

The complaint

Miss D has complained that Great Lakes Insurance UK Limited ('Great Lakes') has unfairly declined her claim.

What happened

Miss D bought a travel insurance policy, underwritten by Great Lakes, and made a claim for cancellation as her daughter was unwell.

Great Lakes declined the claim on the basis that Miss D's daughter would have had symptoms when she bought the policy as she bought it late at night, the night before she was due to travel.

Miss D says she simply forgot to buy her insurance beforehand, and her daughter's symptoms only started after she had bought the policy, even though it was the same day. Miss D made a complaint and unhappy with the response, referred her complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service.

Our investigator looked into the complaint but didn't think Great Lakes had unfairly declined the claim. Miss D disagreed and asked for an Ombudsman's decision.

And so the case has been passed to me to decide.

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 don't think this complaint should be upheld. I'll explain why.

- The relevant rules and industry guidelines say an insurer should handle claims promptly and fairly. And shouldn't unreasonably reject a claim.
- Miss D booked her holiday in early February and bought the travel insurance policy the evening before her flight in April, just after 6pm. On the same night that Miss D bought the travel insurance policy, at around 11pm, she said her daughter started showing symptoms of Covid-19 and subsequently tested positive. And so they were unable to go on their holiday the next day.
- Great Lakes said Miss D would have been aware of her daughter's symptoms when she bought the policy and so she knew she would have to make a claim. It declined the claim on this basis as the policy would only cover claims for circumstances Miss D was unaware of at the time of buying the insurance.
- I don't doubt what Miss D says about forgetting to buy the insurance sooner. But considering the facts of this case, I think it's more likely than not that she was aware of her daughter's symptoms just a few hours before she tested positive and so I don't

think Great Lakes unfairly declined this claim. Insurance policies are designed to cover unforeseen events. In this case, on balance, I think Miss D was aware that she may need to make a claim for cancellation based on the time and date she booked the holiday (in February), bought the insurance (the day before the holiday) and her daughter showed symptoms of Covid-19 (the same day as the insurance was bought).

- Miss D says the timing is crucial in this case as her daughter didn't start showing symptoms of Covid-19 until a few hours after the insurance was purchased. But I think it's unlikely that her daughter had no symptoms at all at the time the insurance was bought, which was just a few hours before testing positive for Covid-19.
- I'm sorry to disappoint Miss D but I don't think Great Lakes has acted unfairly.

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 Miss D to accept or reject my decision before 15 January 2024.

Shamaila Hussain
Ombudsman