

complaint

Mrs B has complained about British Gas Insurance Limited's service after she made a claim on her home emergency policy.

All references to British Gas include its agents.

background

Mrs B made a claim to British Gas after her boiler started making loud noises. She asked for an emergency appointment because her husband has a heart condition and is sensitive to the cold. An appointment was set up for her between 6 and 10pm that evening.

Mrs B called British Gas a couple of times after the appointment was booked but couldn't get through. Around 9pm she spoke to a British Gas advisor who told her she shouldn't have been told the engineer would definitely arrive before ten. The advisor called the engineer while Mrs B was on the other line who said he would try to get there at some point during the night. The engineer said he had other appointments he had to prioritise such as leaks.

Mrs B wasn't happy and said she had been given a similar time slot on other occasions so she didn't think British Gas gave her the wrong advice to begin with. Her husband, Mr B, said he'd stay up and wait for the engineer. Mrs B asked for the engineer to call her husband and not her before he arrived as she didn't want to be woken up. Around 1.45am the engineer called Mrs B to say he was on his way.

British Gas didn't respond to Mrs B's complaint so she complained to us. She cancelled her policy and said British Gas should provide a better service and it should also charge a reduced rate for pensioners. And she asked for compensation because she said the British Gas advisor spoke to her brutally, and wasn't sympathetic or flexible.

British Gas offered £60 compensation for the service it provided and for not responding to the complaint. Mrs B accepted the £60 but also asked for the complaint to go to an ombudsman. British Gas agreed to pay her the £60 in the meantime.

my findings

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 going to uphold it.

British Gas agreed that it didn't respond to Mrs B's complaint. And it said when it booked her appointment it should've told her there was no guarantee the engineer would arrive during the time slot she was given. This is because other appointments may be booked in the meantime that need to be prioritised such as water leaks. It offered Mrs B £60 for the inconvenience it caused her.

The engineer said he had nine appointments that evening and some involved leaks so he had to prioritise those over Mrs B's boiler issue. I think this is reasonable. And I note the engineer arrived around 2am but didn't find anything wrong with the boiler. In the circumstances I think British Gas's £60 offer is reasonable to compensate for the inconvenience it caused.

Mrs B said the British Gas advisor spoke to her brutally. I've listened to the call she is referring to. I didn't find that the advisor was brutal or inflexible or that he showed no sympathy. He apologised because Mrs B wasn't told the engineer might not arrive between the time slot given and explained that this depended on other urgent appointments. He tried to explain how the emergency service works and offered Mrs B other appointments when she said she didn't want to stay up all night waiting for the engineer. As I think British Gas has handled the matter reasonably I won't ask it to pay Mrs B more compensation for this part of her complaint.

Mrs B said British Gas should be offering pensioners reduced rates. And she wants it to offer her a better service so she returns as a customer. My role is to consider individual complaints and decide whether a business has behaved fairly and reasonably in each one. If Mrs B decides to take out a policy with British Gas in the future and feels she has something to complain about, she can bring a new complaint to us at that stage. And as my role is to resolve individual complaints, I couldn't insist that British Gas reduces the rates it offers a particular group of consumers.

my final decision

For the reasons above, I'm upholding Mrs B's complaint in part. British Gas Insurance Limited must pay Mrs B £60 for the distress and inconvenience it caused her, if it hasn't already.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs B to accept or reject my decision before 10 April 2017.

Anastasia Serdari
ombudsman