

complaint

Mrs H is unhappy with the level of compensation British Gas Insurance Limited has offered after a gas leak in her home.

background

On 6 December 2017 British Gas attended Mrs H's property to carry out an annual service on her boiler. During this visit it was reported that there was a leaking valve, so a replacement part was ordered and then fitted on 7 December 2017.

Following this visit Mrs H noticed a strange smell, so she contacted British Gas on 13 December 2017. During this call she explained that when she did her washing there was an awful smell and it was now around her house. She said the system had to be drained for the repair. She described an acidic smell and said she was concerned about the safety of the water to drink. British Gas put her through to the plumbing department. The notes from this call say that the plumbing department didn't consider it was a water issue and suggested she should get a white goods engineer to attend.

On 23 December 2017 Mrs H calls British Gas again. She described there being an ammonia smell in her home where the boiler was. At this time she said the smell was coming from the boiler and she was worried about it. In this call she said she didn't get a white goods engineer because the smell was coming from the boiler. British Gas transferred her through to National Grid who attended the property after the call. It identified there was a gas leak and so British Gas then visited the property later that day. It discovered the joints on the boiler hadn't been tightened properly after the replacement part was fitted, allowing gas to leak out. Following this visit the gas leak was resolved.

Mrs H complained to British Gas in January 2018. It agreed she hadn't been provided with the level of service she should have and awarded her £200 compensation. Mrs H wasn't happy with this, so she brought her complaint to our service. Our investigator thought the amount offered was fair, so Mrs H then asked for an ombudsman's decision.

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 has told us it accepts its engineer made a mistake fitting the replacement part which meant gas was left leaking from the boiler. And so, as a result of this National Grid needed to attend and then a further visit was required from British Gas to fix the problem.

I can understand Mrs H's concern about what happened. British Gas should've ensured the service and part replacement didn't result in a gas leak. And I do appreciate that the consequences of this leak could've been very serious. However, our service's role isn't to regulate businesses or to punish them for mistakes.

British Gas has acknowledged that it didn't provide the level of service it should have and has apologised to Mrs H. So I consider the matter left for me to decide whether or not £200 is fair compensation.

To decide this I have to consider the impact the leak *had* on Mrs H. I appreciate she's said the leak could've potentially been very dangerous. But luckily in this case nothing serious happened and I won't be awarding her compensation for something that *could've* happened.

I consider Mrs H was inconvenienced as she did have to call British Gas a number of times and had both National Grid and British Gas attend her property following the service. And from listening to the call it does sound as if the gas leak was inconveniencing her due to the smell around her home. She also said in the call that she had reduced the amount of washing she was doing because of it. So I think she is due compensation for this inconvenience.

I can see that in January 2018 Mrs H told British Gas that she'd been ill with flu like symptoms and nausea. She's told us that during this time she also felt short tempered and like she wasn't in control. She's confirmed to us she had these symptoms during the gas leak and felt better once it had been stopped. Mrs H didn't visit a doctor during this time so we don't know whether or not she was ill due to the gas leak. But we know, thankfully, by Christmas she was better and she doesn't consider there was a longer term impact on her health. I appreciate it would've been inconvenient and unpleasant to be unwell and it is possible the gas leak contributed her illness. But I don't consider there is enough evidence to show British Gas's actions were the cause of it. So while I have factored this into my decision, I can't hold British Gas responsible for making Mrs H sick.

Mrs H has also said the leak was very distressing for her. So I've looked at what happened and her actions to see whether this distress warrants further compensation.

From her early phone call with British Gas she seems concerned about the safety of her water supply. But it did then reassure her that this isn't likely to be the cause of the smell and sign posts her to a white goods engineer. Mrs H didn't then go on to contact the white goods engineer. She says she "*just gave up*" after the call with the plumber – which I don't consider she would've done if she was very distressed by the issue. I do appreciate it would be very distressing to find out the smell was down to a gas leak. But the leak was then fixed the same day. And considering the amount that has been offered, I don't think this distress warrants further compensation.

Considering everything that happened to Mrs H, I think British Gas's offer of £200 is fair to reflect the impact of what went wrong. British Gas shouldn't have left Mrs H's property with a leak. But I think it responded reasonably to the information she gave in her phone calls, so I don't think it was wrong to only consider there was a gas leak after her second call. And following this call, it acted quickly to rectify the situation. So while I do appreciate Mrs H has gone through a difficult time, I don't require British Gas to do or pay any more.

my final decision

I don't uphold Mrs H's complaint.

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

Amy Osborne
ombudsman