

complaint

Miss F has complained about the boiler repair cover she has with SSE Home Services Limited ('SSE'). She's unhappy about the time slots in which an engineer visited her house to fix her boiler.

background

Miss F had a problem with her boiler and claimed on her boiler repair cover with SSE. An engineer visited her house on 24 January 2019, but needed a part so the boiler could be fixed. An engineer returned with the part to fix the boiler on 29 January.

Miss F has complained that:

- On 24 January the engineer arrived before the agreed time, and left a card saying he couldn't access the property - she had to call SSE about this.
- On 29 January she had to wait in all day for the engineer, but the engineer didn't arrive until 5.15pm. Because of this she lost a day's income. And the engineer only called her 15 minutes beforehand, not the 30 minutes SSE said he would.
- Her complaint acknowledgement letter and final complaint response letter from SSE were both dated 5 February, and she received the acknowledgement after she received the final response.

Our adjudicator found SSE had acted reasonably. She felt SSE had given Miss F time slots for the engineer's visits, and the engineers had visited within those time slots. She also felt that SSE had acted reasonably by arranging for the engineer to revisit Miss M's house on 24 January because the engineer had originally arrived before Miss M's preferred time. She also didn't think that SSE could be held responsible for any delays in the postal service.

Miss F didn't agree with the adjudicator. She feels SSE broke the agreement by the engineer visiting before he was due on 24 January. She also says she lost a day's income by having to wait in for an engineer on 29 January, and SSE should've given her a morning or afternoon slot instead. She thinks the engineer only calling 15 minutes before arriving on the 29 January visit was an unacceptable lack of communication.

Miss F has also said that it's not usual practice for acknowledgement and final complaint letters to be dated the same day, and that the adjudicator has ignored that fact that she never received SSE's Terms and Conditions.

my findings

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

engineer's visit on 24 January 2019

I've seen SSE's case notes for Miss F's breakdown policy, and these show she was booked an afternoon appointment for this visit. This means the engineer could arrive anytime between 1pm and 6pm. But Miss F had told SSE that she didn't leave work until 1pm and asked if the engineer could arrive after 1.30pm. SSE agreed to this.

On the day of the visit the engineer was running ahead of schedule. He called Miss F at 12.50pm to let her know he was on his way, but there was no answer. The engineer arrived at Miss F's house at 1.20pm. He called her mobile and landline numbers but these calls weren't answered. He knocked on Miss F's door, but it wasn't answered. Because of this he left a card to say he'd called, and went on to his next job.

Miss F has said she was at home at 1.20pm, but didn't hear her phones or the knock on the door. Because of this she missed the engineer. At 1.24pm Miss F called SSE about the missed visit, and SSE arranged for the engineer to go back the same day.

I appreciate that the engineer visited Miss F's house before she was expecting him, and she was frustrated by his. But the engineer visited within the afternoon appointment time slot. The engineer tried to call Miss F before he arrived at her house, and again when he arrived at her house. He also knocked the door to let Miss F know he'd arrived. While it's unfortunate Miss F didn't hear her phones or the knock at the door, I don't think the engineer could've done anything more. I also think that SSE acted reasonably by arranging for the engineer to go back to Miss F's house once she'd let them know what happened.

engineer's visit on 29 January 2019

SSE told Miss F that this visit would be an 'all day appointment'. This meant the engineer could arrive anytime between 8am and 6pm. I appreciate Miss F was unhappy with this, and would've preferred a morning or afternoon appointment. SSE said this wasn't possible. They explained that the engineer would've needed to make sure the parts had arrived on the day of the visit, so arranging a shorter time slot couldn't be agreed beforehand.

The engineer would've had a number of jobs that day. While each job would have an estimated time to complete, jobs could take longer or shorter than expected. Also travel time between jobs could be longer or shorter than expected because of local traffic conditions. Because of this, I agree it wasn't reasonable for SSE to have provided a shorter time slot.

SSE also expects their engineers to call beforehand, to let customers know they're on their way. SSE have said it isn't always possible for this call to be made 30 minutes before the engineer's arrival. Calls are dependent on the engineer being able to get a phone signal, on the distance between jobs, and on local traffic conditions. The engineer called Miss F 15 minutes before he arrived. Given the circumstances, I can't say this was unreasonable.

Waiting in for an engineer's visit can be frustrating, especially if you've something else you could be doing. So I can understand why Miss F is unhappy the engineer arrived towards the very end of the time slot she was given. But I've seen that SSE wrote to her on 2 March 2018 about her policy that renewed on 23 March. Because of a change in the product, this letter included a Policy Booklet. I've seen the Policy Booklet, which says that engineer visits "*will be scheduled for our core working hours ... between 8am and 8pm Monday to Friday.*" So I can't say that Miss F didn't have the terms and conditions of her policy with SSE.

Boiler repair cover policies of this type usually come with estimated time slots, rather than a specific time when an engineer will arrive. This is for the reasons I've mentioned above. So I can't say that SSE should compensate Miss F for a day's lost income because the engineer arrived within the time slot they said he would, even though it was near the end of that slot.

complaint correspondence

Complaint handling is not a regulated activity, so this isn't something I can consider. But I have seen SSE called Miss F on 4 February, acknowledging her complaint verbally, and with the intention of discussing her complaint with her. The next day SSE sent Miss F a written acknowledgement to her complaint, and their final response. It's unusual that the acknowledgement and final decision are done on the same day, but I can see this is what happened. I'm pleased that SSE dealt with Miss F's complaint points in their final response.

my final decision

For the reasons explained above I don't uphold Miss F's complaint about SSE Home Services Limited.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss F to accept or reject my decision before 23 October 2019.

Andrew Burford
ombudsman