

complaint

Mrs E complains that British Gas Insurance Limited is responsible for poor service under her HomeCare policy.

background

Mrs E held a HomeCare policy that covered repairs and an annual service of her boiler. British Gas provided services and dealt with any claims for the policy. In March 2018 under the policy, British Gas installed a new boiler and later set up a five-year warranty.

Mrs E complained to British Gas in December 2018 that she'd only recently got the hot water working properly and her energy bills had increased. Mrs E said she uses very little hot water. British Gas responded and said it had sent engineers to fit and examine the boiler and they had explained to Mrs E how the boiler operated. British Gas offered Mrs E £50 compensation for its engineers providing conflicting information at one point.

Mrs E brought her complaint to our service. She said she had the inconvenience of no hot running water for washing-up, a hot shower or bath for eight months. She said she had to boil the kettle every day to get hot water to wash up. And she said the £50 compensation British Gas offered is equivalent to two pence per day and wouldn't compensate her for the cost of this.

Our investigator didn't recommend that the complaint be upheld. She didn't think that British Gas had made a mistake by installing the boiler and the reports indicated it is working properly. She said the engineers who visited Mrs E had given conflicting information. But she thought offering £50 compensation was fair and reasonable in the circumstances.

Mrs E said she wasn't satisfied with the outcome reached by the investigator. She asked that an ombudsman review the complaint.

my findings

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

Mrs E said her previous boiler was old and British Gas said it was inefficient. Mrs E said she had been given poor service by British Gas since the replacement boiler was installed. She said she had only had hot bath water for three weeks and hot water for washing up for two weeks. I have considered her complaint under her HomeCare policy.

British Gas has provided records summarising its visits. From those, it appears that following the installation of the new boiler in March 2018 - British Gas didn't visit Mrs E until August 2018. I think that – having paid for a new boiler - most people would've called British Gas out straightaway if there was a significant problem with the temperature or quantity of hot water. And most people would've complained if British Gas hadn't visited within a few days.

So, I don't think it likely that Mrs E had been suffering a significant problem with the temperature or quantity of hot water for the intervening period of nearly five months. If she had, then I don't think she'd given British Gas an opportunity to fix it.

After the visit in August, British Gas visited again in the Autumn and December 2018 when the problems appear to have been resolved. British Gas said these were to do with Mrs E's understanding of the operation of the boiler. From what Mrs E has said, I think that these visits made an improvement to the hot water in the bathroom and kitchen.

From what I've seen, it appears that British Gas sent engineers to Mrs E to top up the water pressure and provide advice on the settings. They advised her about how to work the boiler controls and control the pressure. This is what we would expect British Gas to do and meets its requirements under the HomeCare policy. Overall, I think that British Gas treated Mrs E fairly.

British Gas has apologised for the conflicting information to Mrs E from the engineers who visited her home. But because of the reasons given above, I think offering £50 compensation is fair and reasonable in the circumstances. If this amount hasn't already been paid to Mrs E I recommend that she accepts this compensation from British Gas. If she doesn't and rejects this decision, other options for pursuing her complaint remain open to her.

my final decision

For the reasons I've explained, my final decision is that I don't uphold this complaint. I don't direct British Gas Insurance Limited to do anything further in response to this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs E to accept or reject my decision before 7 May 2020.

Andrew Fraser
ombudsman