

The complaint

Mr B complains about how Hastings Insurance Services Limited administered his motor insurance policy. He wants compensation for the upset this caused him.

What happened

Mr B checked how much the renewal of his policy with Hastings would cost with a different address. He inputted his father's address, as he said he wanted to move to the area, but he didn't complete the action. Mr B then called Hastings to confirm a change of car and Hastings' agent confirmed his address but didn't notice that this was different to that on the file.

Hastings then wrote to Mr B at his father's address. Mr B said this caused him upset. And then Hastings said it wouldn't charge Mr B for correcting the address. Mr B was also upset by this as he thought the error was caused by Hastings. Hastings apologised, but Mr B wanted compensation.

Our Investigator recommended that the complaint should be upheld. He thought Mr B hadn't intended to complete a change of address. He thought Mr B hadn't authorised this and Hastings had missed the opportunity to correct the error when Mr B called. He thought this had caused Mr B avoidable trouble and upset. And he thought Hastings should pay Mr B £150 compensation for this.

Hastings agreed to do this. But Mr B thought Hastings should pay him more compensation. Mr B asked for his complaint to be reviewed by an Ombudsman, so it's come 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.

Hastings has agreed that it changed Mr B's address without his authorisation and then wrongly sent correspondence to a third party's address. And it missed the opportunity to correct this error when Mr B called it to confirm his change of car on the policy.

When a business makes a mistake, as Hastings accepts it has done here, we expect it to restore the consumer's position, as far as it's able to do so. And we also consider the impact the error had on the consumer.

I can see that Mr B's address was corrected and he wasn't charged for this. And Hastings offered Mr B a renewal of his current policy, which Mr B was concerned about. So I think this sufficiently restores Mr B's position to what it should have been without the error. And so I've then looked at the impact the error had on Mr B:

- Mr B should not have initially been told he would be charged for a change of address that he did not authorise, which caused Mr B upset.
- Correspondence should not have been incorrectly sent to the wrong address which caused family upset.

- Mr B had to take the trouble to have the error corrected and he said his policy renewal was initially declined, which worried him.

From what I can see, Hastings wrote to Mr B at the incorrect address after it wrongly changed it on its system. But Mr B didn't complain or seek to have this corrected until three months later when his policy was due for renewal. Mr B hasn't explained why he waited so long to do this if the error had had such a big impact on his family relationships. Mr B then sought to have the address corrected and I think Hastings responded promptly when the error was pointed out.

Our Investigator recommended that Hastings should pay Mr B £150 compensation for its level of service. I think that's in keeping with our published guidance for the impact caused by the error. And so I think this is fair and reasonable compensation for Hastings' error. I don't require it to increase this.

Putting things right

I require Hastings Insurance Services Limited to pay Mr B £150 compensation for the distress and inconvenience caused by its level of service, as it's already agreed to do.

My final decision

For the reasons given above, my final decision is that I uphold this complaint. I require Hastings Insurance Services Limited to carry out the redress set out above.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr B to accept or reject my decision before 14 December 2022.

Phillip Berechree
Ombudsman