

The complaint

Ms W complains Domestic & General Insurance Plc (D&G) unfairly declined a breakdown claim under an appliance insurance policy.

What happened

The details of this complaint are well-known to the parties, so I won't repeat them here. Instead, I'll focus on 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.

Ms W incepted an insurance policy with D&G. This covered an oven she'd purchased in 2010 for mechanical or electrical breakdown or accidental damage. Ms W claimed on the policy due to condensation leaving puddles on the floor when used, a hole in the grill lining, and a shelf had fallen.

Ms W complains, in summary, D&G unfairly declined the claim, its reason(s) were inconsistent, and unfounded. She says her oven suffered a breakdown and the evidence points to structural or mechanical faults consistent with wear and tear, rather than misuse, neglect, or corrosion. She says D&G should replace her oven or refund the premiums.

D&G says it declined the claim following its engineer inspecting the oven and deeming it beyond economical repair. It said there were three problems with the oven which gave rise to this claim, it didn't think these were the result of breakdown or accidental damage, and corrosion was present.

My review has determined Ms W's complaint should be upheld in part. I'll explain why.

The claim

The policy responds to certain perils, namely mechanical or electrical breakdown, and accidental damage. I don't find there is a mechanical or electrical breakdown because the problems with it (excessive condensation when in use, a hole in the bottom of the grill, and the grill shelf falling) suggest the appliance is experiencing the effects of wear and tear. Ms W has also said she thinks the problems are consistent with wear and tear, but the policy doesn't respond to this.

Nor do I find these problems are the result of accidental damage, which is physical damage due to a sudden cause that means the appliance is no longer in working order, because an accident wasn't reported, and they seem to more likely than not be the result of wear and tear, as, for example, Ms W has said the screws holding the grill shelf in place have worked loose over time. This wouldn't be considered accidental damage. I therefore find, on balance, there is no insured peril in operation for the policy to respond to. It follows I find it was fair and reasonable for D&G to decline the claim.

The customer service

I've reviewed the claim journey, and D&G's service failings. My review has determined D&G's claim handling was unsatisfactory. D&G was required to deal with Ms W's claim promptly, fairly, and provide her with reasonable guidance on its progress, which extends to ensuring she clearly understood the reason(s) for its claim decision. It's evident in my view D&G's handling and claim decision caused confusion, lacked clarity, was unhelpful, and this gave Ms W the impression her claim was being declined unfairly and without basis.

I recognise the outcome of my decision means a great deal to Ms W. I say this because she thinks she's been treated unfairly and has gone to great lengths to support her claim. And while I note my decision not to require D&G to take action in respect of the claim will be disappointing to her, I find some compensation is appropriate to recognise the impact D&G's poor claim handling had on her. Having considered this, I find £150 compensation to be fair, reasonable, and proportionate in all the circumstances of this complaint. It follows I'll be directing D&G to pay Ms W £150 compensation.

Putting things right

Domestic & General Insurance Plc ought to have handled this matter much better – and with a more appropriate level of customer service. It must now pay Ms W £150 compensation to recognise its service failings and the impact on Ms W.

I accept Ms W will be disappointed with my decision. But it ends what we – in attempting to informally resolve her dispute with D&G – can do for her.

My final decision

I uphold this complaint. I now require Domestic & General Insurance Plc to settle this complaint in line with my instructions above.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Ms W to accept or reject my decision before 13 January 2026.

Liam Hickey
Ombudsman