

The complaint

Mr and Mrs S complain British Gas Services Limited treated them unfairly when their boiler stopped working and they needed assistance under their homecare cover policy.

What happened

- On 5 February 2021, Mr and Mrs S contacted British Gas because their boiler showed a low pressure reading.
- British Gas said the earliest date an engineer could attend was 25 February 2021.
- Shortly after the call, the boiler stopped working altogether, so Mr S called back.
- He explained that he and Mrs S are elderly and how they couldn't be without heating or hot water. British Gas said the earliest an engineer could attend was 11 February 2021. But it said Mr S could arrange his own engineer and it would reimburse him the cost.
- Mr S arranged his own engineer, who attended the same day. The engineer said British Gas had missed a fault with the boiler which should have been identified when it was serviced the previous year.
- British Gas reimbursed Mr and Mrs S the cost of this.
- Mr and Mrs S complained that engineers should have been available sooner, they'd been without heating for several days, the telephone system wasn't good enough and the service had been poor. British Gas paid £75 to recognise the difficulties they'd experienced
- Mr and Mrs S also said British Gas failed to spot a fault with their boiler when it was serviced in 2020 and so, they want the 2021 premiums refunded.
- They brought a complaint to this service. Our investigator considered it and didn't uphold the complaint. She thought £75 compensation was fair in the circumstances.
- Mr and Mrs S remained unhappy and so the complaint 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 done so, I'm not upholding it and I'll explain why.

Mr and Mrs S say British Gas failed to spot a fault with their boiler when it was serviced in 2020, and so it should refund their premiums. I appreciate their engineer said British Gas should have spotted the fault, but I've not been provided with evidence to support this – so I'm not persuaded by this. Instead, what I've had to balance this with is the possibility the fault occurred *after* the annual service and so, wasn't present when it was serviced. I understand another British Gas engineer attended later that same year, but the issue they were sent to deal with didn't necessitate them looking at the main gas burner and so, the

problem wouldn't have been apparent to them. For these reasons, I don't think it would be reasonable to conclude British Gas failed to identify a fault in 2020, and so, I won't be asking British Gas to refund their premiums.

Turning to the difficulties Mr and Mrs S experienced. I've no doubt it would have been disappointing and frustrating to be told an engineer wasn't available until late February – especially as Mr and Mrs S are elderly. And it was a worry for them being without heating and hot water. But I have to keep in mind that this was against the backdrop of the pandemic when services were stretched. I also balance this with the fact British Gas agreed to Mr and Mrs S arranging their own engineer if it allowed them to sort the problem sooner – which it did. And this is what I'd expect it to do given Mr and Mrs S' circumstances.

Mr and Mrs S have told us that their engineer attended the same day their boiler stopped working, but that sourcing a part meant it took another six days before they had heating again. Unfortunately, having to source new parts will inevitably delay things, but I don't think it's reasonable to attribute this delay to something British Gas did wrong. I say this because I've not been provided with evidence to show that had British Gas sent an engineer sooner, Mr and Mrs S wouldn't have experienced a number of days without heating. It's possible that British Gas would have had to source the part as well, which would mean Mr and Mrs S would have found themselves in the same situation. So, on balance, I'm satisfied £75 fairly reflects the difficulties Mr and Mrs S experienced.

I know my decision will disappoint them, but I hope Mr and Mrs S understand, based on the reasons above, why I haven't upheld it.

My final decision

My final decision is that I don't uphold this complaint

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr S and Mrs S to accept or reject my decision before 11 April 2022.

Nicola Beakhust
Ombudsman