

The complaint

Mr B and Mrs B complaint is, in essence, that First Holiday Finance Ltd (the 'Lender') acted unfairly and unreasonably by (1) being party to an unfair credit relationship with them 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 B and Mrs B purchased a membership of a timeshare (the 'Fractional Club') from a timeshare provider (the 'Supplier') – purchasing 2400 fractional points on 12 January 2015 (the 'time of sale') for a price of £42,979. Mr B and Mrs B had previously purchased nine timeshare memberships (of differing types) between December 2000 and January 2014 none of which are the subject of this complaint.

Fractional Club membership was asset backed – which meant it gave Mr B and Mrs B more than just holiday rights. It also included a share in the net sale proceeds of a property named on their purchase agreement (which I'll refer to as the 'Allocated Property') after their membership term ends.

Mr B and Mrs B paid for their fractional points by trading in a timeshare membership valued at £23660, paying a £500 deposit and by taking finance of £18,819 from the Lender (the 'credit agreement'). (The Lender wrote off this debt in December 2019 with Mr B and Mrs B owing over £23,558 at the time).

Mr B and Mrs B – using a professional representative (the 'PR') – wrote to the Lender on 15 August 2019 (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 and Mrs B's concerns as a complaint and issued its final response letter on 17 November 2020, 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 and Mrs B disagreed with the Investigator's assessment and asked for an Ombudsman's decision – which is why it was passed to me.

I issued my provisional findings to the parties on 31 July 2025. In my provisional decision, I said (in italics and smaller font for clarity):

I have considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what is fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint. And having done that, I do not currently 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 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 for section 75 to apply including, for instance, the cash price of the purchase and the nature of the arrangements between the parties involved in the transaction. Section 75(3)(b) says this protection does not apply if:

"the claim relates to any single item to which the supplier has attached a cash price not exceeding £100 or more than £30,000."

In this case we have the pricing sheet from this purchase which clearly shows the purchase price of the membership as being £42,979. Accordingly, the misrepresentation claim under section 75 of the CCA isn't within the financial limits set by the CCA. And so, any section 75 claim made to the Lender cannot be successful as liability does not attach to the Lender for any misrepresentations by the Supplier under this provision.

Section 75 of the CCA: the Supplier's Breach of Contract

I've already summarised how Section 75 of the CCA works and why it gives Mr B and Mrs B a right of recourse against the Lender. So, it isn't necessary to repeat that here other than to say that, here a claim has been made under Section 75A (which has different requirements, including financial limits) and that if I find that the Supplier is liable for having breached the Purchase Agreement, the Lender is also liable.

Mr B and Mrs B say in their submissions that they could not holiday where and when they wanted to – which, on my reading of the complaint, suggests that they consider that the Supplier was not living up to its end of the bargain, and had breached the Purchase Agreement. Like any holiday accommodation, availability was not unlimited – given the higher demand at peak times, like school holidays, for instance. Some of the sales paperwork signed by Mr B and Mrs B states that the availability of holidays was/is subject to demand. It also looks like they made use of their fractional points to holiday on occasions between the date of sale and when they complained to the Lender. I accept that they may not have been able to take certain holidays. But I have not seen enough to persuade me that the Supplier had breached the terms of the Purchase Agreement.

Overall, therefore, from the evidence I have seen to date, I do not think the Lender is liable to pay Mr B and Mrs B any compensation for a breach of contract by the Supplier. And with that being the case, I do not think the Lender acted unfairly or unreasonably when it dealt with the Section 75 breach and misrepresentation claim in question.

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 breached 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 the credit relationship between Mr B and Mrs 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 Times of Sale along with any relevant training material;*
- 2. The provision of information by the Supplier at the Times 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 Times 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 Mrs B and the Lender.

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

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

It was said in the Letter of Complaint that Fractional Club membership had been misrepresented by the Supplier at the Times of Sale and thereby led to an unfair credit relationship between the parties because Mr B and Mrs B were:

- (1) *told by the Supplier that Fractional Club membership had a guaranteed end date when that was not true.*
- (2) *told by the Supplier that they were buying an interest in a specific piece of "real property" when that was not true.*
- (3) *told by the Supplier that Fractional Club membership was an "investment" when that was not true.*

The words and/or phrases allegedly used by the Supplier to misrepresent Fractional Club for the reason given in point one were set out by the PR in the Letter of Complaint, and they were in essence of being told it had a 'guaranteed end date.'

The PR is saying that such a representation was untrue because the "Sales Process" begins on the Sale Date as defined in the Fractional Club Rules, and under Rule 9, particularly Rules 9.2.9 and 9.2.12, there is no guarantee that any sale will result at all, leaving prospective members to pay their annual management charge for an indefinite and unspecified period.

However, I cannot see why the phrase above would have been untrue at the Times of Sale even if it were said. It seems to me to reflect the main thrust of the contract Mr B and Mrs B entered into. And while, under Rules 9.1 and 9.2.9 of the relevant Fractional Club Rules, the sale of the Allocated Properties could be postponed for up to two years by the 'Vendor'¹, longer than that if there were problems selling and the 'Owners'² agreed, or for an otherwise specified period provided there was unanimous agreement in writing from the Owners, that does not render the representation above untrue. So, I am not persuaded that the representation above constituted a false statement of fact even if it was made.

As for points two nor three, neither of them strikes 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 – nor was it untrue to tell prospective members that they would receive some money when the allocated property is sold. After all, a share in an allocated property was clearly the purchase of a share of the net sale proceeds of a specific property in a specific resort. And while the PR might question the exact legal mechanism used to give prospective members that interest, it did not change the fact that they acquired such an interest.

So, while I recognise that Mr B and Mrs B - and the PR - have concerns about the way in which Fractional Club membership was sold by the Supplier, I'm not persuaded that there were any factual and or any material misrepresentations which could have led to an unfair relationship between the parties for the reasons I've given.

¹ Defined in the Rules as "CLC Resort Developments Limited".

² Defined in the Rules as "a purchaser who has entered into a Purchase Agreement and has been issued with a Fractional Rights Certificate (which shall include the Vendor for such period of time until the maximum number of Fractional Rights have been acquired)."

Other allegations made include that the Supplier misled Mr B and Mrs B and carried on unfair commercial practices under Regulations 5 and 6 of the CPUT Regulations. However, as Regulations 5 and 6 state, commercial practices only amount to misleading actions or omissions if, in addition to satisfying one or more of the specific matters set out in those provisions, they cause or are likely to cause the average consumer to take a transactional decision they would not have taken otherwise. And as I haven't seen enough evidence to persuade me that, if there were any such actions or omissions at the Time of Sale (which I make no formal finding on), they led Mr B and Mrs B to make the purchasing decision they did, I'm not persuaded that anything done or not done by the Supplier amounted to an unfair commercial practice for the purposes of those provisions.

The PR also alleges that the Supplier acted unfairly under Regulation 7 Schedule 1 of the CPUT Regulations. But given the limited evidence in this complaint, I am not persuaded that the Supplier did.

In addition, the PR also says that:

1. the right checks weren't carried out before the Lender lent to Mr B and Mrs B.
2. Mr B and Mrs B were pressured by the Supplier into purchasing Fractional Club membership at the Times of Sale.
3. there was one or more unfair contract terms in the Purchase Agreements.

However, as things currently stand, none of these strike me as reasons why this complaint should succeed.

I haven't seen anything to persuade me that the right checks weren't carried out before the Lender given this complaint's 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 and Mrs B was actually unaffordable before also concluding that they lost out as a result and then consider whether the credit relationship with the Lender was unfair to them for this reason. But from the information provided, I am not satisfied that any of the lending was unaffordable for the Mr B and Mrs B.

I acknowledge that Mr B and Mrs B 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 that made them feel as if they had no choice but to purchase Fractional Club membership when they simply did not want to. They were also given a 14-day cooling off period and they have not provided a credible explanation for why they did not cancel their membership during that time. Furthermore Mr B and Mrs B say in their statement dated 24 January 2024 (para 11) that in relation to all of their fractional purchases they were pressured into them. Bearing in mind the sale here was their fourth such purchase I note that I've seen no persuasive explanation from Mr B and Mrs B why they stayed in such a relationship with the supplier (and kept returning to these resorts where they) were regularly being forced into financial transactions for significant sums that they didn't want to enter. And with all of that being the case, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that Mr B and Mrs B made the decision to purchase this Fractional Club membership because their ability to exercise that choice was significantly impaired by pressure from the Supplier.

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

Overall, therefore, I don't think that Mr B and Mrs B credit relationship 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 now says the credit relationship with the Lender was unfair to them. And that's the suggestion that Fractional Club 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 of Regulation 14(3) of the Timeshare Regulations

The Lender does not dispute, and I am satisfied, that Mr B and Mrs B's Fractional Club memberships 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 and Mr B and Mrs B say that the Supplier did exactly that at the Times of Sale – saying, in summary, that they 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 Properties clearly constituted an investment as it offered Mr B and Mrs B 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 Mrs B 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 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 as an 'investment' or quantifying to prospective purchasers, such as Mr B and Mrs B, 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 membership as an investment. So, I accept that it's equally possible that Fractional Club membership was marketed and sold to Mr B and Mrs B as an investment in breach of Regulation 14(3).

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

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

Having found that it was possible that the Supplier breached Regulation 14(3) of the Timeshare Regulations at the Times of Sale, I now need to consider what impact that breach had on the fairness of the credit relationship between Mr B and Mrs B 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 B and Mrs B and the Lender that was unfair to them and warranted relief as a result, whether the Supplier's breach of Regulation 14(3) led them to enter into the Purchase Agreements and the Credit Agreements 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 Mr B and Mrs B decided to go ahead with their purchase. I say this for two main reasons. Firstly there is no persuasive mention of such a gain being a motivating factor in their letter of claim dated 15 August 2019 in relation to this purchase. It is mentioned (in passing) in relation to other purchases but not this purchase. And I think it fair to conclude that the letter of claim that was sent fairly reflected Mr B and Mrs B's concerns. Secondly, I note that in Mr B and Mrs B's witness statement received on 31 October 2023 Mr B and Mrs B clearly state that they "felt we had to upgrade because all the good apartments were being converted, with only poorer quality apartments available to (Fractional) members." So this seems a clear explanation of why they made this purchase rather than any other reasoning.

I acknowledge what Mr B and Mrs B have said in their statement in response to the investigators assessment. But I note it is materially different to their written comments about the purchase made more contemporaneously to the events at hand (on the issue of their motivations in relation to the purchase in this sale). And it is signed after the judgement on the judicial review was issued, so I cannot discount their statements contents have been influenced by that judgement. Accordingly as it's so materially different I'm not going to place significant weight on their latest statement in my decision making.

I also acknowledge that Mr B and Mrs B have been successful in complaining about other timeshares they have purchased. However bearing in mind what they've said about this sale specifically and their reasons for purchasing here (as I've described) I'm satisfied that the prospect of a financial gain from this Fractional Club membership was not an important and motivating factor when Mr B and Mrs B decided to go ahead with this particular purchase.

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 products at the centre of this complaint. But as Mr B and Mrs B themselves don't persuade me that their purchase was motivated by their shares 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 they 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 Mrs B's decision to purchase this Fractional Club membership at the Time of Sale was motivated by the prospect of a financial gain (i.e. a profit). On the contrary, I think the evidence suggests they would have pressed ahead with their purchase whether or not there had been a breach of Regulation 14(3). And for that reason, I do not think the credit relationship between Mr B and Mrs B and the Lender were unfair to them even if the Supplier had breached Regulation 14(3).

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

The PR says that Mr B and Mrs B were not given sufficient information at the Times 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 B and Mrs B sufficient information, in good time, on the various charges they could have been subject to as Fractional Club members in order to satisfy the requirements of Regulation 12 of the Timeshare Regulations (which was concerned with the provision of 'key information'). But even if that was the case, I cannot see that the ongoing costs of membership were applied unfairly in practice. And as neither Mr B and Mrs B nor the PR have persuaded me that they would not have pressed ahead with their 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.

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

I note that one of Mr B and Mrs B other concerns about the sale of Fractional Club membership relates to an alleged payment of commission by the Lender to the Supplier for acting as a credit broker and arranging the Credit Agreement. But as they've not demonstrated that any commission was paid here and because the lender has told us that commission wasn't paid due to the companies being related, I'm not persuaded that this issue is a persuasive reason to uphold this complaint.

Lastly, I note that the Lender has written off a substantial amount that Mr B and Mrs B are contracted to pay it. I don't think the Lender has acted unfairly in that regard either.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as things currently stand, I do not think that the Lender acted unfairly or unreasonably when it dealt with the relevant Section 75 claim, and I am not persuaded that the Lender was party to a credit relationship with Mr B and Mrs B under the Credit Agreements that was unfair to them for the purposes of Section 140A of the CCA – nor do I see any other reason why it would be fair or reasonable to direct the Lender to compensate them.

In summary, I wasn't minded to think that the Lender acted unfairly or unreasonably when it dealt with Mr B and Mrs B's complaint about the outcome of their S75 claim. And I didn't find any of the arguments put forward demonstrated that the credit agreement between Mr B and Mrs B and the Lender was unfair to them under section 140A of the CCA. Absent any other reason why it would be fair or reasonable to direct the Lender to compensate Mr B and Mrs B, I said I didn't propose to uphold the complaint.

Responses to my provisional findings

The Lender accepted my provisional decision. The PR didn't accept the proposed outcome. It made further submissions in support of Mr B and Mrs B's position. Having received and reviewed these, I'm now proceeding with my final decision.

The legal and regulatory context

The legal and regulatory context that I think is relevant to this complaint has been shared in several hundred published decisions on very similar complaints, as well as in previous correspondence with the parties. So there's no need for me to set this out again in detail here. I simply remind the parties that our rules³ say that in considering what is fair and

³ Financial Conduct Authority ("FCA") Handbook – DISP 3.6.4R ("R" denotes a rule).

reasonable in all the circumstances of the complaint, I will 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.

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.

After considering the case afresh and having regard for what's been said in response to my provisional decision, I find it offers no persuasive reason to depart from the conclusions I've previously set out. I'll explain why.

The PR originally raised various points of complaint, such as those giving rise to Mr B and Mrs B's section 75 claim, which I addressed in my provisional decision. In its response, it hasn't made any further comments in relation to most of its original points, or said anything that leads me to think it disagrees with my provisional conclusions in relation to those points. So I'll focus here on the points the PR *has* made in response.

The PR's response to my provisional decision relates mainly to the issue of whether the credit relationship between Mr B and Mrs B and the Lender was unfair *per* section 140A of the CCA. In particular, the PR has provided more comment in relation to whether the membership was sold to Mr B and Mrs B as an investment at the Time of Sale. It has also made further submissions in support of its position that the payment of a commission by the Lender to the Supplier led to an unfair credit relationship between the Lender and Mr B and Mrs B.

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

The PR has questioned whether my provisional conclusions run contrary to precedent decisions issued by my ombudsman colleagues and the judgment handed down in *Shawbrook and BPF v FOS*. I don't believe they do. However, for the avoidance of doubt, other decisions issued by other ombudsmen do not have a precedent effect like some court judgments might, and each ombudsman must determine each case on its own specific facts. Further, the judgment referred to did not make a blanket finding that all products of the type Mr B and Mrs B purchased were mis-sold in the way the PR appears to be suggesting.

I remind the PR that in my provisional decision I accepted the possibility that Fractional Club membership was marketed and/or sold to Mr B and Mrs B as an investment, in breach of Regulation 14(3). I went on to explain that relevant case law⁴ indicates that in considering the question of relief for any resultant unfairness in the credit relationship, I needed to take into account any material impact of such a breach on Mr B and Mrs B's decision whether to enter into the Purchase and Credit Agreements. It doesn't strike me that doing so flies in the face of either the handed down judgment or previous decisions the PR has mentioned.

While the PR has referred me to Mr B and Mrs B's recollections and the Supplier's training materials, I have already considered these and what was said. And I set out in my provisional decision the reasons why I didn't find that evidence sufficiently persuasive that Mr B and Mrs B's purchase decision would have been any different, given the other

⁴ *Carney and Kerrigan*

motivational factors they had described. Having re-examined Mr B and Mrs B's statement that remains my view, for the reasons previously given.

So as I said before, whether or not the Supplier marketed or sold Fractional Club membership as an investment in breach of Regulation 14(3), I'm not persuaded Mr B and Mrs B's decision to make the purchase was materially impacted by the prospect of a financial gain. It follows that I find the credit relationship between Mr B and Mrs B and the Lender was not rendered unfair to them for this reason.

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

The PR has said:

"Unlike the decisions in (decision references), which explicitly addressed the issue of commission and its potential impact on the fairness of the credit relationship, the Ombudsman in (this case) fails to mention this crucial aspect."

I can only repeat what I said in my provisional decision:

"I note that one of Mr B and Mrs B other concerns about the sale of Fractional Club membership relates to an alleged payment of commission by the Lender to the Supplier for acting as a credit broker and arranging the Credit Agreement. But as they've not demonstrated that any commission was paid here and because the lender has told us that commission wasn't paid due to the companies being related, I'm not persuaded that this issue is a persuasive reason to uphold this complaint."

I've seen no persuasive evidence of any commission being paid here broadly or submitted by the PR. And as such I cannot see how the non-payment of commission can cause unfairness. Furthermore for such a claim to be successful would require more than the bare assertions that have been made in this case. I'm not persuaded that it is sufficient, as the PR seems to contend, simply to suggest unsubstantiated allegations of fact and require that the Lender disprove them else the credit relationship be deemed unfair. This issue was considered in the judgment in *Promontoria (Henrico) Ltd v. Gurcharn Samra* [2019] EWHC 2327 (Ch) ("*Samra*"), where HHJ David Cooke held (at para.26):

"...the onus is on the claimant⁵ to show, to the normal civil standard, that the relationship is not unfair because of any of the reasons set out in s 140A(1)(a)-(c). Whether it is so unfair is a matter for the court's overall judgment having regard to all the relevant circumstances and matters, including matters relating (i.e. personal) to the creditor and debtor. This onus on the claimant does not however mean, in my judgement...that where Mr Samra⁶ makes allegations of fact on which he relies he does not have the burden of proving them to the normal civil standard. The onus placed on the creditor is as to the relationship between it and the debtor, and does not have the effect that factual allegations made by Mr Samra must be accepted unless they can be positively disproved by contrary evidence."⁷

⁵ In this case the creditor answering a claim of an unfair credit relationship arising out of an overdraft facility.

⁶ In this case the borrower making an allegation that there was an unfair credit relationship.

⁷ I further note that in *Wilson v Clydesdale Financial Services Ltd t/a Barclays Partner Finance* [2021] (Unreported), the court also took the view that the burden is on the debtor to prove on the balance of probabilities *the facts* that purportedly create the unfairness. It is then that the lender's burden of proof that requires it to prove *the relationship* was not unfair kicks in. While I do not suggest this offers legal precedent, the subject matter of that case was a fractional timeshare sale, and given the similarities seems to me an appropriate approach when considering the facts in this case.

I'm satisfied the Lender has provided sufficient information in response to my enquiries to enable me to reach a conclusion about its commission arrangements with the Supplier. I've seen nothing in this case that leads me to think what the Lender has said about there being no commission paid is inaccurate. So there's no reason for me to reach a different finding over those commission arrangements.

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 remain unpersuaded that the credit relationship between Mr B and Mrs B and the Lender under the Credit Agreement and related Purchase Agreement was unfair to them such that it warrants the Lender offering any redress.

Conclusion

After careful reconsideration of the facts and circumstances of this complaint, I adopt my provisional conclusions as part of my final decision. For the reasons I've given above and in my earlier correspondence I've mentioned, I don't think the Lender acted unfairly or unreasonably when it dealt with Mr B and Mrs B's section 75 claim. And I'm not persuaded that the Lender was party to a credit relationship with Mr B and Mrs B that was unfair to them for the purposes of section 140A of the CCA. Having taken everything into account, I see no other reason why it would be fair or reasonable for me to direct the Lender to compensate Mr B and Mrs B.

My final decision

For the reasons set out above, my final decision is that I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr B and Mrs B to accept or reject my decision before 10 March 2026.

Rod Glyn-Thomas
Ombudsman