

## The complaint

Mr P says Covea Insurance plc provided poor service that led to delay when he made a claim on his motor insurance policy, and that its valuation of his car was too low.

## What happened

Mr P's car was taken to a holding garage after being written-off by another car whilst parked and unattended. He had a replacement car, but he was unhappy that Covea's agent didn't retrieve his car for several weeks *and* that he had to call Covea to chase for progress. Mr P didn't think he should have to pay the £650 excess on the policy - or the charges for retaining his private number plate - given that the accident was non-fault. Covea said these were *uninsured losses* - not covered by the policy. But it accepted that its agent had caused delays and that one of its advisors had been rude to Mr P. He didn't accept the £150 compensation Covea offered him. And he said it had valued the wrong model of his car.

One of our investigators reviewed Mr P's complaint. She thought Covea had acted reasonably in offering him £150 compensation for distress and inconvenience. And she said it had based its valuation for the car on the correct model. She said adverts may have shown higher asking prices, but we don't think they're reliable.

As there was no agreement, the complaint was passed to me for review.

## 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.

Understandably, Mr P wanted an offer for his car as soon as possible, so the delay in collecting it (which seems to have been four weeks) must have been frustrating for him. It seems there were communication issues between the garage that was holding the car, Covea's agent and others in getting it released. But Covea accepted that it was partly at fault for the delay. I think it was reasonable for it to offer Mr P £100 compensation for the undue inconvenience he faced. I think it was also reasonable for it to offer him £50 compensation for its advisor's lack of professionalism during a call.

Although Mr P thinks Covea looked at the wrong model when valuing his car, that isn't the case. Covea has provided evidence that the valuation was based on the correct model, year of manufacture and mileage. It has also shown that it used four of the national trade guides to arrive at a valuation and that it offered him the highest valuation of all four (at £10,890).

Mr P told Covea he wouldn't accept less than £12,425 for his car, although he could have accepted the sum it offered (as an interim payment) whilst continuing to dispute it. But Mr P is only entitled to the car's market value, and we think the best way to establish what a car's market value is likely to be is to review the figures quoted in the national trade guides. They're based on extensive research of likely selling prices and are updated regularly.

We don't think advertised prices are generally reliable, as they show negotiable asking

prices that are often inflated. And the figures shown in adverts often vary greatly for what appear to be similar cars. So although some adverts will show higher prices for cars similar to Mr P's car than the sum offered by Covea, others won't. Covea provided an advert for the same model of car as Mr P's car (with slightly higher mileage) on sale for £10,000 – and it may well not have achieved that asking price.

In my opinion, Covea has shown that it offered Mr P a reasonable settlement sum for his car. It's standard industry practice (and part of a policy's usual terms and conditions) for the agreed policy excess to be deducted, as it's payable on every claim. If it's a *non-fault* claim like this one, and the other insurer accepts liability, it's usual for a consumer to claim the excess back from that insurer. The same applies to the usual costs associated with retaining a private number plate.

As I think Covea has shown that it acted reasonably in valuing Mr P's car, and that it made a reasonable attempt to put the service issues / delay right, I can't uphold his complaint.

### **My final decision**

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 P to accept or reject my decision before 29 August 2023.

Susan Ewins

**Ombudsman**