

## **The complaint**

Mr R'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.

## **What happened**

Mr and Mrs R were trial members of a timeshare provider (the 'Supplier'). But the product at the centre of this complaint is their membership of a timeshare that I'll call the 'Fractional Club' – which they bought on 19 October 2017 (the 'Time of Sale'). They entered into an agreement with the Supplier to buy 2,040 fractional points at a cost of £22,494 (the 'Purchase Agreement').

Fractional Club membership was asset backed – which meant it gave Mr and Mrs R 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 the end of their membership term.

Mr and Mrs R paid for their Fractional Club membership by taking finance of £22,494 from the Lender in Mr R's name (the 'Credit Agreement'). As the finance used for the purchase was in Mr R's sole name, only he is eligible to bring this complaint. Hereafter, I shall refer to Mr R only.

Mr R – using a professional representative (the 'PR') – wrote to the Lender on 27 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 R's concerns as a complaint and issued its final response letter on 20 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 R disagreed with the Investigator's assessment and asked for an Ombudsman's decision – which is why it was passed to me.

## **The legal and regulatory context**

In considering what is fair and reasonable in all the circumstances of the complaint, I am required under DISP 3.6.4 R 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.

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**

This part of Mr R’s complaint was made for several reasons, which included that the Supplier misrepresented Fractional Club membership at the Time of Sale as it told him he had purchased an investment which would considerably increase in value and that he would have access to the Allocated Property at any time.

Creditors can generally reasonably reject Section 75 claims that they are first made aware of after the claim has become time barred under the Limitation Act (the 'LA'), as it wouldn't be fair to expect them to look into such claims so long after the liability arose, and after a limitation defence would have been available in court. Therefore, it's relevant to consider whether Mr R's Section 75 claim was time barred under the LA before he put it to the Lender.

A claim under Section 75 is a “like claim against the creditor”. It in effect mirrors the claim a consumer could make against the Supplier.

A claim for misrepresentation against the Supplier would typically be made under

Section 2(1) of the Misrepresentation Act 1967. And the limitation period to make such a claim expires six years from the date on which the cause of action accrued (see Section 2 of the LA).

However, a claim under Section 75, like the one in question here, is also “an action to recover any sum by virtue of any enactment” under Section 9 of the LA. The limitation period under that provision is also six years from the date on which the cause of action accrued.

The date on which the cause of action accrued was the Time of Sale. That’s when Mr R entered into the purchase of his timeshare based on the alleged misrepresentations of the Supplier – which he says he relied on. Further, as the loan from the Lender was used to help finance the purchase, it was when he entered into the Credit Agreement that he suffered a loss.

Mr R first notified the Lender of his Section 75 claim on 27 May 2024. Given more than six years had passed between the Time of Sale and when he first put his claim to the Lender, in my view it was neither unfair nor unreasonable that the Lender rejected his concerns about the Supplier’s alleged misrepresentations.

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

I’ve already explained why I don’t think the Lender acted unfairly or unreasonably when it rejected Mr R’s Section 75 claim in respect of the Supplier’s alleged misrepresentations 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 R and the Lender along with all 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 R and the Lender.

### **The Supplier’s sales & marketing practices at the Time of Sale**

Mr R’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 R. 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 R 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 him.

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 R 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 R experiencing a 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.

I acknowledge that Mr R 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 his sales presentation that made him feel as if he had no choice but to purchase Fractional Club membership when he simply did not want to. He was also given a 14-day cooling-off period and has not provided a credible explanation for why he did not cancel his membership during that time.

Mr R has said that he unsuccessfully attempted to cancel his membership during the cooling-off period, but I am not persuaded this was the case. The Supplier's contact notes do not suggest that he attempted this and instead show him making holiday reservations during this period.

And with all of that being the case, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that Mr R made the decision to purchase Fractional Club membership because his ability to exercise that choice was significantly impaired by pressure from the Supplier.

Overall, therefore, I don't think that Mr R'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 a prohibition against selling timeshares in that way.

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

A share in the Allocated Property clearly constituted an investment as it offered Mr R the prospect of a financial return – whether or not, like all investments, that was more than what he first put into it. But it's 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 R 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 Fractional Club 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 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's 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 R, the financial value of their share in the net sales proceeds of their allocated property along with the investment considerations, risks and rewards attached to it.

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 also possible that Fractional Club membership was marketed and sold to Mr R 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 R 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 R 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 R 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 Fractional Club membership was not an important and motivating factor when he decided to go ahead with his purchase.

Included in the PR's initial submissions was a statement from Mr R containing his recollections of the Time of Sale. Insofar as is relevant to the matter I'm considering here, this says:

"On the 19th October 2017 my wife and I viewed a timeshare on the Costa Del Sol in Spain. We originally had no intention of actually going ahead with such an investment, it was just a free holiday. Upon spending a morning being shown various properties we were then instructed to follow the rep into an office which had numerous other reps all sitting at individual tables with other prospective customers.

The rep asked our average yearly cost of our holidays and explained that he would

recommend a Fractional Ownership where we can use our yearly points (2050) towards any holidays in various locations. This amount of points should give us between 3 to 4 weeks of holidays depending on when we take them furthermore he then said that after 19 years we can either choose to sell our ownership which we would look to receive a healthy yield or enjoy free holidays at any of the destinations listed on the website. At this point we decided not to pursue it and informed the rep that we just couldn't afford it. He was extremely put out by this and became very forceful in his approach to get us to go ahead. He then went and spoke to his Manager who then came over with him being just as forceful and said "I'll adjust the price slightly and give you 2 free weeks of holidays without using any of your points." My wife at this point after being in the office for approx 3 hours just said yes let's do it but did so just so we could get the hell out of there."

Mr R's statement does not say or suggest that the motivation for his purchase at the Time of Sale was the hope or expectation of a financial gain or profit from Fractional Club membership. Indeed, after the sales representative(s) had explained that he could sell his fraction at the end of the membership term and receive a "healthy yield", he "decided not to pursue it". It was only after what he considers to be intense pressure from the sales representative(s) and the offer of "free" holidays that he decided to proceed "just so" he and his wife "could get the hell out of there."

That doesn't mean he wasn'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 R 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 he 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 R's decision to purchase this 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 his 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 R 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 R was not given sufficient information at the Time of Sale by the Supplier about the ongoing costs of Fractional Club 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 R sufficient information, in good time, on the various charges he could have been subject to as a Fractional Club member 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 R nor the PR have persuaded me that he would not have pressed ahead with his purchase had the finer details of the Fractional Club'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.

The PR also 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 FCA's Dispute Resolution rules ('DISP').

But I don't think *Hopcraft, Johnson and Wrench* assists Mr R 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 R, 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 him 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 above, 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's 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 R.

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 R entered into wasn't high. At £899.76, it was only 4% of the amount borrowed and even less than that (3.7%) as a proportion of the charge for credit. So, had Mr R 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 R 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 so far, 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 R 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 R.

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 R in practice, nor that any such terms led him to behave in a certain way to his detriment. And with that being the case, 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.

### **S140A conclusion**

Given all 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 R 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 R'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 his 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 R (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 R 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 Mr R 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.

### **Overall conclusion**

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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 R's Section 75 claim, and I am 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 see no other reason why it would be fair or reasonable to direct the Lender to compensate him.

**My final decision**

My final decision is to not uphold Mr R's complaint about Mitsubishi HC Capital UK PLC, trading as Novuna Personal Finance, for the reasons provided.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr R to accept or reject my decision before 23 March 2026.

Alex Salton  
**Ombudsman**