

The complaint

Mr D has complained about the way Saga Services Limited administered the setting up of his travel insurance policy.

What happened

Mr D applied and paid for the policy online on 15 September 2023. It was a single trip policy to cover him for a holiday beginning on 28 September 2023. He realised that he needed to make a slight amendment and so rang Saga on 19 September 2023. At that time he found out that the policy was showing on Saga's system only as a quote.

Other problems then ensued. For example, although Mr D paid for the amendment over the phone on 19 September 2023, he noticed the payment hadn't left his bank account and this wasn't done until he alerted Saga. And even though he had already paid, he received an email from Saga on 20 September 2023 saying that it intended to take full payment on 27 September 2023 but that the payment details it held were wrong. Around this time, he also received various other automated emails that were also incorrect, such as referring to the policy as an annual policy.

Mr D complained and received a final response from Saga on 26 September 2023. It apologised for the poor service he'd received, which was the result of a system issue, and offered him £30 compensation for the distress and inconvenience caused.

Our investigator thought that Saga's response to the complaint was reasonable. Mr D disagrees with the investigator's opinion and so the complaint has been passed to me for a 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.

Saga told Mr D that his policy was successfully set up and paid for online. However, there was an error as it was being downloaded to its own system and the download failed. Mr D is not satisfied with this response. He would like a detailed explanation of what caused the error. He also wants to know how it usually detects such errors.

I can understand why Mr D isn't entirely happy with the response. The download error sounds as if it would only relate to the online application. Mr D thought this had been sorted out when he rang on 19 September 2023 to make the amendment. And yet a number of system issues continued after that point.

Having said that, I agree with our investigator that we wouldn't expect Saga to provide a detailed technical report of what went wrong. Saga did subsequently tell Mr D that *'everything mentioned was a result of the download failing'*. So, it seems that the initial failure continued to cause a number of further glitches.

Mr D is asking how Saga usually identifies such download problems because he's wondering what would have happened if he hadn't called up on 19 September 2023 to amend the policy. He says he dreads to think what would have happened if he hadn't called and then subsequently needed to make a claim.

I don't know if the download error would have been picked up if Mr D hadn't rung to amend the policy, or if he would have encountered problems if he'd needed to make a claim. But the fact is that Mr D did ring up to make an amendment and then didn't need to make a claim on the policy. This decision cannot consider hypothetical impacts (in terms of what might have happened), only what did happen.

Because of his concerns, he asked Saga to provide him with a signed letter. He also asked that this letter be placed on his record so that it would be readily available to the claims department. I think there was some misunderstanding about what Mr D was asking for. Saga thought he was asking for an assurance that any claim he might need to make wouldn't be declined. Quite reasonably, it said that it couldn't provide such a letter as other factors would come into play in assessing any claim. Actually, Mr D was asking for a letter, to be sent to him by post, confirming the status of his policy as active.

I can understand why Mr D had some concerns. The mistakes that happened would not inspire confidence. However, prior to going on holiday, Mr D had received confirmation from Saga that his policy had been set up and paid for. This was in the final response sent on 26 September 2023. He also had the policy number. It might have been sent by email, rather than letter, but it still provided the assurances he was seeking.

I appreciate Mr D's point that he'd received erroneous emails before and that's why he wanted a letter. But this wasn't an automated email, it was a direct response from a customer services adviser in answer to his complaint. As such, I consider that the final response on 26 September 2023 should have sufficiently reassured Mr D about the situation.

I've thought very carefully about what Mr D has said. But, on balance, I consider that Saga's response to the complaint was fair and reasonable, so I won't be asking it to do anything more.

My final decision

For the reasons set out above, I do not uphold the complaint. However, Saga Services Limited should pay Mr D the £30 compensation now if it hasn't already done so.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr D to accept or reject my decision before 31 January 2024.

Carole Clark
Ombudsman