

The complaint

Mr B's complaint is, in essence, that Mitsubishi HC Capital UK 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.

The loan in question was taken out in the sole name of Mr B and as such, he is the only eligible complainant here. But, as the timeshare membership purchased using the loan was bought in the joint names of Mr B and Ms V, I'll refer to them both throughout where appropriate.

What happened

Mr B and Ms V purchased membership of a timeshare (the 'Fractional Club') from a timeshare provider (the 'Supplier') on 15 July 2019 (the 'Time of Sale'). They entered into an agreement with the Supplier to buy 1,040 fractional points at a cost of £14,430 (the 'Purchase Agreement').

Fractional Club membership was asset backed – which meant it gave Mr B and Ms V 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 their membership term ends.

Mr B and Ms V paid for their Fractional Club membership by taking finance of £14,430 from the Lender in Mr B's sole name (the 'Credit Agreement').

Mr B – using a professional representative (the 'PR') – wrote to the Lender on 13 December 2022 (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 B's concerns as a complaint and issued its final response letter on 28 December 2022, 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 B 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:

“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 Fractional Club membership had been misrepresented by the Supplier at the Time of Sale because Mr B and Ms V were:

- 1. Told that they had purchased an investment that would “considerably appreciate in value”.*
- 2. Promised a considerable return on their investment because they were told that they would own a share in a property that would considerably increase in value.*
- 3. Told that they could sell their Fractional Club membership to the Supplier or easily to third parties at a profit.*
- 4. Made to believe that they would have access to “the holiday apartment” at any time all year round.*

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 any accompanying 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 points 3 and 4, while it’s possible that Fractional Club membership was misrepresented at the Time of Sale for one or both of those reasons, I don’t think it’s probable. They’re given little to none of the colour or context necessary to demonstrating that the Supplier made false statements of existing fact and/or opinion. And as there isn’t any other evidence on file to support the suggestion that Fractional Club membership was misrepresented for these reasons, I don’t think it was.

So, while I recognise that Mr B - and the PR - have concerns about the way in which Fractional Club 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 Fractional Club 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 B 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 in relation to Fractional Club membership, 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 B and the Lender given his circumstances at the Time of Sale.

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

Mr B'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 B. 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 B 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 B.

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 B 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 Fractional Club 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 Mr B's financial loss – 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.

The PR also says that there was one or more unfair contract terms in the Purchase Agreement. But as I can't see that any such terms were operated unfairly against Mr B and Ms V in practice, nor that any such terms led them to behave in a certain way to their detriment, I'm not persuaded that any of the terms governing Fractional Club membership are likely to have led to an unfairness that warrants a remedy.

Overall, therefore, I don't think that Mr B'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 Fractional Club 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 B and Ms V's Fractional Club 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 Fractional Club 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 B and Ms V were told by the Supplier that Fractional Club 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 B and Ms V the prospect of a financial return – whether or not, like all investments, that was more than what they first put into it. But it is important to note at this stage that the fact that Fractional Club 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 Fractional Club. They just regulated how such products were marketed and sold.

To conclude, therefore, that Fractional Club membership was marketed or sold to Mr B and Ms V 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 them as an investment, i.e. told them or led them to believe that Fractional Club membership offered them 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 Fractional Club 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 Fractional Club as an 'investment' or quantifying to prospective purchasers, such as Mr B and Ms V, 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 Fractional Club membership as an investment. So, I accept that it's equally possible that Fractional Club membership was marketed and sold to Mr B and Ms V 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.

Would the credit relationship between the Lender and Mr B have been rendered unfair to him had there been a breach of Regulation 14(3) of the Timeshare Regulations?

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 B 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 B 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 and Ms V to enter into the Purchase Agreement and Mr B to enter into the Credit Agreement is an important consideration.

The PR did not provide evidence to support this allegation when the complaint was first made or referred to this Service. But, in August 2023, they provided a witness statement from Mr B and Ms V which they say was drafted on 13 November 2022.

The statement isn't signed or dated and I note that the PR hasn't provided any evidence to support that this is when the statement was drafted. But, I don't think this is relevant here because in any event, I'm not persuaded by what Mr B and Ms V have had to say. I'll explain.

The statement outlines Mr B and Ms V's purchase history with the Supplier. And, in relation to this Time of Sale, they've said:

"We were told that the resorts could be used for business retreats and meetings as that's what we had been planning to do for some time. Also we were promised that holidays could be sold to friends and family giving them a discount holiday and also in turn helping to pay for the membership. The rep would boast of him doing this with his friends and family and he gave plenty of examples.

This gave us assurance that this is a good investment and it could also be used as a business opportunity. At the end of the day we were convinced to invest in a fractional ownership at a purchase price of £14,430 with finance...

[...]

It was also explained that as we owned a fraction of a physical property we would be given a percentage of the property value when sold at the end of the contract. This was calculated for us and appeared to be sufficient and more to reimburse the maintenance charges paid over the term of the contract."

I firstly note that what Mr B and Ms V have had to say here appears to only be a factual description of how the product worked. I acknowledge that they've said they were told they could 'sell holidays' to friends and family and this could help them to pay for the

membership. And, that it could be a 'business opportunity'. But these comments don't make me think there was a promise by the salesperson of an overall financial gain or profit from doing this, simply that they could potentially receive some money from doing so (which does not appear to be untrue).

I note that they've also said their share in the Allocated Property was 'calculated for them' and that this appeared to them to be sufficient to cover the annual maintenance fees. But, they don't provide any detail around this calculation and what exactly they were told, for example. And, given the fact that it would be impossible to know at the Time of Sale what the Allocated Property might be worth in the future and indeed, how much the annual maintenance fees would be in future years (given these could potentially rise in future years rather than being a set amount), it seems inherently unlikely the salesperson would have made such a promise to them.

But even if I accepted this is what Mr B and Ms V were told at the Time of Sale here, as outlined above, I need to be persuaded that any potential breach by the Supplier was material to their purchasing decision.

In their statement, Mr B and Ms V go on to explain why they're unhappy with the membership now. And, they've described being unhappy with how it functioned as a holiday product:

"After this day and until the end we were never really able to use the Interval app. This would have been particularly useful as we travel quite a lot for both work and leisure. In addition the hotel selection available was nowhere near as vast as we were led to believe and we just ended up using the normal hotel booking sites for any work and leisure travel."

I also think it's important to consider the wider context of Mr B and Ms V's purchase. In 2020, they made a further purchase with the Supplier of a different type of membership, known as 'Vacation Club'. This type of membership was not asset backed in the way Fractional Club membership was. Unlike the Fractional Club, it did not include a share in the net sale proceeds of an Allocated Property after the membership term ends (i.e. the investment element). And importantly, Mr B and Ms V traded in their Fractional Club membership towards this purchase, therefore losing any right they had to their share in the net sale proceeds of the Allocated Property (which they acknowledge in their testimony).

It's ultimately difficult to explain why, if Mr B and Ms V had purchased the Fractional Club membership at the Time of Sale as an investment on the basis of a potential profit at the end of the membership term, they then would have given this up around a year later. Indeed, looking at what they've had to say about their further purchase in 2020, there's nothing which suggests to me they were concerned about that. They've mentioned asking to sell the Fractional Club membership back to the Supplier (which the salesperson ultimately explained wasn't possible), but there's no suggestion they expected a financial gain in return.

The rest of their comments here are focused on how they weren't able to use either membership for holidays in the way they wanted to. For example, they describe issues with availability and issues with getting additional rooms and bringing guests.

So, on my reading of the evidence before me, the prospect of a financial gain from Fractional Club membership was not an important and motivating factor when they decided to go ahead with their purchase. That doesn't mean they 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 B himself doesn't persuade me that their purchase was motivated by their 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 B and Ms V ultimately made.

On balance, therefore, even if the Supplier had marketed or sold the Fractional Club membership as an investment in breach of Regulation 14(3) of the Timeshare Regulations, I am not persuaded that Mr B and Ms V's decision to purchase Fractional Club membership at the Time of Sale was motivated by the prospect of a financial gain (i.e., a profit). And for that reason, I do not think the credit relationship between Mr B and the Lender was unfair to him even if the Supplier had breached Regulation 14(3)."

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 B's Section 75 claim, and I was not persuaded that the Lender was party to a credit relationship with him under the Credit Agreement and related Purchase 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 him.

The Lender did not respond to the PD. The PR did respond – they did not accept the PD and provided some further comments and evidence they wish to be considered.

Having received the relevant responses from both parties, 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 only relate to the issue of whether the credit relationship between Mr B and the Lender was unfair. In particular, the PR has provided further comments in relation to whether the membership was sold to M B as an investment at the Time of Sale. They've also now argued for the first time that the payment of a commission by the Lender to the Supplier led to an unfair credit relationship along with contradictions they say were present in the sales paperwork in relation to the sale date of the Allocated Property.

As outlined in my PD, the PR originally raised various other points of complaint, all of which I addressed at that time. But they didn't make any further comments in relation to those in their response to my PD. Indeed, they haven't said they disagree 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 Supplier's alleged breach of Regulation 14(3) of the Timeshare regulations

As I explained in my PD, a witness statement from Mr B (and Ms V) was provided which the PR says was drafted in November 2022.

Having considered what they had had to say, I felt that this only represented a factual description of how the product worked. And while I acknowledged the comments they had made in relation to 'selling holidays to friends and family', these didn't make me think there was a promise by the salesperson of an overall financial gain or profit from doing so, only that they could potentially receive *some* money from doing so (which does not appear to be untrue).

I also noted that they said their share in the Allocated Property was 'calculated for them' and that this appeared to them to be sufficient to cover the annual maintenance fees. But, I said that they didn't provide any detail around this calculation and what exactly they were told, for example. And, given the fact that it would be impossible to know at the Time of Sale what the Allocated Property might be worth in the future and indeed, how much the annual maintenance fees would be in future years (given these could potentially rise in future years

rather than being a set amount), it seemed to me to be inherently unlikely the salesperson would have made such a promise to them.

But I explained that even if I accepted this is what Mr B and Ms V were told at the Time of Sale, I need to be persuaded that any potential breach by the Supplier was material to their purchasing decision.

I went on to note that in their statement, Mr B and Ms V went on to explain why they're unhappy with the membership now. And, they've described being unhappy with how it functioned as a holiday product. I also explained I considered it important to consider the wider context of Mr B and Ms V's purchase. In 2020, they made a further purchase with the Supplier of a different type of membership, known as 'Vacation Club'. This type of membership was not asset backed in the way Fractional Club membership was. Unlike the Fractional Club, it did not include a share in the net sale proceeds of an Allocated Property after the membership term ends (i.e. the investment element). And importantly, Mr B and Ms V traded in their Fractional Club membership towards this purchase, therefore losing any right they had to their share in the net sale proceeds of the Allocated Property (which they acknowledge in their testimony).

I said that it's ultimately difficult to explain why, if Mr B and Ms V had purchased the Fractional Club membership at the Time of Sale as an investment on the basis of a potential profit at the end of the membership term, they then would have given this up around a year later. Indeed, looking at what they've had to say about their further purchase in 2020, I explained there's nothing which suggests to me they were concerned about that. I noted they had mentioned asking to sell the Fractional Club membership back to the Supplier (which the salesperson ultimately explained wasn't possible), but there's no suggestion they expected a financial gain in return.

I said the rest of their comments are focused on how they weren't able to use either membership for holidays in the way they wanted to. For example, they describe issues with availability and issues with getting additional rooms and bringing guests.

So, I wasn't persuaded that the evidence suggested that Mr B and Ms V purchased Fractional Club membership in whole or in part down to any breach of Regulation 14(3).

I have considered PR's submissions here, but I have not changed my mind from my provisional findings.

In my view, the PR's submissions seem to be conflating the issue of whether there was a breach of Regulation 14(3) at the Time of Sale and whether this was material to Mr B and Ms V's purchasing decision. And, they appear to be suggesting that if there was a breach of Regulation 14(3) at the Time of Sale, this is sufficient reason in and of itself to uphold this complaint. But I don't agree with that - as I explained in my PD, the case law on Section 140A makes it clear that regulatory breaches do not automatically create unfairness for the purposes of that provision.

The PR also says that as the Supplier's pricing sheet set out the "unit share" Mr B and Ms V acquired under their Fractional Club membership, this shows the investment element played "quite an important role" in convincing them to purchase it. But I don't agree with that analysis. The pricing sheet was a proforma document that captured a number of details about the purchase in a standardised format. And the Supplier would have recorded that information irrespective of the customer's motivations for purchasing. So, I don't consider this document offers any insight into Mr B and Ms V's motivation for making their purchase.

So, ultimately, for the above reasons, along with those I already explained in my PD, I

remain unpersuaded that any breach of Regulation 14(3) was material to Mr B and Ms V's purchasing decision.

The PR also said that in the judgment handed down in *Shawbrook & BPF v FOS*, it was not challenged that the product in question was marketed and sold as an investment. But, as I explained in my provisional decision, the Timeshare Regulations did not ban products such as the Fractional Club. They just regulated how such products were marketed and sold. And the judgment referred to did not make a blanket finding that all such products were mis-sold in the way the PR appears to be suggesting. Any complaint needs to be considered in the light of its specific circumstances.

So, as I said before, even if the Supplier had marketed or sold the membership as an investment in breach of Regulation 14(3) (which I still make no finding on here), I'm not persuaded Mr B's decision to make the purchase was motivated by the prospect of a financial gain. So, I still don't think the credit relationship between Mr B and the Lender was unfair to him for this reason.

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

The PR says that a payment of commission from the Lender to the Supplier at the Time of Sale should lead me to uphold this complaint because, simply put, information in relation to that payment went undisclosed at the Time of Sale.

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 B 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.

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 B, 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 B into a credit agreement that cost disproportionately more than it otherwise could have.

I acknowledge that it's possible that the Lender and the Supplier failed to follow the regulatory guidance in place at the Time of Sale insofar as it was relevant to disclosing the commission arrangements between them.

But as I've said before, 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. And with that being the case, it isn't necessary to make a formal finding on that because, even if the Lender and the Supplier failed to follow the relevant regulatory guidance at the Time of Sale, it is for the reasons set out below that I don't think any such failure is itself a reason to find the credit relationship in question unfair to Mr B.

In stark contrast to the facts of Mr Johnson's case, the amount of commission paid by the Lender to the Supplier for arranging the Credit Agreement that Mr B entered into wasn't high. At £577.20, it was only 4% of the amount borrowed and 4.4% as a proportion of the charge for credit. So, had he known at the Time of Sale that the Supplier was going to be paid a flat rate of commission at that level, I'm not persuaded that he either wouldn't have understood that or would have otherwise questioned the size of the payment at that time. After all, Mr B wanted Fractional Club membership and had no obvious means of his own to pay for it. And at such a low level, the impact of commission on the cost of the credit he needed for a timeshare he wanted doesn't strike me as disproportionate. So, I think he would still have taken out the loan to fund his purchase at the Time of Sale had the amount of commission been disclosed.

What's more, 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 B 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.

Overall, therefore, I'm not persuaded that the commission 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 B.

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 B 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 2031. This same date is set out under point 1 of the Members Declaration, which has been initialled and signed as being read by Mr B. This date indicates that the membership has a term of 12 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."* (bold my emphasis).

It seems clear to me that the commencement date for the start of the sales process is 31 December 2031. This actual date is repeated in the sales documentation as I've set out above.

So, I can't see that this is a reason to find the credit relationship unfair and uphold this complaint.

S140A conclusion

Given all of the factors I've looked at in this part of my decision, and having taken all of them into account, I'm not persuaded that the credit relationship between Mr B and the Lender under the Credit Agreement and related Purchase Agreement was unfair to him. So, I don't think it is fair or reasonable that I uphold this complaint on that basis.

Commission: The Alternative Grounds of Complaint

While I've found that Mr B's credit relationship with the Lender wasn't unfair to him for reasons relating to the commission arrangements between it and the Supplier, two of the grounds on which I came to that conclusion also constitute separate and freestanding complaints to Mr B's complaint about an unfair credit relationship. So, for completeness, I've considered those grounds on that basis here.

The first ground relates to whether the Lender is liable for the dishonest assistance of a breach of fiduciary duty by the Supplier because it took a payment of commission from the Lender without telling Mr B (i.e., secretly). And the second relates to the Lender's compliance with the regulatory guidance in place at the Time of Sale insofar as it was relevant to disclosing the commission arrangements between them.

However, for the reasons I set out above, I'm not persuaded that the Supplier – when acting as credit broker – owed Mr B a fiduciary duty. So, the remedies that might be available at law in relation to the payment of secret commission aren't, in my view, available to him. And

while it's possible that the Lender failed to follow the regulatory guidance in place at the Time of Sale insofar as it was relevant to disclosing the commission arrangements between it and the Supplier, I don't think any such failure on the Lender's part is itself a reason to uphold this complaint because, for the reasons I also set out above, I think he would still have taken out the loan to fund his purchase at the Time of Sale had there been more adequate disclosure of the commission arrangements that applied at that time.

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 B'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 him.

My final decision

For the reasons set out above, I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr B to accept or reject my decision before 13 February 2026.

Fiona Mallinson
Ombudsman