

The complaint

Mrs H complains that Scottish Widows Limited (Scottish Widows) didn't provide her with the information she needed when she was reviewing the performance of her policy.

What happened

The background to this complaint is well known to all parties so I'll just give a broad overview here.

In 1990, Mrs H took out a Living Cover Plan policy with a provider and the policy was transferred to Scottish Widows in 2004.

The policy was periodically reviewed which led to changes in the premiums needed to support the cover the policy provided.

Mrs H became increasingly dissatisfied with the results of these periodic reviews and surrendered the policy on 10 May 2024.

Mrs H received a cash sum when she surrendered her policy but wanted to know the total premiums she'd paid, since its inception, to review the difference between what she'd paid into the policy and the surrender value.

In response to her requests, Scottish Widows replied on several occasions providing her with the surrender value she'd been paid but not the total premiums which she'd asked for.

Mrs H became increasingly frustrated by this and complained to Scottish Widows on 9 October 2024.

Scottish Widows investigated her concerns and provided a manual calculation of the total premiums Mrs H had paid and initially provided this to Mrs H on 25 November 2024. It then sent an updated calculation on 26 November 2024 to correct an error it had noticed in its first calculation.

On 27 November 2024, Scottish Widows sent Mrs H its response to her complaint.

It didn't think it had done anything wrong with the management of the policy itself but did agree it had caused Mrs H distress and inconvenience by the delays in providing her with the total amount of premiums she'd paid into her policy.

Scottish Widows apologised and offered Mrs H £300 compensation.

Mrs H wasn't happy with this response so brought the complaint to this Service.

Our Investigator reviewed all the available evidence and restricted her investigation and opinion to the errors Scottish Widows made when sending Mrs H the total amount of

premium payments she'd made. She agreed Scottish Widows had made errors and thought the apology and award of £300 was a reasonable resolution.

Mrs H wasn't satisfied with this opinion, so the complaint has been brought 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.

In her submissions, Mrs H has commented extensively on her dissatisfaction with the way Scottish Widows have managed her policy since it was transferred to it in 2004. And it's clear she feels she has been financially disadvantaged as a result.

These concerns of Mrs H were the subject of a previous complaint brought to this Service in 2023 and so I won't be commenting on any aspect of Scottish Widow's management of Mrs H's policy in this decision.

If Mrs H feels she has new evidence or new cause for complaint about the management of her policy before it was surrendered, that is different to what was covered in her complaint made to this Service in 2023, then she should, in the first instance, direct it to Scottish Widows.

I mean no discourtesy to Mrs H by saying this but the rules on what I can and can't consider are clear.

In this decision, I've limited my review to Scottish Widow's actions following the surrender of Mrs H's policy in May 2024.

Having done so I agree that Scottish Widows made errors by not providing Mrs H with a clear answer to her request for a total of all the premiums she made during the life of the policy. From the evidence I've seen it took Scottish Widows around six months to provide Mrs H with the information she asked for which is considerably longer than it should have.

When Scottish Widows eventually provided Mrs H with the total of the premiums she'd paid, it did so via a manual calculation rather than having the information immediately to hand. Mrs H feels this was symptomatic of a lack of transparency and consistency in Scottish Widow's overall communication. And because of what she feels is a lack of transparency, she says it is difficult for her to trust her policy was managed effectively.

I've thought carefully about Mrs H's comments and can appreciate her frustrations with the communications she received following the surrender of her policy.

But, in this complaint, I've limited my review to Mrs H's request for the total premiums she'd paid on her policy and not considered any communications outside of this specific complaint point.

I've only looked at, and made any judgement on, the communication Scottish Widows sent her relating to this issue. And while I agree errors were made when Scottish Widows communicated with Mrs H about her request for the total premiums, I don't think I can reasonably conclude that the errors in responding to this request is evidence of any wider systematic communication failures by Scottish Widows.

I can see Scottish Widows acknowledged, apologised for its errors, eventually provided Mrs H with the correct information, and awarded Mrs H £300 for the trouble and upset this would have caused her. I think this is fair and I'll explain why.

The guidance at this service describes an award of £300 as suitable where a business has made repeated small errors, or a larger single error, requiring a reasonable effort to sort out.

In this complaint Scottish Widows sent Mrs H incorrect information on several occasions and only sent her the correct information after she complained. Mrs H was put to the inconvenience of having to chase Scottish Widows for the correct information, having to make a formal complaint and she was delayed in her ability to analyse the information she had asked for. And I think this pattern of errors made by Scottish Widows and the effort Mrs H had to make to sort them out broadly fits the definition of £300 being a suitable award.

In summary, I think Scottish Widows made errors when providing Mrs H the total of premium payments she'd made during the life of her policy. And I think the apology and award Scottish Widows offered is a fair and reasonable resolution.

If it hasn't already done so, Scottish Widows should pay Mrs H the £300 it offered in its letter of 27 November 2024.

My final decision

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

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs H to accept or reject my decision before 27 October 2025.

Ben Castell
Ombudsman