

The complaint

Mr D and Mrs D as the trustees of the D Trust ('the trustees') are unhappy with the way in which Aviva Life & Pensions UK Limited handled a claim made under a life insurance policy after the life assured under the policy, Mr D2, died.

What happened

The details of this complaint are well known to both parties, so I won't repeat them again here. I'll focus on giving the reasons for my 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.

That includes Aviva's obligation to handle insurance claims promptly and fairly.

I know that the claim has now been accepted and the life benefit paid (with interest) but I'm only considering what happened up to 4 October 2024, the date of Aviva's final response letter.

From what I've seen I'm satisfied that a claim was made on the policy in mid-2024 and the trustees provided Aviva with some of the information required.

In its final response letter dated Aviva accepted that there have been delays in paying the claim as it needed to complete the necessary due diligence checks. It said it still awaited information from the trustees to progress the claim.

However, I'm persuaded that Aviva had enough information from around August 2024 to decide whether to accept or decline the claim, pending further information. So, I'm satisfied that it needlessly delayed making a claims decision and wasn't proactive in explaining to the trustees what it required to finalise its assessment and why. I'm also satisfied that there were times when Aviva should've reasonably requested information more promptly and didn't quickly progress the claim after receiving documents.

I'm therefore satisfied that Aviva was responsible for some of the delays.

The trustees are relations of Mr D2 so I'm satisfied that they would've already been going through a difficult time. And I'm satisfied that the way Aviva handled the claim needlessly exacerbated their upset. The trustees were also put to the trouble of regularly chasing Aviva for updates.

I'm satisfied £250 compensation fairly reflects the impact on the trustees.

I appreciate that one of the trustees was a named beneficiary in the trust document and she has potentially been impacted by the delays in paying the claim. However, she is bringing

the complaint in her capacity as a trustee and was not experiencing a financial loss in this capacity. I remain satisfied that compensation in the sum of £250 is fair and reasonable.

My final decision

I uphold this complaint to the extent set out above and direct Aviva Life & Pensions UK Limited to pay the trustees of the D trust a total of £250 compensation for distress and inconvenience.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr D and Mrs D as trustees of the D Trust to accept or reject my decision before 23 April 2025.

David Curtis-Johnson
Ombudsman