

## **complaint**

Mr C has complained about British Gas Services Limited. He isn't happy about the level of service and customer care he was provided with in relation to his home emergency policy.

## **background**

Mr C asked British Gas for some technical advice in relation to the central heating system and the positioning of a flue. But it didn't deal with the request and treated Mr C's request as a complaint. This led to a number of issues in relation to poor service, customer care and clearly delayed things for Mr C.

British Gas eventually recognised its poor service and offered £150 compensation and sent a letter in answer to some of Mr C's issues. But it didn't sign the letter even though this was important to Mr C and sent the compensation out even though Mr C declined its offer. As Mr C remained unhappy he complained to this service.

Our investigator looked into things for him and upheld his complaint. He was of the view the compensation level should be lifted to £250 and that British Gas should write an apology to Mr C for the delay and lack of understanding it had shown. He also asked British Gas to provide a signed and dated copy of the technical letter it had provided to Mr C by way of explanation.

Both sides didn't agree so the matter has been passed to me for review. Mr C thought that the compensation for all his time and trouble should be more like £350. And British Gas thought its original offer was fair and said it wouldn't send a signed and dated copy of the letter.

## **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 think that the complaint should be upheld. I'll explain why.

As both sides understand the issues in relation to the complaint I'm not going to rehearse the arguments again here. But what isn't in dispute is that British Gas got things wrong here and clearly mis-understood Mr C's requests for help when it dealt with his request as a complaint and delayed responding for a considerable period of time. This led to Mr C having to chase things and he was left in limbo.

Indeed when it did respond it didn't grasp Mr C's requirements fully as he needed the letter for future reference and needed it signed and dated. I don't understand why British Gas, which took internal legal advice in relation to the response, won't do this. And it didn't seem to understand what Mr C wanted when he asked for this. Indeed, even now British Gas doesn't seem to grasp the importance of this and has said it won't provide a signed copy of the letter having told this service previously that it would.

So, overall I agree that £250 is a fair amount of compensation. I know Mr C would like more but this is in line with what this service would ordinarily award in circumstances like these. And I know British Gas feels the level of compensation it offered is adequate. But it seems to have compounded the difficulties Mr C faced even after it offered £150 compensation and accepted that its service had been very poor. So I think the compensation should be lifted.

In line with this I think it is only fair that British Gas writes out to Mr C with a letter of apology. It is clear that Mr C doesn't particularly want compensation but I'm sure a fair outcome and a meaningful apology would assist Mr C. Finally, I see no reason why British Gas won't provide a signed and dated copy of the letter it has already sent, and stands by, so I think it should do so now.

**my final decision**

It follows, for the reasons given above, that I uphold this complaint. I require British Gas Services Limited to;

- pay Mr C £250 compensation;
- write him a letter of apology and provide a signed and dated copy of its letter technical letter.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr C to accept or reject my decision before 30 April 2018.

Colin Keegan  
**ombudsman**