

The complaint

Mr O has complained about the handling of a claim, and valuation of his car by Tradex Insurance Company PLC (Tradex).

Tradex is the underwriter of this policy. During the claim Mr O also dealt with other businesses who act as Tradex's agents. As Tradex has accepted it is accountable for the actions of its agents, in my decision, any reference to Tradex includes the actions of the agents.

What happened

Mr O made a claim having been involved in a collision with a third party vehicle in November 2024. Mr O was not at fault but the incident resulted in his car being declared a total loss. Tradex valued his car at £24,283. It apologised for difficulties Mr O had experienced when contacting the claims department and offered £50 in compensation.

Unhappy, Mr O referred his complaint to our Service. He said the customer service that he received was shocking – having to hold at least 30 minutes on the telephone before speaking to an adviser. He said that he was financially out of pocket and wanted an increase on the value offered by Tradex of £1500 in order to source a replacement car.

Our investigator didn't recommend that the complaint be upheld. He researched and was satisfied that the settlement offered by Tradex was fair.

Mr O appealed.

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.

Although I've summarised the background to this complaint - no discourtesy is intended by this. Instead, I've focused on what I find are the key issues here. Our rules allow me to take this approach. It simply reflects the informal nature of our service as a free alternative to the courts.

The regulator's rules say that insurers must handle claims promptly and fairly. And that they mustn't turn down claims unreasonably. So I've considered, amongst other things, the relevant law, the policy terms and the available evidence, to decide whether I think Tradex treated Mr O fairly.

Having done so, and although I recognise that Mr O will be disappointed by my decision, I agree with the conclusion reached by the investigator for the following reasons:

- Under Mr O's policy where a car is deemed to be a total loss Tradex will offer the market value or the value shown in the schedule whichever is lower – here market value is shown on the schedule. The policy defines market value as the cost of

replacing the car with another of the same make, specification, model, age mileage and condition as the car immediately before the loss or damage happened. No courtesy car is provided where a car is deemed to be a total loss.

- Our service doesn't value cars. Instead, we check to see that the insurer's valuation is fair and reasonable and in line with the terms and conditions of the policy. To do this we tend to use relevant valuation guides, which are based on nationwide research of sales prices. As the investigator explained, if the valuation guides are in agreement with each other and the insurer has valued the vehicle in line with them, we're likely to say that the valuation is fair.
- Tradex valued Mr O's car at £24,283 – which was fairly in the range of valuations from CAP - £24,007, Glass's - £24,360, Percayso - £24,395 and Autotrader - £24,568. I do understand Mr O's point that he has always purchased his cars from a specific main dealer – but to accord with the policy terms a fair and reasonable valuation doesn't need to be from a main dealer. That said, I note that Tradex did confirm that there was a car of the same model as Mr O's for sale from a main dealer, 2021 plate with 15,000 miles listed at £24,000.
- The investigator further demonstrated that Mr O could replace find a similar replacement to his car with the valuation offered. I appreciate the models suggested may not have been the same colourway or exact specification as Mr O's and I haven't disregarded Mr O's comment that his car wasn't just 'R Design' but 'R Design Pro silver with a black roof'. The investigator was just trying to show that there were similar vehicles available. Be that as it may, it was the R design Pro that was valued and I'm satisfied that Tradex has shown that its valuation was fair by reference to the retail prices in the published guides. This being so there is no basis for me to ask it to pay Mr O the £1500 he has requested or any increased figure.
- I appreciate that Mr O has raised other issues including that his car was sold without his authority, the amount his car was sold for and his renewal premium. I am sorry to note that he has found the process post incident more traumatic than the accident itself. In this decision though I am only considering the issues raised in the complaint brought here initially and which Tradex responded to in January 2025. Tradex didn't agree to further issues being considered as part of this complaint. It said that its file submission had only taken into consideration aspects raised until the January final response. That is not to say Mr O can't raise a further complaint about these issues.
- Mr O did raise the issue about the service he had received and the difficulties he faced in getting through on the telephone. I can accept that this was frustrating and inconvenient. Tradex offered compensation for this in the sum of £50. I find that was fair. I don't find that Tradex acted incorrectly by initially registering this as a fault claim – this is standard practice – but I note that has now been reversed.
- In all the circumstances I find that Tradex has treated Mr O fairly. It has offered a fair valuation for his car, and fair compensation for the difficulties in getting through expediently. I don't require it to make any increased offer.

My final decision

My final decision is that I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr O to accept or reject my decision before 14 October 2025.

Lindsey Woloski
Ombudsman