

## **The complaint**

Mr B complains about how British Gas Services Limited ("British Gas") handled a claim he made under his HomeCare policy.

## **What happened**

Mr B discovered a fault with his fridge freezer in September 2019, after the appliance made a loud popping sound. Mr B phoned British Gas and said there was smoke coming out of his fridge freezer. He unplugged the appliance from the power supply and the British Gas representative told Mr B over the phone that he'd taken the necessary action to make the situation safe.

British Gas explained that the earliest it could get an engineer out to Mr B would be in four days' time. Mr B was unhappy about this and wanted the fridge freezer looked at sooner. Because Mr B then mentioned he had medication stored in the fridge freezer, British Gas agreed to send an engineer round the next day.

The engineer didn't visit as agreed the following day, and Mr B didn't hear from British Gas about the missed appointment. Mr B then went on holiday for two weeks. When he returned, an engineer visited his home and told Mr B the fridge freezer would need to be replaced.

Mr B complained about the service he'd received from British Gas. It offered him £50 initially but then increased this to £150 to say sorry for the trouble and upset it'd caused. Mr B remained unhappy with British Gas's offer and referred the complaint to our service.

Our investigator considered all the issues and didn't think the complaint should be upheld. He explained why he thought the offer from British Gas was fair. Because Mr B disagreed with our investigator's opinion, the complaint has now come 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 this complaint. I know Mr B will be disappointed by this, but I'll explain how I've reached my decision.

There's no dispute about what happened here. Mr B wanted his fridge freezer looked at as soon as possible and this is understandable. British Gas didn't send an engineer on 1 October as it said it would. So Mr B only had the appliance assessed after he returned from holiday. British Gas has accepted that the level of service it provided fell below what its customers should expect.

I've considered the impact of what happened. Mr B went on holiday on 3 October and returned on 14 October. During this time, I don't think Mr B would've been significantly impacted by British Gas failing to send an engineer for a visit on 1 October. I say this because Mr B would've been able to store his medication safely with him on holiday.

Mr B has also told us that he had a small chiller, in which he stored food and medication. So I'm satisfied he was able to use that to keep his medicine safe when he returned from holiday and during the time his fridge freezer wasn't working.

Mr B mentioned that he would sometimes host Christmas parties, and needed a working fridge freezer so he could store enough food for his guests. But I don't think that makes a difference to my decision, because an engineer was able to visit him on 25 October. And that's when Mr B was told the fridge freezer couldn't be repaired and he'd need to buy a new one.

Under the terms of Mr B's policy with British Gas, he could get his kitchen appliances repaired or receive a contribution towards a replacement if an appliance couldn't be fixed. British Gas told Mr B at the beginning of November 2019 that it'd pay him £191.64 as a contribution towards a replacement fridge freezer, and it said Mr B would receive his cheque for this amount within 28 days. So I think it met its obligation to repair or contribute to replacing under the policy. And as Mr B would've received his cheque some time before Christmas, I think he would've had sufficient time to purchase a replacement fridge freezer.

While the parties agree that the service provided by British Gas wasn't adequate, I can see from the available evidence that Mr B didn't get in touch with British Gas when he returned from his holiday on 14 October 2019. The first time he spoke to British Gas to arrange another engineer's visit was on 22 October 2019 and a visit was arranged for 25 October 2019. So I don't think Mr B considered it to be an urgent matter, because if he had, I would've expected him to get in touch with British Gas much sooner after his return from holiday.

British Gas offered £150 compensation for the trouble and upset it caused. For the reasons I've explained, I don't think the impact of British Gas's errors on Mr B was significant, so I think the amount offered is reasonable and I won't be requiring British Gas to do anything further.

### **My final decision**

I'm sorry to disappoint Mr B, but my final decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr B to accept or reject my decision before 6 May 2021.

Ifrah Malik  
**Ombudsman**