

The complaint

Mr R complains about how Haven Insurance Company Limited (“Haven”) handled his claim and the value it gave him for his car following a claim under his motor insurance policy.

What happened

Mr R had a motor insurance policy with Haven covering his car.

His car suffered a fire and was damaged.

Haven assessed his car as being beyond economic repair. It said it would declare it a write-off and assessed its market value as £1,175.

Mr R didn’t agree with this valuation, and he complained to Haven. It increased the valuation to £2,325 using three trade guides to arrive at a market value.

Mr R remained unhappy with Haven’s valuation and brought his complaint to this service. He says his car’s value is £5,500 to £8,000. He complained about the time he’d spent on hold waiting for a response from Haven during his claim and the service he’d had.

Our investigator looked into his complaint and didn’t think it would be upheld. She thought the value it’d offered him was in line with this service’s approach using trade guides and she didn’t think the hold times were excessive.

Mr R didn’t agree with the view and asks that his complaint was reviewed by an ombudsman, so it has been passed to me for a final 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 reviewed the file of evidence, I’m not upholding Mr R’s complaint. I’ll explain why as I appreciate this will be a disappointment to him.

I’ve said above about how Haven arrived at the valuation of Mr R’s car.

Its approach fits with this service’s approach to car valuations. We don’t provide valuations for vehicles, but look to whether the insurer’s offer is reasonable.

I’ve done research into Mr R’s car and I’ve found these values, provided by different trade guides, for the month his car was damaged, which are based on a vehicle with the same specification and mileage:

Company A: £2,230

Company B: £2,066

Company C: £2,675

I've looked at Haven's valuation of his car and I can see it has offered him £2,325 which is in the range of values listed above. We'd normally agree the insurer's valuation is fair if it is in the range of the guides.

I can see Mr R has provided evidence that the value he's been offered doesn't represent the market value of his car, but what he's sent shows different mileage. I can see from his evidence that Mr R's car was a higher-mileage example, and many of the examples he's sent to this service are markedly lower. The mileage of a vehicle is a considerable factor when considering the market value.

Mr R had also said the car was in very good condition and had significant and recent maintenance done on it, such as the timing belt replacement and an intercooler replacement. But I don't agree that this changes the value of his car as it's maintenance of the sort that might reasonably be expected in a higher-mileage vehicle.

I can appreciate Mr R's frustration with this, but it's usual that insurers would seek to reduce market value if the maintenance had not been done. So it follows that I think the market value of his car has been fairly assessed by Haven.

I've also thought about the service Mr R had during his claim. When Mr R approached this service he made some additional points of complaint about this. Haven hadn't provided him with its final response, but during the investigation of his complaint by this service I can see that Haven did respond. I think that means I can consider the service element of his complaint here.

Mr R said he spent several hours on the phone trying to get through to Haven. I asked Mr R to send me details of these calls but he refused to send me the information. I asked Haven for the details and it sent me details of multiple calls including the call recordings.

It said it didn't have evidence that Mr R had spent additional hours on calls waiting to get through to its call operators. It also asked Mr R for details about the numbers he said he'd called but he wasn't willing to provide this.

Having listened to the calls between Mr R and Haven I can understand why Mr R said he's been kept waiting for a considerable period of time. There are a significant number of calls made between the parties, and in particular several on one day. Some of the calls are lengthy and, having listened to them, I can't reasonably say that the length of the calls was mainly due to Haven's actions.

Taking everything into account, I don't think Haven has acted unfairly or unreasonably in how it's handled Mr R's claim.

My final decision

It's my final decision that I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr R to accept or reject my decision before 11 December 2023.

Richard Sowden
Ombudsman