

The complaint

Mr S complained that British Gas Insurance Limited (“British Gas”), didn’t make a reasonable adjustment for him as a vulnerable customer under his home emergency policy. Mr S had representation for the complaint, but for ease and simplicity, I’ll only refer to Mr S.

What happened

Mr S was unhappy that British Gas’ engineer only waited for one and half minutes after knocking on his door, before he left. Mr S didn’t think this was long enough to allow him to open the door, considering he was registered with British Gas as a vulnerable customer.

The engineer had left by the time Mr S opened the door. Mr S was unhappy he had to arrange another appointment and he said he would also need to arrange for his disability carer to be in attendance. He was unhappy with the difficulty he had in registering his complaint.

British Gas thought it had tried to accommodate Mr S’ needs, but nonetheless still offered £40 in compensation. Mr S would like £250 compensation in total.

Our investigator decided not to uphold the complaint. He thought British Gas had tried to ensure the appointment went ahead successfully and thought the offer of compensation was reasonable. Mr S disagreed, so the case has been referred to an ombudsman.

What I’ve decided – and why

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

As a known vulnerable customer Mr S should expect British Gas to make reasonable adjustments to allow him to benefit from its service. Having reviewed the complaint, I think British Gas has acted fairly, so I won’t be upholding this complaint. I know this will be disappointing for Mr S, so I’ll explain why I’ve made this decision.

British Gas said *“it is worth noting that our engineer did call ahead on the day to inform Mr S that he was on his way, and this is noted on the job report. This would have both informed Mr S of the engineer’s approximate arrival time, and let the engineer know that Mr S was at home. However, as there was no answer to the engineer’s call, together with the fact that there were no cars on the drive, it’s reasonable that he would have assumed that no-one was home.*

It is also noted in the investigation that Mr S would not have answered a call on his mobile as he wouldn’t have known who it was. Given that this is the telephone number that he would have given at the time of booking the job, this didn’t give our engineer the opportunity to expect someone home which would have allowed him to wait longer as Mr S could have explained the situation to the engineer, but also this could have eliminated the need for a rescheduled appointment”.

Mr S indicated he never received a call and there were no missed calls on his phone. However, I can see from the job record that the engineer did try to call Mr S as British Gas advised. As I haven't seen any evidence contradicting this, I'm persuaded British Gas did try to call. Whether the call was missed, there was an administration issue with the telephone number or some other reason for the call not being answered I can't say. But I think British Gas tried.

Therefore, I'm happy British Gas did try to accommodate Mr S' needs. Unfortunately, this didn't stop the failed appointment. British Gas has offered a small level of compensation for this. I think this is fair. I appreciate the impact on Mr S may have been greater due to his circumstances. However, I think British Gas has put in a reasonable process to try and mitigate any issues.

Whilst I appreciate Mr S though one and half minutes was a short time to wait. The engineer didn't think there was anyone in. As his call wasn't answered and there was no sign of activity at the house. Therefore, I don't uphold this complaint.

My final decision

My final decision is that I don't uphold this complaint. I don't require British Gas Insurance Limited to do anything more.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr S to accept or reject my decision before 25 March 2024.

Pete Averill
Ombudsman