

## **The complaint**

Miss H complains about how British Gas Services Limited handled her request for an annual service and subsequent problems with her boiler.

## **What happened**

Miss H had a home care policy with British Gas. This included an annual service of her boiler.

In October 2021 she had an appointment for her annual service but the engineer came later than arranged. A few days after the visit her boiler broke and she had no heating or hot water. She called British Gas to arrange an engineer visit. However in the two weeks that followed British Gas missed a number of appointments and Miss H was without heating and hot water for 13 days. During this time Miss H had tried to contact British Gas to make a complaint and was promised call backs that she did not receive.

Due to the poor service she made a complaint. British Gas upheld it and offered £400 compensation. However Miss H didn't think this was enough. She said her boiler was still not completely fixed and she thought British Gas were responsible for breaking it in the first place. So she thought it should provide a replacement. She brought her complaint to this service.

Our investigator considered the issues and recommended the complaint be upheld. She thought that £400 wasn't enough to recognise the impact the matter had had on Miss H. She said that Miss H had been living with her elderly mother and had to arrange for her to take showers in other people's homes while they were without water. So she recommended British Gas pay an additional £200 compensation to make up for this. However she didn't agree that it should provide a replacement boiler as she said this wasn't covered under the policy.

British Gas accepted our investigator's view, however Miss H didn't. She said British Gas should have provided alternative accommodation during the time she was without hot water and therefore should pay the equivalent of what this would have cost, on top of the compensation for distress. She asked for the complaint to be reviewed by an ombudsman.

## **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.

I've looked at the timeline of events from the point the October 2021 service was arranged. And I can see that Miss H has received a very poor service from British Gas.

There have been a number of times when Miss H has been promised an appointment and let down. This has meant she has had to wait at home only for the engineer not to turn up which would have been both distressing and inconvenient.

Further, it took British Gas a total of 11 appointments to fix the problem with the boiler when it's confirmed this should have taken no more than three. So it's clear it caused an unnecessary delay there. During this time Miss H was without heating and hot water for 13 days. She's told us she was living with her elderly mother and had to arrange for them both to wash other people's homes and the gym. This was also during October and November, when the weather is colder so there is a greater need for heating.

Based on this, I agree with our investigator that the level of distress and inconvenience caused by British Gas' poor service is significant. And I agree that £600 better recognises this, and is in line with awards offered on similar complaints.

I've considered what Miss H has said about British Gas providing a new boiler, as she believes it was its engineer that caused the fault in the first place. While I understand why she thinks this, due to the proximity of the problem to the engineer's visit, I've not seen any evidence to say the boiler was damaged at the first visit. And as a replacement boiler isn't covered in the policy terms, it wouldn't be fair for me to ask British Gas to provide a replacement.

I've also considered what she's said about British Gas not providing alternative accommodation. I can see the policy provides cover for up to £500 of costs towards alternative accommodation where there's been accidental damage to the boiler. However where this isn't requested or provided at the time, this service wouldn't expect the business to provide the money as an alternative. As the cover is there in order to lessen the impact of the claim on the insured and not as a monetary award. For that reason I don't agree British Gas should pay the money it would have paid for alternative accommodation, however I've considered the impact of living in a house without these facilities in my compensation award.

Finally Miss H has said that her boiler still isn't fixed. She's said she is unable to have both hot water and heating on at the same time. It's unclear whether she has reported this directly to British Gas, or just through our service, but I'd expect British Gas to ensure the boiler is fully repaired, in line with the policy terms and conditions. I suggest Miss H speaks to it directly about the issues.

### **My final decision**

For the reasons I've given, I uphold Miss H's complaint and require British Gas Services Limited to pay a total of £600 compensation to resolve this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss H to accept or reject my decision before 4 August 2022.

Sophie Goodyear  
**Ombudsman**