

The complaint

Ms M is unhappy that she was left without heating because British Gas Services Limited (BG) failed to diagnose the problem with her boiler.

What happened

Ms M had a five year warranty for her boiler, which BG installed. She told BG her boiler wasn't working, and it tried to repair her boiler on six different visits without success. Because of this, Ms M didn't have any heating or hot water for three winter months.

The details of this complaint are well known to both parties, so I won't repeat them again here. Instead I'll focus on giving the reasons for my 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 done so, I agree with the conclusions reached by the investigator for these reasons:

- After each visit, BG said the boiler was working, only for Ms M to report a fault again. The issue of the leak was only considered after six visits and Ms M had paid a private engineer £200. While I realise the cause of a fault is not always obvious, it would've been reasonable for BG to consider the possibility that the boiler wasn't the cause.
- Although the problem was due to a leak, which wasn't covered under the warranty, it's reasonable to think that BG should've identified that as a possible cause without Ms M having to suggest it. Had it done so, Ms M might've been able to minimise the time she spent without heating and hot water.
- Ms M was without heating and hot water for three winter months, leading to her using alternative heating methods and an increase in bills. Given that BG had only recently installed the boiler, I can understand why Ms M was upset that it didn't seem to be working properly and its engineers weren't identifying the fault.

Putting things right

BG paid £100 by way of apology for the service shortfalls. Under the circumstances, I think that £200 is a fair sum for the upset and inconvenience caused, and for the time without heating and hot water. So, BG should pay Ms M a further £100 to address this.

I also think it's reasonable that BG pays £200 to Ms M to cover the cost of using a private engineer to identify the leak, because the delay in resolving the matter was due, in part, to BG's failure to identify the cause of the fault.

My final decision

For these reasons my decision is to uphold Ms M's complaint and British Gas Services Limited must:

- pay Ms M a further £100 compensation for the upset and inconvenience, and
- pay £200 to reimburse some of the cost incurred by Ms M in using a private engineer.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Ms M to accept or reject my decision before 18 January 2021.

Debra Vaughan
Ombudsman