

complaint

Mr A complains that British Gas Insurance Limited failed to correctly diagnose a fault with his boiler and about its handling of his complaint as it did not reply to his letters and calls.

background

In December 2012, Mr A contacted British Gas in order to make a claim under his Homecare policy as his central heating was not working and an engineer attended the following day.

The engineer diagnosed a faulty gas valve as the cause of the fault with the boiler. He informed Mr A that the part was obsolete and isolated the boiler as it was 'At Risk' because the part could not be replaced.

Mr A employed a private engineer who noticed that the gas supply to Mr A's hob was low and discovered that there was water in the gas supply pipe to the house. The fault was rectified the following day and the boiler was left fully functional.

Mr A contacted British Gas to inform it of what his private engineer had found and explained to British Gas that its engineer had misdiagnosed the fault. Mr A cancelled his Homecare contract and British Gas offered to refund two months premium totalling £83.53, and pay £250 for the cost of the private engineer.

Mr A was unhappy and asked British Gas for £500 compensation in addition to its previous offer and outlined a previous problem he had when British Gas refunded costs incurred by Mr A. British Gas went onto offer a further £150 compensation as a gesture of good will but Mr A remained unhappy and complained to this service.

Our adjudicator investigated Mr A's complaint but did not uphold it. Although he recognised that British Gas misdiagnosed the fault and that there were avoidable delays he was of the view that British Gas' offer was reasonable and in line with awards this service would ordinarily make.

As the matter could not be resolved it has been escalated to me for a final decision.

my findings

I have considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what is fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

The issue for me to determine is whether British Gas has acted reasonably in refunding two months premium, paying for the cost of Mr A's engineer and offering £150 compensation in acknowledgement of misdiagnosing a fault with Mr A's boiler and its poor service.

It is not disputed that British Gas misdiagnosed a fault on Mr A's boiler. Fortunately his own engineer rectified the problem but this left Mr A without central heating for a four day period over the Christmas period. British Gas has said that its engineer would not have carried a 'pilot shield' and that it would have taken three days for a replacement to be gained. As Mr A's engineer had to replace the 'pilot shield' British Gas implies that Mr A would have been without central heating for a number of days in any event.

It is clear to me that British Gas incorrectly diagnosed the fault with Mr A's boiler, and it is possible that Mr A would not have been without heating for more than one day, if British Gas had not incorrectly diagnosed the fault. However, although I can understand Mr A's frustration I believe that British Gas' offer is in line with awards this service would ordinarily make and although its service could have been better it took steps to redress the situation and refunded Mr A's costs.

Finally, I understand that Mr A is unhappy with the handing of his complaint by British Gas and I am aware that Mr A contacted British Gas in December 2012 to raise his complaint. However, I believe that British Gas' offer to reimburse the costs of Mr A's private engineer and the two Homecare premium payments is fair and reasonable in the circumstances. British Gas has also offered to pay £150 as a gesture of goodwill and in recognition of any distress and inconvenience caused. This is in line with awards made for similar cases and therefore I do not consider British Gas' offer to be unreasonable in the circumstances.

my final decision

For the above reasons, my final decision is that I do not uphold this complaint. I make no further award against British Gas Insurance Limited. I simply leave it to Mr A to decide whether, upon reflection he wants to accept British Gas's offer of compensation.

Colin Keegan
ombudsman