

complaint

Mr W complains British Gas Insurance Limited didn't complete a test that formed part of his annual boiler service. He says if the test had been completed, an issue would have been identified and saved him an expense.

background

Mr W is entitled to an annual boiler service under his British Gas insurance policy protecting his boiler and central heating. A letter inviting Mr W to book his annual service confirms that, amongst other things, the gas pressure will be tested. However, Mr W says he's since been told by British Gas engineers that they don't test gas pressure, they test flow rates.

Mr W says during some works he was having done at his home, it was discovered that there was a considerable drop in pressure between his meter and gas fire. He says the issue was due to the diameter of the pipe between the meter and the fire, and new pipework had to be fitted at his expense. Mr W has provided an email from his engineer which confirms the issue and the remedial works.

Mr W says the issue should have been picked up during two British Gas annual services. He says if the gas pressure had been properly tested by British Gas, he would have known there was a problem.

Mr W complained to British Gas, and because he remained unhappy with its response, he referred his complaint to this service. British Gas understood that Mr W believed a 'gas soundness' test should have been completed as part of his annual service, but it was satisfied that the appropriate pressure testing had been completed.

The complaint was considered by one of our investigators, but based on the explanation British Gas gave him, he didn't think it should be upheld.

British Gas told our investigator that it carries out a 'gas rate and emissions' test during an annual service. It says the type of gas valve Mr W has fitted on his boiler means a 'burner gas pressure' test isn't possible, so it 'gas rated' his boiler instead. British Gas explained that, in modern gas boilers, a gas rate test is effectively the same as a gas pressure test; noting that modern gas boilers rely on fan pressure, rather than gas pressure.

As such, British Gas was satisfied that it had carried out the equivalent test for Mr W's boiler, to the one described in his annual service invite letter. It also noted that if he had reported a problem with his hot water or heating, it would have investigated, as per the cover under his policy. But it said because no problems had been reported, it had no need to perform the 'working pressure' tests Mr W's engineer had performed when repositioning his gas fire.

Based on British Gas' explanation, our investigator was persuaded that it had fulfilled its obligations. Because Mr W disagreed, the complaint has been passed to me for a final decision.

my findings

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

I appreciate the information contained in the invite letter could be clearer in terms of the tests that are completed during an annual service for modern gas boilers. But I also accept the explanation given by British Gas in respect of the equivalent test. I haven't been shown anything which contradicts British Gas' explanation.

Mr W says that if the gas pressure had been properly tested by British Gas during his annual services, then the issue identified by his own engineer would have been discovered. But I've not seen anything that shows the appropriate annual service tests weren't conducted for his boiler or that the issue should have been picked up during an annual service. Mr W points towards an email from his own engineer, but it doesn't mention that British Gas failed to complete a test, or pick up an issue, it ought to reasonably have done.

In any event, Mr W hadn't reported any related heating issues with his gas fire, so in my view, I can't reasonably decide British Gas ought to have investigated and replaced the pipework Mr W has referred to.

Mr W has also outlined his frustration with how British Gas handled his complaint, and I do understand he feels strongly his complaint should be upheld. But although I agree it could have been clearer with the explanation it gave him when responding to his complaint, overall, I'm not persuaded I can reasonably uphold his complaint on this basis alone.

my final decision

I'm sorry to disappoint Mr W. But for the reasons explained above, I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr W to accept or reject my decision before 16 January 2020.

Vince Martin
ombudsman