

## **complaint**

Mr S is unhappy British Gas Services Limited (British Gas) incorrectly sent him an invoice for £50 and told him the matter would be passed to debt collectors.

## **background**

Mr S was incorrectly sent an invoice for £50 on 18 November 2018 following an annual service under his HomeCare agreement. A payment reminder was sent on 1 December so Mr S called British Gas on 6 December to query this. During this call Mr S was told by British Gas that he had a call out charge on his account. But it said that this particular visit should've been marked as a 'recall', meaning the invoice shouldn't have been sent. So British Gas confirmed the invoice would be cancelled and it told Mr S that he didn't owe anything.

Mr S asked British Gas if it could confirm this in writing. Mr S was then placed on hold while a letter was generated and was then told he can expect to receive the letter within the next 7 working days.

On 15 December 2018, British Gas sent Mr S a letter saying his details would be passed to a debt collection agency because he owed £50 for work carried out. In response Mr S emailed British Gas explaining he'd called previously and was told it would be reversed.

On 24 December 2018 British Gas called Mr S and confirmed the letter had been sent out in error and that there was nothing outstanding. Again Mr S asked if he would receive anything in writing. British Gas said he wouldn't receive a letter explaining what had happened but he would receive a letter saying that it was sorry he'd had to complain and that the matter had now been resolved.

Mr S then sent further correspondence to British Gas explaining his view that the matter was unresolved. He said he hadn't received a letter of explanation or an apology.

In February 2019 Mr S referred his complaint to our service for an independent review. In March British Gas offered to send a gesture of £80 to cover the worry caused to Mr S and to recognise that it didn't provide a full response. But Mr S remained unhappy with this. He said £300 better reflected the inconvenience caused.

One of our investigator's considered the offer of £80 put forward by British Gas but didn't think it was a fair resolution to the complaint. The investigator felt the award should be increased to £150. British Gas disagreed and said its gesture of £80 takes into account the level of upset the matter caused together with the level of service provided. British Gas explained that the matter was resolved following the conversation of 24 December and that whilst Mr S was unhappy at not receiving a more detailed explanation, it was made clear to Mr S that he'd receive a summary resolution letter.

The complaint has been passed to me to reach a final decision on this matter.

## **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 agree with the outcome the investigator reached, and for mostly the same reasons.

When considering awards for trouble and upset, I must consider the impact the issue has had on the customer. In this case, taking into account the level of customer service that Mr S has received as a whole, I think compensation of £150 fairly reflects the trouble and upset caused. I'll explain why.

The reason the invoice was issued, albeit incorrectly, was because it had been necessary for an engineer to revisit Mr S's home, when he'd been left without heating after the annual service on his boiler. British Gas incorrectly reported this as a call out, as opposed to a recall. So this meant an invoice was generated.

When Mr S first called British Gas to query the invoice and to explain what had happened, he also mentioned that the engineer had been late on the day of the service, and that he's in his 80's and had just come out of hospital when the problem happened.

The British Gas call handler explained that the invoice was issued in error and Mr S requested confirmation of this in writing. However, although it appears the call handler drafted a letter, it's not clear if this was actually sent. In any event Mr S received another letter just over a week later saying that the matter was going to be passed to a debt collector.

Mr S emailed British Gas to complain. A week after receiving Mr S's email British Gas called him to apologise and it explained the letter has been sent in error. Again Mr S asked for confirmation in writing and the call handler informed Mr S that he would be receiving a summary resolution letter.

However, this was the second time Mr S had requested confirmation in writing. So I think British Gas could've provided a full written response explaining that the invoice wasn't payable, particularly considering Mr S had explained that the matter had upset him considerably and that he'd woken early in mornings thinking about what to do.

Taking everything into account, I think the award suggested by the investigator better reflects the trouble and upset caused on this occasion. So I direct British Gas to pay Mr S a total of £150 compensation.

### **my final decision**

For the reasons explained above, I uphold this complaint and direct British Gas Services Limited to pay Mr S a total of £150 for the trouble and upset caused.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr S to accept or reject my decision before 22 August 2019.

Lorna Goulding  
**ombudsman**