

The complaint

Mr F's complaint is, in essence, that Mitsubishi HC Capital PLC trading as Novuna Personal Finance (the 'Lender') acted unfairly and unreasonably by (1) being party to an unfair credit relationship with him under Section 140A of the Consumer Credit Act 1974 (as amended) (the 'CCA') and (2) deciding against paying a claim under Section 75 of the CCA.

What happened

Mr F was a member of a timeshare provider (the 'Supplier') – having purchased a number of products from it over time. But the product at the centre of this complaint is his membership of a timeshare that I'll call the 'Signature Collection' – which he bought on 15 August 2019 (the 'Time of Sale'). He entered into an agreement with the Supplier to buy 850 fractional points at a cost of £11,032 (the 'Purchase Agreement').

Signature Collection membership was asset backed – which meant it gave Mr F more than just holiday rights. It also included a share in the net sale proceeds of a property named on the Purchase Agreement (the 'Allocated Property') after his membership term ends.

Mr F paid for his Signature Collection membership by taking finance of £11,032 from the Lender (the 'Credit Agreement').

Mr F – using a professional representative (the 'PR') – wrote to the Lender on 22 May 2024 (the 'Letter of Complaint') to raise a number of different concerns. As those concerns haven't changed since they were first raised, and as both sides are familiar with them, it isn't necessary to repeat them in detail here beyond the summary above.

The Lender dealt with Mr F's concerns as a complaint and issued its final response letter on 19 June 2024, rejecting it on every ground.

The complaint was then referred to the Financial Ombudsman Service. It was assessed by an Investigator who, having considered the information on file, rejected the complaint on its merits.

Mr F disagreed with the Investigator's assessment and asked for an Ombudsman's decision – which is why it was passed to me.

I considered the matter and issued a provisional decision (the 'PD'). In that decision, I said:

"I have considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what is fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint. And having done that, I do not think this complaint should be upheld.

However, before I explain why, I want to make it clear that my role as an Ombudsman is not to address every single point that has been made to date. Instead, it is to decide what is fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint. So, if I have not commented on, or referred to, something that either party has said, that does not mean I have not considered it.

Section 75 of the CCA: the Supplier's misrepresentations at the Time of Sale

The CCA introduced a regime of connected lender liability under section 75 that affords consumers ("debtors") a right of recourse against lenders that provide the finance for the acquisition of goods or services from third-party merchants ("suppliers") in the event that there is an actionable misrepresentation and/or breach of contract by the supplier.

Certain conditions must be met if the protection afforded to consumers is engaged, including, for instance, the cash price of the purchase and the nature of the arrangements between the parties involved in the transaction. The Lender doesn't dispute that the relevant conditions are met. But for reasons I'll come on to below, it isn't necessary to make any formal findings on them here.

It was said in the Letter of Complaint that Signature Collection membership had been misrepresented by the Supplier at the Time of Sale because Mr F was:

- 1. Told that he had purchased an investment that would "considerably appreciate in value" when that was not true.*
- 2. Told that he would own a share in a property that would increase in value during the membership term when that was not true.*
- 3. Made to believe that he would have access to "the holiday apartment" at any time all year round when that was not true.*
- 4. Not told how the maintenance fees operated and was given inaccurate information about them upon which he relied when deciding to purchase his timeshare.*

However, neither points 1 nor 2 strike me as misrepresentations even if such representations had been made by the Supplier (which I make no formal finding on). Telling prospective members that they were investing their money because they were buying a fraction or share of one of the Supplier's properties was not untrue. And even if the Supplier's sales representatives went further and suggested that the share in question would increase in value, perhaps considerably so, that sounds like nothing more than a honestly held opinion as there isn't enough evidence to persuade me that the relevant sales representative(s) said something that, while an opinion, amounted to a statement of fact that they did not hold or could not have reasonably held.

As for point 3, while it's possible that Signature Collection membership was misrepresented at the Time of Sale for that reason, I don't think it's probable. It's given little to none of the colour or context necessary to demonstrating that the Supplier made a false statement of existing fact and/or opinion. And as there isn't any other evidence on file to support the suggestion that Signature Collection membership was misrepresented for that reason, I don't think it was.

And as for point 4, it is not misrepresentation. If something is not told then it cannot have been misrepresented. However I've dealt with this point, and the PR's allegation that inaccurate information was given to Mr F, below.

So, while I recognise that Mr F and the PR have concerns about the way in which his Signature Collection membership was sold by the Supplier, when looking at the claim under Section 75 of the CCA, I can only consider whether there was a factual and material misrepresentation by the Supplier. For the reasons I've set out above, I'm not persuaded that there was. And that means that I don't think that the Lender acted unreasonably or unfairly when it dealt with this particular Section 75 claim.

Section 140A of the CCA: did the Lender participate in an unfair credit relationship?

I've already explained why I'm not persuaded that Signature Collection membership was actionably misrepresented by the Supplier at the Time of Sale. But there are other aspects of the sales process that, being the subject of dissatisfaction, I must explore with Section 140A in mind if I'm to consider this complaint in full – which is what I've done next.

Having considered the entirety of the credit relationship between Mr F and the Lender along with all of the circumstances of the complaint, I don't think the credit relationship between them was likely to have been rendered unfair for the purposes of Section 140A. When coming to that conclusion, and in carrying out my analysis, I have looked at:

- 1. The standard of the Supplier's commercial conduct – which includes its sales and marketing practices at the Time of Sale along with any relevant training material;*
- 2. The provision of information by the Supplier at the Time of Sale, including the contractual documentation and disclaimers made by the Supplier;*
- 3. Evidence provided by both parties on what was likely to have been said and/or done at the Time of Sale;*
- 4. The inherent probabilities of the sale given its circumstances; and, when relevant*
- 5. Any existing unfairness from a related credit agreement.*

I have then considered the impact of these on the fairness of the credit relationship between Mr F and the Lender.

The Supplier's sales & marketing practices at the Time of Sale

Mr F's complaint about the Lender being party to an unfair credit relationship was made for several reasons.

The PR says, for instance, that the right checks weren't carried out before the Lender lent to Mr F. I haven't seen anything to persuade me that was the case in this complaint given its circumstances. But even if I were to find that the Lender failed to do everything it should have when it agreed to lend (and I make no such finding), I would have to be satisfied that the money lent to Mr F was actually unaffordable before also concluding that he lost out as a result and then consider whether the credit relationship with the Lender was unfair to him for this reason. But from the information provided, I am not satisfied that the lending was unaffordable for Mr F.

Connected to this is the suggestion by the PR that the Credit Agreement was arranged by an unauthorised credit broker, the upshot of which is to suggest that the Lender wasn't permitted to enforce the Credit Agreement. However, it looks to me like Mr F knew, amongst other things, how much he was borrowing and repaying each month, who he was borrowing from and that he was borrowing money to pay for Signature Collection membership. And as the lending doesn't look like it was unaffordable for him, even if the Credit Agreement was arranged by a broker that didn't have the necessary permission to do so (which I make no formal finding on), I can't see why that led to a financial loss for Mr F – such that I can say that the credit relationship in question was unfair on him as a result. And with that being the case, I'm not persuaded that it would be fair or reasonable to tell the Lender to compensate him, even if the loan wasn't arranged properly.

I acknowledge that Mr F may have felt weary after a sales process that went on for a long time. But he says little about what was said and/or done by the Supplier during the sales presentation that made him feel as if he had no choice but to purchase Signature Collection membership when he simply did not want to. He was also given a 14-day cooling off period and he has not provided a credible explanation for why he did not cancel his membership during that time. And with all of that being the case, there is insufficient evidence to

demonstrate that Mr F made the decision to purchase Signature Collection membership because his ability to exercise that choice was significantly impaired by pressure from the Supplier.

Overall, therefore, I don't think that Mr F's credit relationship with the Lender was rendered unfair to him under Section 140A for any of the reasons above. But there is another reason, perhaps the main reason, why the PR says the credit relationship with the Lender was unfair to him. And that's the suggestion that Signature Collection membership was marketed and sold to him as an investment in breach of prohibition against selling timeshares in that way.

The Supplier's alleged breach of Regulation 14(3) of the Timeshare Regulations

The Lender does not dispute, and I am satisfied, that Mr F's Signature Collection membership met the definition of a "timeshare contract" and was a "regulated contract" for the purposes of the Timeshare Regulations.

Regulation 14(3) of the Timeshare Regulations prohibited the Supplier from marketing or selling Signature Collection membership as an investment. This is what the provision said at the Time of Sale:

"A trader must not market or sell a proposed timeshare contract or long-term holiday product contract as an investment if the proposed contract would be a regulated contract."

But the PR says that the Supplier did exactly that at the Time of Sale – saying, in summary, that Mr F was told by the Supplier that Signature Collection membership was the type of investment that would only increase in value.

The term "investment" is not defined in the Timeshare Regulations. But for the purposes of this provisional decision, and by reference to the decided authorities, an investment is a transaction in which money or other property is laid out in the expectation or hope of financial gain or profit.

A share in the Allocated Property clearly constituted an investment as it offered Mr F the prospect of a financial return – whether or not, like all investments, that was more than what he first put into it. But it is important to note at this stage that the fact that Signature Collection membership included an investment element did not, itself, transgress the prohibition in Regulation 14(3). That provision prohibits the marketing and selling of a timeshare contract as an investment. It doesn't prohibit the mere existence of an investment element in a timeshare contract or prohibit the marketing and selling of such a timeshare contract per se.

In other words, the Timeshare Regulations did not ban products such as the Signature Collection. They just regulated how such products were marketed and sold.

To conclude, therefore, that Signature Collection membership was marketed or sold to Mr F as an investment in breach of Regulation 14(3), I have to be persuaded that it was more likely than not that the Supplier marketed and/or sold membership to him as an investment, i.e. told him or led him to believe that Signature Collection membership offered him the prospect of a financial gain (i.e., a profit) given the facts and circumstances of this complaint.

There is competing evidence in this complaint as to whether Signature Collection membership was marketed and/or sold by the Supplier at the Time of Sale as an investment in breach of regulation 14(3) of the Timeshare Regulations.

On the one hand, it is clear that the Supplier made efforts to avoid specifically describing membership of the Signature Club as an 'investment' or quantifying to prospective purchasers, such as Mr F, the financial value of their share in the net sales proceeds of the Allocated Property along with the investment considerations, risks and rewards attached to them.

On the other hand, I acknowledge that the Supplier's sales process left open the possibility that the sales representative may have positioned Signature Collection membership as an investment. So, I accept that it's equally possible that Signature Collection membership was marketed and sold to Mr F as an investment in breach of Regulation 14(3).

However, whether or not there was a breach of the relevant prohibition by the Supplier is not ultimately determinative of the outcome in this complaint for reasons I will come on to shortly. And with that being the case, it's not necessary to make a formal finding on that particular issue for the purposes of this decision.

Was the credit relationship between the Lender and the Consumer rendered unfair?

Having found that it was possible that the Supplier breached Regulation 14(3) of the Timeshare Regulations at the Time of Sale, I now need to consider what impact that breach had on the fairness of the credit relationship between Mr F and the Lender under the Credit Agreement and related Purchase Agreement as the case law on Section 140A makes it clear that regulatory breaches do not automatically create unfairness for the purposes of that provision. Such breaches and their consequences (if there are any) must be considered in the round, rather than in a narrow or technical way.

Indeed, it seems to me that, if I am to conclude that a breach of Regulation 14(3) led to a credit relationship between Mr F and the Lender that was unfair to him and warranted relief as a result, whether the Supplier's breach of Regulation 14(3) led him to enter into the Purchase Agreement and the Credit Agreement is an important consideration.

But on my reading of the evidence before me, the prospect of a financial gain from Signature Collection membership was not an important and motivating factor when Mr F decided to go ahead with his purchase. That doesn't mean he weren't interested in a share in the Allocated Property. After all, that wouldn't be surprising given the nature of the product at the centre of this complaint. But as Mr F himself doesn't persuade me that his purchase was motivated by his share in the Allocated Property and the possibility of a profit, I don't think a breach of Regulation 14(3) by the Supplier was likely to have been material to the decision Mr F ultimately made.

What I am considering here, though, is whether any such positioning of the Signature Collection membership as an investment was material to Mr F's decision to purchase it (and in turn, therefore, to enter into the Credit Agreement). Mr F's comments do not lead me to think that it was. I'll explain why.

*I've considered the chronology of the complaint including when Mr F/his PR complained to the Lender, the date Mr F gave authority to the PR to represent him, and when he gave his 'witness statement'. Mr F's witness statement is dated 2 April 2024 and was provided just under five years after the Time of Sale. It was also only after the judgment in *Shawbrook & BPF v FOS* that Mr F provided the statement. The witness statement is the only account I have from Mr F.*

Mr F's witness statement provides his chronological account about the three timeshare memberships he bought, of which the Signature Collection (the one which this complaint is about) was the last. And Mr F's account of the sale of the Signature Collection contains no

mention that it was marketed and sold to him as an investment. I can see that his recollections about the sale of his second (Fractional Club) timeshare do include comments about how he was led to believe that that specific membership offered him the prospect of financial gain, but he makes no such mention of the same in relation to the sale of his Signature Collection membership.

So firstly, not only does Mr F's witness statement post-date the judgment in *Shawbrook & BPF v FOS* - which established this Service's approach to these complaints – it also contains no mention that the Signature Collection was marketed and sold to him as an investment. But secondly, even had Mr F stated that the Supplier had marketed the Signature Collection to him in that way, I'm cognisant of the fact that the more time that passes between the event complained of and a complaint being made, the more risk there is of recollections being vague, inaccurate and influenced by discussions with others. In such circumstances, I am simply unable to rule out the latter or ignore the high risk that Mr F would likely have influenced by discussions he had with others.

For these two reasons I am simply, unable to put enough weight on Mr F's account that would enable me to uphold this complaint.

I have also borne in mind that Mr F was buying extra fractional points in 2019, thereby adding to those he had previously purchased in 2018. That he chose to increase the amount of fractional points serves to underline Mr F's interest in the holiday benefits membership offered him. As he himself says in his witness statement, "The reason why we became "Signature" members is to acquire a few extra points and upgrades, to get a better level of accommodation and to be able to book up to 2 years in advance." This leads me to think that he would more likely than not have gone ahead with the purchase whether or not if it was presented to him as an investment opportunity.

I've thought too about the PR's response to our Investigator's view which is principally concerned with comments about the marketing and sale of Fractional Club membership as an investment. But this complaint isn't about Mr F's purchase and membership of Fractional Club membership. I accept that it is possible that the Supplier marketed and sold Signature Collection membership as an investment but, as have explained here, it does not automatically follow that any such sales practises rendered the credit relationship between Mr F and the Lender unfair for the purposes of s140A. And also, for the reasons I have given here, I can't put sufficient weight on Mr F's account such that I could reasonably uphold his complaint.

On balance, therefore, even if the Supplier had marketed or sold the Signature Collection membership as an investment in breach of Regulation 14(3) of the Timeshare Regulations, I am not persuaded that Mr F's decision to purchase Signature Collection membership at the Time of Sale was motivated by the prospect of a financial gain (i.e., a profit). On the contrary, I think the evidence suggests he would have pressed ahead with their purchase whether or not there had been a breach of Regulation 14(3). And for that reason, I do not think the credit relationship between Mr F and the Lender was unfair to him even if the Supplier had breached Regulation 14(3).

The provision of information by the Supplier at the Time of Sale

The PR says that Mr F was not given sufficient information at the Time of Sale by the Supplier about the ongoing costs of Signature Collection membership. The PR also says that the contractual terms governing the ongoing costs of membership and the consequences of not meeting those costs were unfair contract terms.

As I've already indicated, the case law on Section 140A makes it clear that it does not

automatically follow that regulatory breaches create unfairness for the purposes of the unfair relationship provisions. The extent to which such mistakes render a credit relationship unfair must also be determined according to their impact on the complainant.

I acknowledge that it is also possible that the Supplier did not give Mr F sufficient information, in good time, on the various charges they could have been subject to as Signature Collection members in order to satisfy the requirements of Regulation 12 of the Timeshare Regulations (which was concerned with the provision of 'key information'). But even if that was the case, I cannot see that the ongoing costs of membership were applied unfairly in practice. And as neither Mr F nor the PR have persuaded me that they would not have pressed ahead with his purchase had the finer details of the Signature Collection's ongoing costs been disclosed by the Supplier in compliance with Regulation 12, I cannot see why any failings in that regard are likely to be material to the outcome of this complaint given its fact and circumstances.

As for the PR's argument that there were one or more unfair contract terms in the Purchase Agreement, I can't see that any such terms were operated unfairly against Mr F in practice, nor that any such terms led them to behave in a certain way to their detriment. And with that being the case, I'm not persuaded that any of the terms governing Signature Collection membership are likely to have led to an unfairness that warrants a remedy."

In conclusion, given the facts and circumstances of this complaint, I did not think that the Lender acted unfairly or unreasonably when it dealt with Mr F's Section 75 claim, and I was not persuaded that the Lender was party to a credit relationship with him under the Credit Agreement that was unfair to him for the purposes of Section 140A of the CCA. And having taken everything into account, I could see no other reason why it would be fair or reasonable to direct the Lender to compensate Mr F.

At the time of my provisional decision, I deferred my conclusions on the matter of commission disclosure in order to review that issue further.

The Lender acknowledged receipt of the PD and said it had nothing further to add at this time.

The PR also responded. It did not accept the PD and provided some further comments it wanted me to take into account; these included further comments about commission disclosure. Since then, I've since written to the parties setting out my thoughts on why I wasn't persuaded to uphold this aspect of the complaint. I said:

"As both sides already know, the Supreme Court handed down an important judgment on 1 August 2025 in a series of cases concerned with the issue of commission: Johnson v FirstRand Bank Ltd, Wrench v FirstRand Bank Ltd and Hopcraft v Close Brothers Ltd [2025] UKSC 33 ('Hopcraft, Johnson and Wrench').

The Supreme Court ruled that, in each of the three cases, the commission payments made to car dealers by lenders were legal, as claims for the tort of bribery, or the dishonest assistance of a breach of fiduciary duty, had to be predicated on the car dealer owing a fiduciary duty to the consumer, which the car dealers did not owe. A "disinterested duty", as described in Wood v Commercial First Business Ltd & ors and Business Mortgage Finance 4 plc v Pengelly [2021] EWCA Civ 471, is not enough.

However, the Supreme Court held that the credit relationship between the lender and Mr Johnson was unfair under Section 140A of the CCA because of the commission paid by the lender to the car dealer. The main reasons for coming to that conclusion included, amongst other things, the following factors:

1. *The size of the commission (as a percentage of the total charge for credit). In Mr Johnson's case it was 55%. This was "so high" and "a powerful indication that the relationship...was unfair" (see paragraph 327);*
2. *The failure to disclose the commission; and*
3. *The concealment of the commercial tie between the car dealer and the lender.*

The Supreme Court also confirmed that the following factors, in what was a non-exhaustive list, will normally be relevant when assessing whether a credit relationship was/is unfair under Section 140A of the CCA:

1. *The size of the commission as a proportion of the charge for credit;*
2. *The way in which commission is calculated (a discretionary commission arrangement, for example, may lead to higher interest rates);*
3. *The characteristics of the consumer;*
4. *The extent of any disclosure and the manner of that disclosure (which, insofar as Section 56 of the CCA is engaged, includes any disclosure by a supplier when acting as a broker); and*
5. *Compliance with the regulatory rules.*

From my reading of the Supreme Court's judgment in Hopcraft, Johnson and Wrench, it sets out principles which apply to credit brokers other than car dealer-credit brokers. So, when considering allegations of undisclosed payments of commission like the one in this complaint, Hopcraft, Johnson and Wrench is relevant law that I'm required to consider under Rule 3.6.4 of the Financial Conduct Authority's Dispute Resolution Rules ('DISP').

But I don't think Hopcraft, Johnson and Wrench assists Mr F in arguing that his credit relationship with the Lender was unfair to him for reasons relating to commission given the facts and circumstances of this complaint.

Based on what I've seen, the Supplier's role as a credit broker wasn't a separate service and distinct from its role as the seller of timeshares. It was simply a means to an end in the Supplier's overall pursuit of a successful timeshare sale. I can't see that the Supplier gave an undertaking – either expressly or impliedly – to put to one side its commercial interests in pursuit of that goal when arranging the Credit Agreement. And as it wasn't acting as an agent of Mr F but as the supplier of contractual rights he obtained under the Purchase Agreement, the transaction doesn't strike me as one with features that suggest the Supplier had an obligation of 'loyalty' to him when arranging the Credit Agreement and thus a fiduciary duty.

I haven't seen anything to suggest that the Lender and Supplier were tied to one another contractually or commercially in a way that wasn't properly disclosed to Mr F, nor have I seen anything that persuades me that the commission arrangement between them gave the Supplier a choice over the interest rate that led Mr F into a credit agreement that cost disproportionately more than it otherwise could have.

What's more, in stark contrast to the facts of Mr Johnson's case, as I understand it, no payment between the Lender and the Supplier, such as a commission, was paid when the Credit Agreement was arranged at the Time of Sale. And with that being the case, even if there were information failings at that time and regulatory failings as a result (which I make no formal finding on), I'm not currently persuaded that the commercial arrangements between the Supplier and the Lender were likely to have led to a sufficiently extreme inequality of knowledge that rendered the credit relationship unfair to Mr F."

So, having received the relevant responses from both parties – and having provided my findings in respect of the PR’s concerns about undisclosed commission – I’m now finalising my decision.

The legal and regulatory context

In considering what is fair and reasonable in all the circumstances of the complaint, I am required under DISP 3.6.4R to take into account: relevant (i) law and regulations; (ii) regulators’ rules, guidance and standards; and (iii) codes of practice; and (where appropriate), what I consider to have been good industry practice at the relevant time.

The legal and regulatory context that I think is relevant to this complaint is, in many ways, no different to that shared in several hundred published ombudsman decisions on very similar complaints – which can be found on the Financial Ombudsman Service’s website. And with that being the case, it is not necessary to set out that context in detail here. But I would add that the following regulatory rules/guidance are also relevant:

The Consumer Credit Sourcebook (‘CONC’) – Found in the Financial Conduct Authority’s (the ‘FCA’) Handbook of Rules and Guidance

Below are the most relevant provisions and/or guidance as they were at the relevant time:

- CONC 3.7.3 [R]
- CONC 4.5.3 [R]
- CONC 4.5.2 [G]

The FCA’s Principles

The rules on consumer credit sit alongside the wider obligations of firms, such as the Principles for Businesses (‘PRIN’). Set out below are those that are most relevant to this complaint:

- Principle 6
- Principle 7
- Principle 8

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.

Following the responses from both parties, I’ve considered the case afresh and having done so, I’ve reached the same decision as that which I outlined in my provisional findings, for broadly the same reasons.

Again, my role as an Ombudsman isn’t to address every single point which has been made to date, but to decide what is fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint. If I haven’t commented on, or referred to, something that either party has said, this doesn’t mean I haven’t considered it.

Rather, I’ve focused here on addressing what I consider to be the key issues in deciding this complaint and explaining the reasons for reaching my final decision.

The PR's further comments in response to the PD in the main relate to the issue of whether the credit relationship between Mr F and the Lender was unfair. In particular, the PR has provided further comments in relation to whether the membership was sold to Mr F as an investment at the Time of Sale as well as comments about his motivation for making the purchase and about ambiguity in the documentation related to the overall duration of the contract. It also provided further comments regarding the payment of a commission by the Lender to the Supplier leading to an unfair credit relationship – which, as set out above, I have since addressed in my side letter.

As outlined in my PD, the PR originally raised various other points of complaint, all of which I addressed at that time. But it didn't make any further comments in relation to those in their response to my PD. Indeed, it hasn't said it disagrees with any of my provisional conclusions in relation to those other points. And since I haven't been provided with anything more in relation to those other points by either party, I see no reason to change my conclusions in relation to them as set out in my PD. So, I'll focus here on the PR's points raised in response.

Section 140A of the CCA: did the Lender participate in an unfair credit relationship?

The PR has highlighted under Section 140B (9) of the CCA, the burden of proof falls on the Lender to disprove the allegation that its relationship with Mr F was unfair. I agree that this is correct, placing a burden on lenders during the process of litigation. That does not mean, though, that the Lender – or I – should take a claim at face value. There remains an onus on Mr F to provide some evidence for the claim he is making, despite the overall burden of proof resting with the Lender, as was set out in the judgment in *Smith and another v Royal Bank of Scotland plc* [2023] UKSC 34 at paragraph 40. I also remind both parties that it is my role to make findings on what I consider to be fair and reasonable in all the circumstances of any given complaint.

The Supplier's alleged breach of Regulation 14(3) of the Timeshare regulations

In its response to my PD, the PR has reasserted its view that the Supplier marketed the Fractional Club membership to Mr F as an investment and that this was a motivating factor in his decision.

I accepted in my PD that the membership may well have been marketed as an investment to Mr F in breach of the prohibition in Regulation 14(3) of the Timeshare Regulations. I also explained that while the Supplier's sales processes left open the possibility that the sales representative may have positioned Fractional Club membership as an investment, it wasn't necessary for me to make a finding on this as it is not determinative of the outcome of the complaint. I explained that regulatory breaches do not automatically create unfairness and that such breaches and their consequences (if there are any) must be considered in the round, rather than in a narrow or technical way. The PR's response to my PD hasn't changed my view of this, and so whether the Supplier's breach of Regulation 14(3) led Mr F to enter into the Purchase Agreement and the Credit Agreement remains an important consideration.

In my PD I explained the reasons why I didn't think any breach of Regulation 14(3) had led Mr F to proceed with his purchase. In short, I was not persuaded that his decision was motivated by the prospect of a financial gain (i.e., a profit). In reaching that view, I took into account the testimony given by Mr F in the course of his complaint. I recognise the PR has interpreted Mr F's testimony differently to how I have, and I have carefully considered its further comments. Ultimately though, they have not led me to a different conclusion.

I've thought about the concerns expressed by the PR in reply to my PD, specifically about there being no requirement to provide a witness statement at the same time as making claim. Whilst no formal requirement existed, providing testimony in support of a claim provides it with credibility, context and consistency. It is important for the decision-maker to be able to see that the Letter of Complaint genuinely reflects the consumer's testimony and that simply isn't possible in this case.

The PR has also said it is not correct of me to discredit Mr F's witness statement on the basis it was provided just under five years after the Time of Sale. What I explained in my PD however, was that with the passage of time between the event complained about and the complaint being made, the greater the *risk* there is of recollections being vague, inaccurate or influenced by others. As I said in my PD, I am simply unable to ignore the high risk that Mr F's testimony was impacted by the latter. This, combined with the fact that Mr F's witness statement not only post-dated the judgment in *Shawbrook & BPF v FOS*, but also omitted to mention at any point that the Signature Collection was marketed and sold to him as an investment meant that I am simply unable to put enough weight on Mr F's account that would enable me to uphold this complaint.

The PR has also commented that the fact Mr F was interested in holidays doesn't alter the fact that the prospect of a profit from his investment was a motivating factor in his decision to purchase Signature Collection membership. And it says there is no need for the investment element of membership to be the main motivation behind his decision.

I don't disagree. As I said in my PD, I can't rule out the possibility that Mr F may have been interested in the investment element of Signature Collection membership. But what I also said was that he himself had not persuaded me that his purchase was motivated by his share in the Allocated Property and the possibility of a profit. And whilst I accept he said that he "*entered into this agreement in the strict understanding that upon sale of the property in December 2036 we will receive 0.67% of the sale proceeds and our liability to pay monthly management fees will stop in 2036*" [Mr F's emphasis] this seems to me to be no more than a description of the mechanics of how the Signature Collection operates. I cannot reasonably ignore that Mr F's witness statement says nothing about how the Signature Collection was marketed and sold to him as an investment or about how the value of the property was meant to increase in value over time.

So, I am unable to agree with the PR that Mr F clearly stated in his witness statement that potential *gains* from the sale of the apartment at the end were what motivated him to purchase. Mr F's comments about expecting a '*likely significant increase in the value of the property*' were made in connection to his prior purchase of Fractional Club membership rather than the Signature Collection purchase which is the subject matter of this complaint. But, as I said in my PD, I can't rule out the possibility that Mr F may have been interested in the investment element of Signature Collection membership. But what I also said was that Mr F himself had not persuaded me that his purchase was motivated by his share in the Allocated Property and the possibility of a profit.

The PR objects to the approach I've taken in assessing this aspect of the complaint, believing that I have detracted from the judgment in *Shawbrook & BPF v FOS*¹ and the case law that contributed to it, by requiring Mr F to have been "primarily or mainly motivated" by the investment element in order to uphold the complaint. But I did not make such a finding. I said that, in my view, Mr F was highly motivated by the holiday options offered by the Supplier – which was a factor in my overall conclusion in light of all the available evidence

¹ R (on the application of Shawbrook Bank Ltd) v Financial Ombudsman Service Ltd and R (on the application of Clydesdale Financial Services Ltd (t/a Barclays Partner Finance)) v Financial Ombudsman Service [2023] EWHC 1069 (Admin) ('Shawbrook & BPF v FOS').

that he would, on balance, have pressed ahead with his purchase of the Fractional Club membership even if there had been a breach of Regulation 14(3).

So, for the reasons given in my PD and above, I still do not think that any breach of Regulation 14(3), if there was one, was material to Mr F's decision to purchase the Fractional Club membership.

I will also address the PR's point regarding the apparent ambiguity in the proposed sale date of the Allocated Property. The PR suggests that a delayed sale date could lead to an unfairness to Mr F in the future, as any delay could mean a delay in the realisation of his share in the Allocated Property.

It does appear that the proposed date for the commencement of the sales process, as set out on the owners' certificate, is 31 December 2036. This same date is set out under point 1 of the Members Declaration, which has been initialled and signed as being read by Mr F. This date indicates that the membership has a term of 17 years. The ambiguity identified by the PR is that in the Information Statement provided as part of the purchase documentation it says the following:

“The Owning Company will retain such Allocated Property until the automatic sale date in **19 years time** or such later date as is specified in the Rules or the Fractional Rights Certificate.” (my emphasis)

It seems clear to me that the contractual commencement date for the start of the sales process is 31 December 2036. This actual date is repeated in the sales documentation as I've set out above. The Information Statement is, in my view, reflective of the fact that most fractional memberships were set up to run for nineteen years. But not all memberships attached to a given Allocated Property were sold at exactly the same time, so often the time left before the sale date was less than nineteen years at the actual time of sale. I accept that this could be confusing, however I do not think that Mr F was misled by this at the Time of Sale. So, I can't see that this is a reason to find the credit relationship unfair and uphold this complaint.

Conclusion

In conclusion, given the facts and circumstances of this complaint, I do not think that the Lender acted unfairly or unreasonably when it dealt with Mr F's Section 75 claim, and I am not persuaded that the Lender was party to a credit relationship with him under the Credit Agreement that was unfair to him for the purposes of Section 140A of the CCA. And having taken everything into account, I see no other reason why it would be fair or reasonable to direct the Lender to compensate Mr F.

My final decision

For the reasons set out above, 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 F to accept or reject my decision before 13 March 2026.

Claire Woollerson
Ombudsman