

## **complaint**

Mrs P's complaint arises from problems with the administration of various boiler and central heating insurance policies by British Gas Services Limited.

## **background**

Mrs P holds four policies with British Gas in relation to rental properties. I understand that when they renewed in 2017, the payment arrangements for these weren't carried out properly by British Gas. As a result of British Gas's error, since August 2017 it has taken payments for one or more of her four policies, from one of her parents' account and not hers.

Mrs P says she's had to phone every month to change the billing address and bank details on the accounts but instead of resolving the issue, British Gas kept making it worse. In brief summary, in August 2017 the premium for one policy was taken from Mrs P's father's account in error. After she called to sort this out, British Gas tried to take the premium for two policies from her mother's account and still took a payment from her father's account. In December 2017 no payment was taken from her account for any of the policies but British Gas took another payment from her father's account. British Gas also failed to take some other monthly payments properly in 2018.

Mrs P was therefore not up-to-date with the payments on the accounts. Mrs P asked for compensation for the trouble caused and for British Gas to waive the outstanding amounts due.

British Gas apologised and assured Mrs P that feedback had been given to some of its representatives that she had dealt with to try and sort out the problem with the accounts. British Gas offered a total of £160 compensation for the distress and inconvenience caused, which has been paid in different stages.

One of our investigators looked into the matter. She considered that the sum of £300 compensation was more appropriate for the distress and inconvenience caused to Mrs P.

Neither British Gas nor Mrs P accepted this recommendation and so the matter has been passed to me. Mrs P also says she can't find one of the payments of £30 that British Gas said it made for compensation.

## **my findings**

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

British Gas does not dispute that it was responsible for all that has gone wrong with the payments for these four policies. I therefore need to consider what compensation, if any, is appropriate to reflect the trouble this caused to Mrs P.

I can see that Mrs P has had to spend considerable time trying to rectify the problems with the accounts. I can also see that each time she thought this was resolved, British Gas made further errors. The service provided by British Gas was poor and I can understand the mounting frustration this would have caused to Mrs P.

I agree with the investigator that this doesn't mean that the outstanding premiums should be waived; I also agree with the investigator that the £160 already offered by British Gas isn't enough to reflect the distress and inconvenience caused to Mrs P. She had to call every month for several months, spending considerable time on the phone watch time and keep checking her account for the payments. In my opinion, the £300 recommended is appropriate to reflect the distress and inconvenience this caused and is in line with awards made in similar cases.

**my final decision**

I uphold this complaint and require British Gas Services Limited to pay Mrs P the sum of £300 compensation for the distress and inconvenience caused to her by its maladministration of her insurance policies.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs P to accept or reject my decision before 21 October 2018.

Harriet McCarthy  
**ombudsman**