

# New Homes Ombudsman Case Study: **Faulty Heating System**



## Issue

The customer complained that the heating system in their new home did not perform as expected. When attempting to control the temperature of one bedroom independently from the rest of the house, the boiler entered a short cycling mode, and the room failed to reach the desired temperature. Although plumbers attended, they were unable to resolve the issue. The developer subsequently arranged for an independent assessment by a consultant who made adjustments and found the system was functioning as intended.

## Relevant sections of the New Homes Quality Code

Part 1

**Selling a New Home**

Part 2

**Legal documents, information, inspection and completion**

Part 3

**After-sales, complaints and the NHOS**

## Circumstances

- The customer bought the home expecting a two-zone heating system so they could set a different temperature in their mother's room. However, the room didn't reach the desired temperature, and the boiler kept switching on and off.
- Despite several checks, the issue persisted. An engineer said replacing the radiators would help, but the developer declined, stating the warranty covered defects, not upgrades. A plumbing contractor later confirmed the system worked when used as intended, and the developer provided user guidance.
- The developer explained the system wasn't designed to heat one room independently, and no faults were found. The customer, however, said the sales team had advised otherwise. A boiler engineer found no fault with the boiler but flagged a potential system issue.
- The developer commissioned a consultant, who adjusted the system. Although the customer remained dissatisfied, the developer confirmed the changes were compliant and replaced a radiator valve before closing the complaint.

## Ombudsman's decision

The Ombudsman reviewed the available evidence and determined that the developer had taken action to establish whether there was a defect and that the customer's complaints had been dealt with in a timely manner.

The customer remains dissatisfied but cannot say whether the adjustments made have improved heating performance.

The customer would like the system upgraded by installing a larger radiator in the bedroom at the developer's expense. However, to make an award on this basis, the developer's failure to meet the requirements of the Code would need to be made clear.

The information available indicates that the system is performing as designed in accordance with the appropriate standards.

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## Outcome

Complaint **not upheld**.



## Learnings

- Make sure sales teams check the accuracy of the information they provide to customers. If in doubt, it's better to delay giving an answer until the facts have been checked.
- Arranging for consultants to assess the issue on multiple occasions and in good time meant that this developer appropriately addressed each of its customer complaints. Being responsive to customer communications is essential for successfully resolving complaints.

## Recommendations for developers

It is important that customers receive clear and accurate information about their property. In this scenario, the customer claims that they were incorrectly told they could set the thermostat in one room independently from the rest of the home. This type of detail may influence customer purchasing decisions.

Responding to customer complaints in a timely manner establishes a good standard of customer service. It is important to resolve all faults promptly, fairly, and in line with the Code.

