

Case Study

Boilers and heating



Resolution requested

- £800 - repay some of the rent paid for the time heating and hot water were unavailable
- £400 - compensation for the time it took to chase the repair and the inconvenience caused

Awards

- £400.00 for the delays, distress and inconvenience

Resolved by early resolution

The tenant complainant said:

- the boiler stopped working at the beginning of February
- he told the agent straight away but they never responded
- he emailed the agent one week later to find out what was happening and then had to chase again at least twice a week for any updates
- it was only at the beginning of March that the agent confirmed the landlord had been told and authorised them to send out a plumber
- by the time the agent replied and the plumber came, he had bought two fan heaters to use
- due to the delay and the time of year, other problems like mould and damp began to appear
- it took six weeks before the boiler was repaired on 17 March
- he was left cold and without hot water for much of this time, having to go the gym for showers and rely on offers of help from neighbours

The agent responded, saying:

- they accept that the complainant's first email fell through the cracks and was not acted on
- they have apologised to the complainant for the delay
- the landlord was informed as soon as they became aware, and he had to approve the action that was then taken
- it took the landlord one week to reply to their request and then the plumber was booked and attended the next day
- as parts were needed for the repair, it took another ten days to be resolved

Key evidence

Tenancy agreement, email communication, photos, invoices.

What was decided and why?

1. Due to the cold time of year this was a pressing problem and needed prompt action
2. Although the agent accepted that they had missed the tenant's email and apologised, the time taken to resolve the issue was not up to the standard expected
3. As soon as the problem was reported, the agent/landlord could have provided temporary heaters and not left the complainant to buy their own
4. Additionally, the complainant having to chase the agent for a response shows a poor level of service and communication
5. The delay, distress and inconvenience caused to the complainant warranted compensation in addition to the apology already issued
6. We are unable to make a decision on a rent reduction or repayment as this would be for the landlord and tenant to discuss and agree

How can you avoid this happening in future?

- ✓ Where a boiler breaks down, it should be dealt with promptly and all action taken to resolve it quickly
- ✓ Where parts are needed which may result in a delay, find a solution that will work for the interim
- ✓ Agents can encourage their landlords to keep their boilers serviced regularly to minimise the risks of them breaking down (this is a separate thing to the gas safety checks required by law)
- ✓ Agents need to check their processes to make sure communications are not missed and replied to promptly

For more information on how to avoid problems with your boiler, read [Total Landlord's ultimate guide to preparing your boiler and heating system for winter](#).

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