

The complaint

Mr and Mrs L's complaint is, in essence, that Shawbrook Bank Limited (the 'Lender') acted unfairly and unreasonably by (1) being party to unfair credit relationships with them under Section 140A of the Consumer Credit Act 1974 (as amended) (the 'CCA') and (2) deciding against paying claims under Section 75 of the CCA.

What happened

Mr and Mrs L were members of a timeshare provider (the 'Supplier') – having purchased a trial membership from it previously. But the products at the centre of this complaint are their membership(s) of a timeshare that I'll call the 'Fractional Club' and the 'Signature Collection' respectively – points in which Mr and Mrs L purchased on the dates below:

- 850 fractional points on 30 May 2016 for £14,494 ('Purchase Agreement 1') – having traded in their trial membership
- 2,200 Signature Collection points on 7 June 2017 for £10,699 – having traded in the first lot of 850 fractional points. ('Purchase Agreement 2')

(which, when appropriate, I'll simply refer to as the "Purchase Agreements")

As this complaint is concerned with the purchases on 30 May 2016 and 7 June 2017, those are the 'Times of Sale' for the purposes of my decision.

Both Fractional Club membership and Signature Collection membership were asset backed – which meant it gave Mr and Mrs L more than just holiday rights. It also included a share in the net sale proceeds of a property named on the relevant purchase agreement (which I'll refer to as the 'Allocated Property 1 and 2' or, when appropriate, the 'Allocated Properties') after their membership term ends.

Mr and Mrs L paid for their fractional points by taking the following amounts of finance of from the Lender in both of their names:

- £17,980 on 30 May 2016 ('Credit Agreement 1')
- £28,644 on 7 June 2017 ('Credit Agreement 2')

(which, when appropriate, I'll simply refer to as the "Credit Agreements")

Mr and Mrs L – using a professional representative (the 'PR') – wrote to the Lender on 3 December 2021 (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 wasn't able to issue a final response letter to the complaint within the eight-week period required by the regulator. So, 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 and Mrs L 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') dated 30 December 2025. In that decision, I said:

“Section 75 of the CCA: the Supplier's misrepresentations at the Times 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 and/or Signature Collection membership had been misrepresented by the Supplier at the Times of Sale because Mr and Mrs L 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 and/or Signature Collection 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 and/or Signature Collection 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 and/or Signature Collection membership was misrepresented for these reasons, I don't think it was.

So, while I recognise that Mr and Mrs L - and the PR - have concerns about the way in which Fractional Club and 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 Fractional Club and Signature Collection membership was actionably misrepresented by the Supplier at the Times 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 both the credit relationships between Mr and Mrs L 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 Times of Sale along with any relevant training material;*
- 2. The provision of information by the Supplier at the Times of Sale in relation to Fractional Club and Signature Collection membership, including the contractual documentation and disclaimers made by the Supplier;*
- 3. The commission arrangements between the Lender and the Supplier at the Times of Sale and the disclosure of those arrangements;*
- 4. Evidence provided by both parties on what was likely to have been said and/or done at the Times of Sale;*
- 5. The inherent probabilities of the sales given their circumstances; and, when relevant*
- 6. Any existing unfairness from a related credit agreement.*

I have then considered the impact of these on the fairness of the credit relationships between Mr and Mrs L and the Lender given their circumstances at the Times of Sale.

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

Mr and Mrs L's complaint about the Lender being party to unfair credit relationships was made for several reasons.

The PR says, for instance, that the right checks weren't carried out before the Lender lent to Mr and Mrs L. 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 and Mrs L was actually unaffordable before also concluding that they lost out as a result and then consider whether the credit relationships with the Lender were unfair to them for this reason. But from the information provided, I am not satisfied that the lending was unaffordable for Mr and Mrs L.

Connected to this is the suggestion by the PR that the Credit Agreements were arranged by an unauthorised credit broker, the upshot of which is to suggest that the Lender wasn't permitted to enforce the Credit Agreements. However, it looks to me like Mr and Mrs L knew, amongst other things, how much they were borrowing and repaying each month, who they were borrowing from and that they were borrowing money to pay for Fractional Club and Signature Collection membership. And as the lending doesn't look like it was unaffordable for them, even if the Credit Agreements were 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 and Mrs L's financial loss – such that I can say that the credit relationships in question were unfair on them 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 them, even if the loans weren'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 and Mrs L 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 and Signature Collection membership are likely to have led to an unfairness that warrants a remedy.

I acknowledge that Mr and Mrs L may have felt weary after a sales process that went on for a long time. But they say little about what was said and/or done by the Supplier during their sales presentation(s) that made them feel as if they had no choice but to purchase Fractional Club and/or Signature Collection membership when they simply did not want to. They were also given a 14-day cooling off period on both occasions and they have not provided a credible explanation for why they did not cancel their membership during that time. And with all of that being the case, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that Mr and Mrs L made the decision to purchase Fractional Club and/or Signature Collection membership because their ability to exercise that choice was significantly impaired by pressure from the Supplier.

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

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

The Lender does not dispute, and I am satisfied, that Mr and Mrs L's Fractional Club and Signature Collection memberships met the definition of a "timeshare contract" and were 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 and Signature Collection membership as an investment. This is what the provision said at the Times 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 Times of Sale – saying, in summary, that Mr and Mrs L were told by the Supplier that Fractional Club and 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 and Mrs L 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 and 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 Fractional Club or Signature Collection. They just regulated how such products were marketed and sold.

To conclude, therefore, that Fractional Club and/or Signature Collection membership was marketed or sold to Mr and Mrs L 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 and/or Signature Collection 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 and Signature Collection membership was marketed and/or sold by the Supplier at the Times 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 and Signature Collection as an 'investment' or quantifying to prospective purchasers, such as Mr and Mrs L, the financial value of their share in the net sales proceeds of the Allocated Properties 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 and/or Signature Collection membership as an investment. So, I accept that it's equally possible that Fractional Club and/or Signature Collection membership was marketed and sold to Mr and Mrs L 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 relationships between the Lender and Mr and Mrs L have been rendered unfair to them had there been breach(es) 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 Times of Sale, I now need to consider what impact those breaches had on the fairness of the credit relationships between Mr and Mrs L and the Lender under the Credit Agreements and related Purchase Agreements 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 and Mrs L and the Lender that was unfair to them and warranted relief as a result, whether the Supplier's breach(es) of Regulation 14(3) led them to enter into the Purchase Agreements and the Credit Agreements is an important consideration.

But it was only after the Investigator issued their view, and after the judgment in 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') was handed down, that Mr and Mrs L recalled that the Supplier led them to believe that Fractional Club and Signature Collection membership offered them the prospect of a financial gain. And as experience tells me that, the more time that passes between a complaint and the event

complained about, the more risk there is of recollections being vague, inaccurate and/or influenced by discussion with others, I find it difficult to understand why the Financial Ombudsman Service was only given such evidence when it was.

*Indeed, as there isn't any other evidence on file to corroborate Mr and Mrs L's very recent evidence about their motivations at the Times of Sale, there seems to me to be a very real risk that Mr and Mrs L's recollections were coloured by the judgment in *Shawbrook & BPF v FOS*¹. And with that being the case, I'm not persuaded that I can give their written recollections the weight necessary to finding that the credit relationships in question were unfair for reasons relating to a breach of the relevant prohibition.*

So, on my reading of the evidence before me, the prospect of a financial gain from Fractional Club and Signature Collection membership was not an important and motivating factor when they decided to go ahead with their purchases. That doesn't mean they weren't interested in a share in the Allocated Properties. After all, that wouldn't be surprising given the nature of the product at the centre of this complaint. But as Mr and Mrs L themselves don't persuade me that their purchases were motivated by their share in the Allocated Properties 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 decisions Mr and Mrs L ultimately made.

On balance, therefore, even if the Supplier had marketed or sold the Fractional Club and/or Signature Collection membership as an investment in breach of Regulation 14(3) of the Timeshare Regulations, I am not persuaded that Mr and Mrs L's decisions to purchase Fractional Club and Signature Collection membership at the Times of Sale were motivated by the prospect of a financial gain (i.e., a profit). And for that reason, I do not think the credit relationships between Mr and Mrs L and the Lender were unfair to them even if the Supplier had breached Regulation 14(3).

Section 140A: 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 relationships between Mr and Mrs L and the Lender under the Credit Agreements and related Purchase Agreements were unfair to them. And as things currently stand, I don't think it would be fair or reasonable that I uphold this complaint on that basis.

The Supplier's alleged breach of Spanish Law and its implications on the Credit Agreement

*The PR argues that, because the Purchase Agreements were unlawful under Spanish law in light of certain information failings by the Supplier, I should treat those Agreements and the Credit Agreements as rescinded by Mr and Mrs L and award them compensation accordingly – in keeping with the judgment of the UK's Supreme Court in *Durkin v DSG Retail* [2014] UKSC 21 ('Durkin').*

However, as the Lender hasn't been party to any court proceedings in Spain, it seems to me that there is an argument for saying that the Purchase Agreements are valid under English law for the purposes of Durkin.

I also note that the Purchase Agreements are governed by English law. So, it isn't at all clear that Spanish law would be held relevant if the validity of the Purchase Agreements were

¹ I also note that in October 2025, Mrs L contacted our Service herself directly, having attempted to make the same complaint to the Lender again. And, in that correspondence to both the Lender and our Service, she makes clear reference to this judgment.

litigated between its parties and the Lender in an English court. For example, in Diamond Resorts Europe and Others (Case C-632/21), the European Court of Justice ruled that, because the claimant lived in England and the timeshare contract governed by English law, it was English law that applied, not Spanish, even though the latter was more favourable to the claimant in ways that resemble the matters seemingly relied upon by the PR.

What's more, as Mr and Mrs L have gone some way to taking advantage of the Credit Agreements, an English court might hesitate to uphold a claim for rescission of either Agreement because there are equitable reasons to do so.

Overall, therefore, in the absence of a successful English court ruling on a timeshare case paid for using a point-of-sale loan on similar facts to this complaint, and given the facts and circumstances of this complaint, I'm not persuaded that it would be fair or reasonable to uphold it for this reason."

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 and Mrs L's Section 75 claims. I was not persuaded that the Lender was party to credit relationships with them under the Credit Agreements and related Purchase Agreements that were unfair to them 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 them.

The Lender responded to the PD and accepted it. The PR also responded – 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 in the main relate to the issue of whether the credit relationships between Mr and Mrs L and the Lender were unfair. In particular, the PR has provided further comments in relation to whether the memberships were sold to Mr and Mrs L as an investment at the Times 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 unfair credit relationships. The PR has also reiterated that they think I should treat the Purchase Agreements and the Credit Agreements as rescinded and award Mr and Mrs L compensation accordingly.

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 one or more unfair credit relationships?

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

The PR explained in their response to my PD that they hadn't shared the Investigator's view on this complaint with Mr and Mrs L, saying "*this was done in order not to influence their recollections*".

The PR said this means Mr and Mrs L's recollections have not been influenced by either the Investigator's view or the aforementioned judgment handed down in *Shawbrook and BPF v FOS*².

Part of my assessment of the testimony was to consider *when* it was written, and whether it may have been affected by external factors such as the widespread publication of the outcome of *Shawbrook and BPF v FOS*.

I have thought about what the PR has said, but on balance, I don't find it a credible explanation of the contents of Mr and Mrs L's evidence. Here, the PR responded to our Investigator's view to say that Mr and Mrs L alleged that Fractional Club and Signature Collection membership had been sold to them as an investment and it provided evidence from Mr and Mrs L to that effect. I fail to understand how Mr and Mrs L disagreed with the view (and PD) on the basis that the timeshares were sold as an investment if they didn't know our Investigator's conclusions. It follows, I think it more likely than not, that Mr and Mrs L did know about our Investigator's view before their evidence was provided.

Indeed, as I already noted in my PD, in October 2025, Mrs L contacted our Service herself directly, having attempted to make the same complaint to the Lender again. And, in that correspondence to both the Lender and our Service, she makes clear reference to this judgment and her awareness of it.

So, I maintain that there is a risk that Mr and Mrs L's testimony was coloured by the Investigator's view and/or the outcome in *Shawbrook & BPF v FOS*. And, on balance, the way in which the evidence has been provided makes me conclude that I can place little weight on it. So, ultimately, for the above reasons, along with those I already explained in my PD, I remain unpersuaded that any breach(es) of Regulation 14(3) were material to Mr and Mrs L's purchasing decisions.

The PR says that as the Supplier's pricing sheets set out the "unit share" Mr and Mrs L acquired under their Fractional Club and Signature Collection memberships, this shows the investment element played "quite an important role" in convincing them to purchase them. 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 and Mrs L's motivations for making their purchases.

The PR also said that in the judgment handed down in *Shawbrook & BPF v FOS*, it was not challenged that the product(s) 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 or Signature Collection. 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 either or both of the memberships as an investment in breach of Regulation 14(3) (which I still make no finding on here), I'm not persuaded Mr and Mrs L's decisions to make the purchases were motivated by the prospect of a financial gain. So, I still don't think the credit relationships between Mr and Mrs L and the Lender were unfair to them for this reason.

² *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*').

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

The PR says that a payment of commission from the Lender to the Supplier at the Times of Sale should lead me to uphold this complaint because, simply put, information in relation to that payment went undisclosed at the Times 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 and Mrs L in arguing that their credit relationships with the Lender were unfair to them 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 and Mrs L, 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 and Mrs L 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 Times 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 Times 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 relationships in question unfair to Mr and Mrs L.

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 Agreements. And as it wasn't acting as an agent of Mr and Mrs L but as the supplier of contractual rights they obtained under the Purchase Agreements, the transaction(s) don't strike me as one with features that suggest the Supplier had an obligation of 'loyalty' to them when arranging the Credit Agreements and thus a fiduciary duty.

What's more, in stark contrast to the facts of Mr Johnson's case, as I understand it, the Lender didn't pay the Supplier any commission at the Time of Sale 1. 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 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 1 unfair to Mr and Mrs L.

And, again in stark contrast to the facts of Mr Johnson's case, at the Time of Sale 2 the amount of commission paid by the Lender to the Supplier would have been no more than 5% of the amount borrowed. So, had they known at the Time of Sale 2 that the Supplier was going to be paid a flat rate of commission at that level, I'm not persuaded that they either wouldn't have understood that or would have otherwise questioned the size of the payment at that time. After all, Mr and Mrs L wanted Signature Collection membership and had no obvious means of their own to pay for it. And at such a low level, the impact of commission on the cost of the credit they needed for a timeshare they wanted doesn't strike me as disproportionate. So, I think they would still have taken out the loan to fund their purchase at the Time of Sale 2 had the amount of commission been disclosed.

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 relationships unfair to Mr and Mrs L.

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 relationships between Mr and Mrs L and the Lender under the Credit Agreements and related Purchase Agreements were unfair to them. 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 and Mrs L's credit relationships with the Lender weren't unfair to them 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 and Mrs L's complaint about unfair credit relationships. 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 and Mrs L (i.e., secretly). And the second relates to the Lender's compliance with the regulatory guidance in place at the Time(s) 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 and Mrs L 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 them. And while it's possible that the Lender failed to follow the regulatory guidance in place at the Time(s) 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 they would still have taken out the loan(s) to fund their purchase(s) at the Time(s) of Sale had there been more adequate disclosure of the commission arrangements that applied at that time.

Other points

Here, the PR has asked us to determine the rights and obligations of the Lender based on the outcome of a court case in Spain. In my PD, I said that in the absence of a judgment in an English jurisdiction on this issue, I was not persuaded it was fair and reasonable to conclude the loan agreements were able to be set aside. I remain of this view for the following reasons:

- The Lender wasn't a party to the proceedings the PR has referred to, so its' rights under the Credit Agreements have not been determined.
- I still think that the Purchase Agreements are governed by English law for the reasons already set out in my PD. The PR has pointed to a different decision of the European Court of Justice that points the other way. But in the absence of any authorities under English law, I'm still not persuaded that (1) the Purchase Agreements, properly governed by English law, could be avoided following the Spanish Judgment to which the PR refers and (2) that the Credit Agreements were also something that could be successfully avoided.

So again, I'm still not persuaded that it would be fair or reasonable to uphold the complaint for this reason.

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 and Mrs L's Section 75 claims, and I am not persuaded that the Lender was party to credit relationships with them under the Credit Agreements that were unfair to them 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 them.

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 Mrs L and Mr L to

accept or reject my decision before 20 February 2026.

Fiona Mallinson
Ombudsman