

The complaint

Ms G and Mr M complain that Scottish Widows Limited (Scottish Widows) provided incorrect information to them when they made an enquiry about the details held on their Whole of Life Protection Policy. They say this error caused them stress and anxiety.

What happened

Ms G took out a Protection for Life Lifetime Cover policy with Scottish Widows in 2014. This was a Whole of Life Policy intended to cover funeral and other expenses in the event of her death. In 2015, Mr M was added as an additional trustee.

In September 2024, Ms G and Mr M appear to have contacted Scottish Widows to ask for up to details of the policy, including the names of the policy beneficiaries.

Scottish Widows responded on 26 September 2024 with the details but didn't provide the full name of one of the beneficiaries. It missed the first name and used the beneficiaries' middle name only.

Ms G and Mr M complained to Scottish Widows. They were concerned that the name of the beneficiary was wrong.

Ms G and Mr M said they had read several negative reviews about Scottish Widows especially relating to delays to settling claims. They said these reviews coupled with the incorrect beneficiary's name was causing them both stress and anxiety.

They were worried about the implications any delay would have for Ms G's children in the event of her death. Ms G and Mr M wanted to cancel the policy and have all the premiums refunded.

Scottish Widows said it wouldn't comment on the reviews but apologised for providing incorrect beneficiary details and paid Ms G and Mr M £50 for the distress and inconvenience this had caused.

Ms G and Mr M weren't satisfied with this response, so they brought their complaint to this Service.

Our Investigator reviewed the case and didn't think Scottish Widows needed to do anything else. She felt the £50 paid and the apology was appropriate for the errors made and explained that as this Service is focused on individual consumer complaints, she wouldn't make any comment on negative reviews against Scottish Widows.

Ms G and Mr M remained unhappy, so the complaint has been 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.

It's clear from the evidence I've looked at that Ms G and Mr M are concerned at reviews they've read, from several different sources, about Scottish Widows and the administration and service it provides on the type of policy they have.

Ms G and Mr M don't feel that the reviews represent the level of service they assumed when the policy was initially taken out.

Given the purpose of the policy was to make funeral arrangements, in the event of Ms G's death, as easy as possible for her beneficiaries, it is understandable that any suggestion of a delay to a claim, in such an event, would be a cause for stress and anxiety.

But my role here is limited to look at how Scottish Widows acted when Ms G and Mr M asked for up-to-date information on their policy. As an impartial service we only look at complaints on an individual basis which is what I've done here.

Given this, it is not appropriate for me to comment or make judgement on any wider reviews, either positive or negative, that have been made about Scottish Widows.

That said, I do think the incorrect naming of the policy beneficiary, provided by Scottish Widows, was poor and would have caused Ms G and Mr M both inconvenience and anxiety. They were put to the trouble of having to notify Scottish Widows of the error and will have been worried about the incorrect information.

I'm pleased to see Scottish Widows have acknowledged this and awarded Ms G and Mr M £50, apologised, and explained it would provide corrective coaching to staff to minimise the possibility of similar errors in the future.

I think this resolution is fair. The complaint here was a one-off error (the incorrect naming of a beneficiary) which was quickly corrected. I haven't seen any evidence of any further impact on the policy or any financial disadvantage to Ms G and Mr M and, as the action taken by Scottish Widows is broadly in line with the guidance this Service provides, I won't be asking it to do anything more.

I know Ms G and Mr M feel that the error made here isn't in line with the level of service they expected when the policy was taken out. But on the evidence I've seen, I think Scottish Widows reacted to an error it made in a timely manner and resolved it in line with what I would expect.

In summary, I agree Scottish Widows made an error when it provided Ms G and Mr M with incorrect beneficiary details. And I think the resolution Scottish Widows made is fair and reasonable.

If it hasn't already done so it should pay them the £50 it has offered.

My final decision

For the reasons given above I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Ms G and Mr M as trustees of the Protection for Life Lifetime Cover to accept or reject my decision before 1 July 2025.

Ben Castell
Ombudsman