she would have been. She said Saga had also

acknowledged it had been experiencing high call volumes and had apologised for this. She said Saga had fairly responded to the complaint.

Miss B said Saga's timeframe for accepting a quote was unclear and it continued to misinform people about this. Saga had also provided incorrect information in its complaint response, including that it now accepted that quotes were valid until the date cover started. She said Saga should explain this correctly in its quotes and they should be honoured at that time. So, the complaint was referred to me.

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 don't uphold this complaint. I will explain why.

Miss B went online to get a quote for a Saga home insurance policy. A couple of days later, Miss B spoke to Saga about the quote and how to pay. I've listened to that phone call. Saga explained the options and Miss B said she wanted to pay in full by a one-off direct debit payment. Miss B asked if a new quote that day might reduce the price. The call handler said it might do and said she'd check. Miss B then asked whether a new quote might also increase the price. The call handler said it might, which Miss B was concerned about. But based on what I could hear in the call, the process had already started to regenerate the quote at that day's price.

Miss B was then told the premium had increased. Miss B was, understandably, unhappy about this. So, the call handler spoke to a manager. Miss B was then told it wasn't possible to reduce the premium to the previous quote. But, if she paid for the policy, Saga said the difference between the two quotes would be refunded to her. I think that was fair in the circumstances. It put Miss B back in the position she would have been had the premium not increased.

I'm aware Miss B has told this Service she would have had to use her overdraft to pay for the policy and then await a refund of the additional premium. I've listened to the phone calls and Miss B didn't say this to Saga. So, I think the way Saga offered the refund was fair based on the information available to it at the time.

Miss B has said Saga also needed to be clearer in its wording about how long quotes were valid. It's a business decision for Saga to decide what it says in its documents. I'm unable to tell it what it should say. However, I've looked at the documents. The quote document Miss B was provided said "*This quotation is not guaranteed*". The documents included other information such as the cover selected, the assumptions made about the property and the additional cover available. It also said Miss B should read the endorsements before she went ahead with the quote. So, there were a number of items in the quote that could have affected the cover or premium offered. So, the documents explained the quote wasn't guaranteed, how to check or change any details in the quote and how to buy the policy. I think that was reasonable.

Miss B has also said Saga didn't tell her at any point, including during the complaint process, that quotes were valid until the date on which the policy started. I've seen an email Saga sent to Miss B on 8 July 2024 that explained this. Saga sent the email when Miss B continued to disagree with its response to her complaint to clarify the position. I should also note that the issue that caused the premium to change wasn't about the validity period of the original quote. It was that the call handler regenerated the quote at that day's price. The

quote was then higher than the quote Miss B had been able to obtain a couple of days earlier.

Miss B was also concerned about the options available to accept the quote. She said she tried to phone Saga but there was a long wait on its phone lines. When Saga replied to the complaint, it said it sometimes experienced high call volumes. During those times, Miss B's call would be placed in a queue for the next advisor. It also offered the option of a call back within 24 hours if the query wasn't urgent. It said it was monitoring the availability of its call centre and apologised to Miss B for any inconvenience caused. I think that was fair in the circumstances.

After Miss B tried to phone Saga, she sent an email to accept the quote and query the payment method. However, I note that in the documents Miss B was sent, this offered two options to accept the quote. These were to go to Saga's website or to phone Saga. The following day, Miss B hadn't heard back from Saga, so she phoned and spoke to the call handler who regenerated the quote. But, email wasn't a route by which Miss B could accept the quote. About a week later, Saga replied to explain about payment methods. This was still before the start date of the policy. I haven't seen anything that persuades me Saga acted unreasonably.

I'm aware Miss B has said she spent a long time looking for a policy before finding the Saga policy at a premium she wanted to pay. When Miss B tried to accept the quote with Saga over the phone, due to the quote being regenerated, the premium increased. Saga immediately offered to refund the difference. However, Miss B decided not to accept the resolution put forward by Saga and opted to find a policy elsewhere. I'm aware Miss B has said it then took some time to find another policy. However, I don't think I can fairly say Saga was responsible for the time Miss B spent looking for a policy.

Overall, I think Saga fairly dealt with the complaint. As a result, I don't uphold this complaint or require Saga to do anything further in relation to it.

My final decision

For the reasons I have given, it is my final decision that this complaint is not upheld.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss B and Mr T to accept or reject my decision before 6 January 2025.

Louise O'Sullivan
Ombudsman