

The complaint

Mrs R complains that First Central Underwriting Limited (First Central) cancelled her car insurance policy without telling her.

What happened

Mrs R took out a car insurance policy through a comparison website with First Central in January 2024. First Central said there were discrepancies between Mrs R's quotes, and they needed additional information. So, they emailed Mrs R requesting this further information – the email said if the information wasn't received, this could result in changes to Mrs R's policy – which in turn could mean an additional amount to pay.

First Central didn't receive a response, so they sent another email the following month and explained they had identified differences in occupations provided by Mrs R between quotes, as well as an undisclosed speeding offence. First Central said if Mrs R wanted to continue with the policy she would need to get in touch and pay an additional premium – otherwise the policy would be cancelled. As no contact or payment was received, the policy was cancelled in late February 2024

Mrs R says she never received any contact from First Central that her policy would be cancelled. She says her details must have transferred incorrectly from the comparison site she purchased her policy through. And she said the first she heard of any issues was when she received a letter through the post after the policy was cancelled.

Mrs R was unhappy First Central hadn't tried to contact her through other methods before they cancelled her policy – so she raised a complaint. First Central considered the complaint but they didn't uphold it. They said they had tried to contact her multiple times on the contact details she had provided and didn't hear anything back. But they did agree to waive any outstanding fees as a gesture of goodwill.

Mrs R remained unhappy with First Central's response, so she brought it to this Service. An Investigator looked at what had happened but didn't recommend the complaint should be upheld. She said First Central hadn't acted unfairly or unreasonably when cancelling the policy in line with the policy's terms – and she was satisfied with how they'd communicated this. Mrs R remained unhappy and asked for an Ombudsman to consider the complaint – so it's 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've decided not to uphold the complaint, for the same reasons as the Investigator. I'll explain why.

Mrs R set up her policy using a comparison site. This means the information First Central received was provided directly from Mrs R. I appreciate Mrs R has said her details may not

have transferred over correctly from the comparison site. I find that to be unlikely given other policy information was correct. But in any event, I'm not able to consider anything the comparison site did or didn't do. My decision focuses on whether First Central have acted fairly and reasonably.

First Central sent out an email and text explaining they needed more information. And they followed this up with further emails when they didn't receive a reply. I find this to be reasonable and what I would expect an insurer to do. I've looked at the contact information First Central were given on the statement of Fact document. I can see Mrs R's address, email, and phone number are all slightly different to those she has used when contacting this Service. So, I can see why First Central would have been unable to contact Mrs R to explain her policy would be cancelled.

I appreciate First Central say the first email they sent bounced back, so they also sent a text to the number they had on file. And subsequent emails they sent out didn't bounce back. Therefore, I'm satisfied they wouldn't have had any reason to believe Mrs R wasn't receiving their correspondence.

I can also see Mrs R says she received a letter from First Central by post after her policy was cancelled. She asked why this wasn't sent out earlier so she could get in touch. I can see the letter was sent out on 20 February 2024, a week before the policy was cancelled – which is in line with what I would expect an insurer to do. I wouldn't hold First Central responsible for delays with the postal system in any event. But even if the letter was sent out earlier, I can see it was sent to the address on file, which isn't Mrs R's address. So, it appears fortunate that she received it at all, even if it was received later than intended.

Ultimately, First Central sent correspondence to the contact details they were provided with. I'm not persuaded that Mrs R didn't receive this correspondence because of anything First Central did wrong – because the contact information was provided by Mrs R. So, having taken everything into account, I'm not persuaded First Central has done anything wrong or acted unfairly here - and I'm therefore not directing them to do anything further.

My final decision

My final decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs R to accept or reject my decision before 18 December 2024.

Stephen Howard
Ombudsman