

The complaint

Miss J complains that Startline Motor Finance Limited (Startline) failed to provide a detailed breakdown settlement figure for her. She would like the account balance written off.

What happened

The details of this complaint are well known to both parties so I won't repeat them again here, instead I will focus on giving the reasons for my decision.

What I've decided – and why

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

Having done so I have reached the following conclusions:-

- I appreciate it must have been very distressing for Miss J to have had her car stolen and then to have had, what she feels, is an unclear and excessive amount to pay to settle her agreement.
- Although both Miss J and Startline accepted our investigator's view, Miss J then rejected it as she felt Startline had made incorrect assumptions and acted unlawfully. She would now like the balance on her account corrected, the default removed, the account to be treated as settled and compensation for the distress and inconvenience caused.
- As I understand it Miss J feels her balance was artificially inflated as it didn't reflect the interest rebate she was entitled to when a loan is repaid in full or part. The issue here is that as Miss J didn't pay off the outstanding balance the rebate wasn't applied. Startline has explained the amount Miss J needs to pay and that the rebate will be applied on settlement. I don't agree that Startline deliberately inflated Miss J's account balance to coincide with her account being defaulted. And I see no reason as to why it should have done so.
- Miss J has told us that the default on her credit file was triggered by Startline breaking the finance arrangement she had in place to repay the outstanding balance. Also that wrong assumptions were made about her ability to repay the balance.
- The key issue here is that Miss J stopped making payments not what assumptions may have been made about her ability to make repayments. I appreciate Miss J was frustrated at the time with her contact with Startline but she had a responsibility to meet agreed repayments. When she didn't Startline was within its rights to report a default on her credit file. It's important the credit files accurately report credit history so I can't reasonably ask Startline to remove the default.
- I also have no grounds to ask Startline to write off the balance on Miss J's account as she has requested. Based on the agreement she took out she is liable to repay the

outstanding balance on her account,

- I appreciate getting letters from Startline about her account being in arrears would have caused some distress but that doesn't mean it shouldn't have sent them. It's important for consumers to be aware of the status of their account
- Taking into account all of the points Miss J has raised after our investigator issued her first view I don't feel any new information has been provided. I agree Miss J should receive an accurate and clear breakdown of her balance and compensation for the distress and inconvenience caused by not receiving this as it wasn't an unreasonable request to make.
- I appreciate Miss J doesn't feel the £150 compensation originally agreed is fair . I think it's important for her to realise our role is not to make punitive awards against businesses. I think the £150 Miss J originally accepted is fair in the circumstances.

My final decision

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint.

In full and final settlement Startline Motor Finance Limited should :-

- Provide Miss J with a full breakdown of the settlement figure for her account
- Pay Miss J £150 compensation for the distress and inconvenience caused

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss J to accept or reject my decision before 3 March 2026.

Bridget Makins
Ombudsman