

Ian Harris

From: Ian Harris
Sent: 03 November 2020 07:44
To: Karen Benson
Subject: RE: EXT RE: British Gas Business Complaint Reference number: 5022907658

Karen

Thank you for your rapid reply.

I accept your goodwill credit of £200 towards my account. It should be credited to the gas account, as my complaint relates to your poor service in respect of gas, not electricity. I shall personally donate £200 to FoodCycle as a result of this settlement, which in fact will be worth £250 to the charity once it claims gift aid on that donation – in effect I am adding to the donation myself.

I am afraid that British Gas and other large corporate suppliers of your ilk have a very poor reputation among my friends, relatives and colleagues, judging by the comments I have already received about our correspondence. One friend, who volunteers for Citizens Advice, reports that he spent 3¼ hours the other day helping a vulnerable client deal with two utility matters by phone (not British Gas I should point out). He concludes his note by saying:

“Most energy companies do classify clients as vulnerable but then don’t actually do anything to make communication easier.”

In short, thank you for the £200 which I shall donate to the needy through FoodCycle.

But please pass on my comments about the customer support telephone service to those in British Gas who actually make decisions about your resourcing and service levels. British gas and other suppliers of your kind need to do much better in the matter of providing customer services to those who need them most.

With best wishes

Ian

From: Karen Benson <Karen.Benson@britishgas.co.uk>
Sent: 02 November 2020 11:20
To: Ian Harris <ian_harris@zyen.com>
Subject: RE: EXT RE: British Gas Business Complaint Reference number: 5022907658

Dear Ian Harris,

Thanks for your response.

I apologise for the mistake in referring to your old gas supplier as Opus when as you say it was actually Octopus Energy and I am sorry that you do not accept my apologies for the delay which I see no reason for on our side and for the delays in contacting our Customer Service Teams.

Whether you believe it or not, I can assure you that we do our very best to ensure the maximum coverage of our Customer Service lines so as not to inconvenience our customers.

However, I can offer a maximum goodwill gesture credit of £200 which would be credited to one of your accounts as resolution to your complaint.

If you do not wish to accept this you have the option to pursue your complaint with the Ombudsman. To do this I can arrange for a Final Position Letter to be issued.

Please let me know whether you wish to accept this offer or not.

Kind regards,

Karen

From: Ian Harris <ian_harris@zyen.com>
Sent: 02 November 2020 10:10
To: Karen Benson <Karen.Benson@britishgas.co.uk>
Subject: EXT RE: British Gas Business Complaint Reference number: 5022907658

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE BRITISH GAS CUSTOMER RELATIONS TEAM

2 NOVEMBER 2020

Thank you for your response to my complaint last month.

For the benefit of new readers, I complained about shortcomings in the establishment of a joint electricity and gas account which required me to spend 10 to 15 minutes unsuccessfully and eventually 45 minutes successfully waiting for my phone call to be answered. I would not have needed to phone British Gas at all, but for shortcomings in the on-line service which allowed me access to the electricity account but required me to phone to initiate the gas one.

I asked you not to blame the Covid pandemic for these shortcomings, but you spent some 35% of the words in the substantive part of your response doing just that. I did not complain about the delay in commencing the gas service, as I am aware that you were one of two suppliers involved. But you spent some 30% of the words in your substantive response implying that Opus might be to blame. (The previous supplier was Octopus).

To be clear, only British Gas is to blame for:

- the fact that the on-line system worked for the electricity account on commencement but not for the gas account;
- providing no means for me to initiate on-line activity for that gas account – there was simply a clear message on the screen telling me to call a particular phone number;
- such dire staffing on that phone line, I waited an hour before speaking with someone.

The reason I didn't want you to blame Covid is because I KNOW that British Gas can staff telephone lines adequately at the moment. The sales team responded to my calls very rapidly. British Gas has chosen not to staff adequately the customer services phone. I strongly suspect that the dire service level I experienced is regular fare for your poorer and more vulnerable customers, who might lack the literacy or IT skills to use the on-line systems and webchats (if/when available, which in my case, you realise, they were not).

You end the substantive part of your response with a delicious question:

“In terms of complaint resolution, other than apologies, could I ask what are you requesting?”

I find this question hard to answer. Perhaps some of my friends and contacts have ideas, which is one of the reasons I am publishing this letter openly. If I get any great ideas from my personal network, I shall pass them on to you.

But I suspect that your question is a veiled way of asking “how much compensation do you need to go away and not come back?” I shall leave the answer to that question to you. I spent an unnecessary hour just waiting for you to answer the phone and I have spent a further 90 minutes or so actually getting my problem resolved and writing to you.

At minimum wages levels that equates to £21.80. At my commercial charge out rate it equates to £1,000. Somewhere between those two figures feels right to me.

Whatever you decide to provide as compensation to Buffalo Woodfield Limited, I pledge personally to donate that sum to FoodCycle, the charity which my wife and I are supporting through the pandemic by doing food drops to the needy. My friends and contacts will eagerly await the donation figure.

I genuinely want British Gas as a supplier to look after poorer and more vulnerable customers properly. You are a large organisation which can make bigger and bolder choices than small companies like mine and individuals like me. Currently, in the matter of customer service, you are making bad customer care choices. Do better.

With best wishes

Ian Harris, Director, Buffalo Woodfield Limited. Complaint Reference number: 5022907658.

From: Karen Benson <Karen.Benson@britishgas.co.uk>

Sent: 23 October 2020 13:05

To: Ian Harris <ian_harris@zyen.com>

Subject: RE: British Gas Business Complaint Reference number: 5022907658

Complaint Reference number: 5022907658

Account Number: Buffalo Woodfield Limited/ Electricity: 603437059 & Gas: 603437234

Dear Ian Harris,

You contacted us recently and asked us to look into an important issue for you. Thank you for giving me the chance to deal with your concerns. I hope that you are staying safe and well during this difficult time.

I am emailing you to advise that your complaint with British Gas Business, which I am so sorry you felt necessary to raise, has now been escalated to our Customer Relations Team.

I am so sorry for what seems to be a bad start to your time with us. I hope I can improve upon your experience so far by addressing the issues you have raised by either explaining and/ or apologising for any service failures.

I promise not to harp on about the Covid situation (after this point) however as most of our staff are still working from home, because we are based in a high alert area, this has in all honesty created some issues in terms of delays in answering our calls. I do however apologise and assure you that we do everything possible to counter these issues by enabling customer to contact us in a variety of ways, e.g. if phone lines are busy we also have the Webchat facility. We also try to make sure we have max capacity on the phones when calls mount. I accept however that the customer experience is compromised sometimes and we will endeavor to make sure we do everything possible to answer the phones as quickly as possible.

Moving on from this, I understand that although your electricity switch was fairly smooth and timely this wasn't the case for your gas. We managed to acquire your electric 26.09.2020 but your gas supply didn't come to us until 16.10.2020. All I can say is that Opus Energy don't appear to have released the supply until this date. Did they give you a particular reason for this? Were you still within contract till that date or did they say we had objected to it moving sooner? I know that this may not have been your fault and I am sorry for the delay and for any inconvenience.

In terms of complaint resolution, other than apologies, could I ask what are you requesting?

If you have any questions, please email me back directly.

If you'd like information about our complaints handling procedure you can view a copy by going online at britishgas.co.uk/business/making-a-complaint, or by getting in touch and one of our advisors will arrange to send you a copy free of charge.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Karen

Karen Benson

Customer Relations Executive

Customer Operations, UK Business

karen.benson@britishgas.co.uk

Manage your business energy online

You can submit meter readings, view and pay your bills and do much more online.

[Register now](#)

The advertisement features a blue background with white text. On the right, there is a laptop displaying the British Gas website interface, which includes a 'Your accounts' section with various icons and text.

From: Ian Harris <ian_harris@zyen.com>

Sent: 21 October 2020 07:20

To: CSD Complaints (BGB) <customer.service.director@britishgas.co.uk>

Cc: Andrew Moran <Andrew.Moran@britishgas.co.uk>

Subject: RE: EXT RE: British Gas - Energy Renewals - 603436208 - Complaint

I wish to complain about the poor service with regard to establishing dual gas and electricity accounts for Buffalo Woodfield Limited's business property, 3 Woodfield Avenue, Streatham London SW16 1LH.

Electricity: 603437059

Gas: 603437234

Please note that this is not a complaint about Andrew Moran who sold me the accounts in mid-September, nor about the gentleman on the end of the phone on Monday 19 October who helped resolve the problem with the gas account.

I am complaining about the poor service in the matter of establishing the gas account compared with the electricity account. The electricity one went live on 26 September; a reasonable interval between sale and establishment of the service. Mr Moran did tell me that it was normal for the gas one to take a week or so longer and indeed the on-line system said that the gas one should start around 3 October.

But it did not.

When I logged on 19 October, the system said that the gas service had started 16 October, but the system would not let me see the gas account and told me that I needed to supply a meter reading by phone in order to initiate the on-line account.

I was perplexed as the electricity account had initiated in the manner I am used to – I was simply able to provide the meter reading on-line.

My first attempt to contact you by phone that day I gave up after 10-15 minutes, as I had meetings to attend. My second attempt, in the afternoon, I held on a full 45 minutes before my call was answered. This is an unacceptable level of service and there should have been no need for me to contact you by telephone at all as I should simply have been enabled to supply the meter reading on-line, as was the case with the electricity account.

The gentleman who enabled my gas account and took my meter reading over the phone was also perplexed.

To my mind these are two matters worthy of complaint:

- The failure to establish the gas account in a reasonably timely and efficient manner;
- A dire level of service in the matter of answering phones.

Please do not respond with the “Covid excuse”. I cut my suppliers (and customers) a lot of slack in the early days of the pandemic, but more than 6 months into it, your on-line systems should be fully functional and you should be geared up to answering phones in a reasonably timely fashion.

Not a good start to our business arrangements. I value my time and yours; both have been wasted in large quantity by your shortcomings. I look forward to your comments.

With best wishes

Ian Harris
Director, Buffalo Woodfield Limited

From: Andrew Moran <Andrew.Moran@britishgas.co.uk>
Sent: 17 September 2020 11:23
To: Ian Harris <ian_harris@zyen.com>
Subject: RE: EXT RE: British Gas - Energy Renewals - 603436208

Hi Ian,

I am just about to into a teams meeting myself for an hour!

I will call around 1pm as advised.

Thanks

Andrew

From: Ian Harris <ian_harris@zyen.com>
Sent: 17 September 2020 11:22 AM
To: Andrew Moran <Andrew.Moran@britishgas.co.uk>
Subject: EXT RE: British Gas - Energy Renewals - 603436208

Andrew

You are welcome to call me in the next 10-15 minutes.

After that I am hosting a webinar until 13:00.

Again you are welcome to call between 13:00 and 14:00, at which point I shall be starting my next Teams meeting!

07785-225208.

Thanks

Ian

From: Andrew Moran <Andrew.Moran@britishgas.co.uk>
Sent: 16 September 2020 16:57
To: Ian Harris <ian_harris@zyen.com>
Subject: British Gas - Energy Renewals - 603436208

Good Afternoon Mr Harris,

My apologies for not being able to call you today between 10am and 1pm. I was covering a different department so couldn't dial outbound.

Are you free tomorrow for a call please?

Kind Regards

Andrew Moran
Business Sales Executive
) phone: 0800 612 1694
* email: andrew.moran@britishgas.co.uk



Visit our website at www.britishgasbusiness.co.uk