

## **complaint**

Mrs B complains that Great Lakes Insurance SE took too long to deal with a claim on her home emergency insurance policy.

Where I refer to Great Lakes, this includes its agents and claims handlers.

## **background**

Mrs B has a property which she lets out to tenants. She has a home emergency policy for the property. So when the boiler in the property broke down she made a claim on her policy. She was unhappy with the amount of time it took Great Lakes to fix the boiler and made a complaint about this.

Great Lakes say it sent a contractor out to the property the day after the claim was made. On inspection of the boiler, they found it needed several parts which they ordered and, because of the age and make of the boiler, it would take 4-5 working days to get them. When the parts arrived, Great Lakes found they weren't correct. There was then an error when speaking to the supplier about this.

Great Lakes agreed that some things went wrong during the claims process but said it wasn't responsible for the actions of the supplier. It offered Mrs B £60 compensation for the delays.

Mrs B didn't think this was enough, so she complained to this service. Our investigator thought Great Lakes should increase the compensation to £150 but Great Lakes disagrees. It says as Mrs B's boiler isn't a common type, and is quite old, it's unlikely that parts would be easily available; it took prompt action to sort things out; and can't be responsible for the supplier's actions.

Mrs B says that based on the number of calls both she and her tenant had to make, the time spent by both of them and the inconvenience caused, she had expected the compensation would be higher. But she was prepared to accept £150 to resolve the matter

As no agreement has been reached, the complaint has been passed to me.

## **my findings**

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

The policy covers Mrs B for repairs where the boiler breaks down leaving the property with no heating and/or hot water. As it's a home emergency policy, she expects repairs to be done quickly. In this case it took 11 days and she thinks that's too long.

Great Lakes accepts the repair took too long but says it took reasonable steps to chase things and isn't responsible for delays caused by the supplier. It has referred to a term in the policy that says there may be times when replacement parts are unavailable, delayed or are no longer available because of circumstances beyond its control.

I appreciate that in this case, the parts needed to repair the boiler weren't available immediately. And the policy does refer to situations like this. Great Lakes says it was only responsible for three days of delay, with other issues being outside its control. It says the compensation covers the missed appointment and around £10 per day for the three days delay it was responsible for, which it considers reasonable.

I've taken this into account, but there were a number of issues, such as a missed appointment and some communication issues. Mrs B says both she and her tenant had to make lots of calls and chase Great Lakes to find out what was happening. I can see from the records that Great Lakes did take steps to chase the suppliers and contractors, but Mrs B says she had to chase for updates. I can't comment on her tenant's actions; the policy isn't for their benefit. But I can see the situation caused Mrs B distress and inconvenience. She's also explained there were times when Great Lakes didn't call her on the correct number or send an email to her when promised.

Taking all of this into account, I think £150 is a fair amount of compensation for the trouble and upset caused.

Great Lakes is concerned that awarding compensation due to the part not being available would set an unfair precedent where customers are compensated for delays outside of its control. My decision won't set a precedent for other cases. I think £150 is a fair reflection of all the circumstances in this case; what's fair in another case will depend on the facts of that case.

### **my final decision**

My final decision is that I uphold the complaint and direct Great Lakes Insurance SE to pay Mrs B £150 compensation for the trouble and inconvenience caused to her.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs B to accept or reject my decision before 18 August 2018.

Peter Whiteley  
**ombudsman**