

DO YOU NEED A SERVICE CONTRACT?

We look at whether it's cheaper to pay for one-off repairs or to go for the security of a boiler servicing contract



British Gas is the biggest provider of boiler servicing contracts – but it's not your favourite. We carried out a survey among Which? members asking who your preferred providers of contracts are, what you paid for one-off repairs and who you like to get repairs done by.

Worcester was your favourite firm and one of the cheapest, but you can only use it if you have a Worcester boiler. Eon and Homeserve were least popular. For more on the best and worst providers see the table below.

We found that for nine out of 10 people, it was cheaper to pay for one-off repairs rather than buy

a servicing contract. The average service costs £63 and you're unlikely to need repairs.

Even if you do need repairs, it's likely to cost less than the price of a contract – the cheapest contract is nearly £150 a year (including a service and no callout fees). Boiler cover may become better value as your boiler gets older. Those of you who don't have a contract found you were most satisfied with your local fitter when one-off repairs and servicing were needed. Independents' customer score for one-off repairs was 75%, compared with British Gas scoring 58%. Worcester did well with an average score of 68%.

BOILER SERVICING CONTRACTS

Company	Price ^a	Response time (satisfaction) ^b	Customer score (%) ^c
Worcester (135)	£148		70%
Scottish & Southern (91)	£155		58%
Vaillant (57)	£180		58%
Domestic & General (149)	£174		58%
British Gas/Scottish Gas (3,300)	£156		55%
Heateam (Baxi/Potterton) (104)	£180		55%
Homeserve (220)	£176		46%
Eon (63)	£156		43%

Key: Poor Satisfactory Good

^a Price includes a service and with no callout fees based on 12-monthly payments. ^b Satisfaction with response times. ^c Customer score is based on satisfaction and likelihood of recommending to a friend. Prices for June 2010. Sample size in brackets

MEMBER'S VIEW

PROBLEM MISSED FOR EIGHT YEARS



Jean Willis had her boiler serviced by British Gas every year for eight years. In all that time its engineers failed to spot that the flue had been incorrectly installed in

the first place – by British Gas.

The boiler had been installed in 2000 and eight years later, she finally cancelled her British Gas boiler servicing contract. This year, she asked a local independent to carry out a service.

The local fitter revealed a series of problems. The flue had been installed in such a way that water ran into the boiler, causing it to rust, and newspaper had been used as packing around the flue. British Gas initially offered to cover half the costs of the work, but after a review has reimbursed Mrs Willis for all the work.

BRITISH GAS RESPONDS

'We are very sorry Mrs Willis has had cause to complain about her boiler. We have investigated the matter and the flue had been installed incorrectly, although safety was not compromised at any time.

'We offered to carry out the remedial work but Mrs Willis had already had the work done by a third party.'

British Gas has confirmed that it has reimbursed Mrs Willis for all the work that was done.

OUR RESEARCH

We surveyed 10,778 online Which? Connect members in May/June 2010, about costs, boiler repairs, services, installation and servicing contracts.

Thirteen undercover researchers around the UK asked British Gas to visit and quote for the cost of replacing a boiler. We asked 13 randomly chosen independents to quote for the same job, including the same model of boiler as British Gas quoted for.