



Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
*Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing
and Communities*
Minister for Intergovernmental Relations
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Fiona Taylor
Chief Executive, London Borough of Barking & Dagenham
Barking Town Hall
1 Town Square
Barking
IG11 7LU

4 September 2023

Dear Fiona,

I write following a finding of severe maladministration by the Housing Ombudsman.

In this case you failed to address reports of damp and mould, leaving a family of six living in poor conditions for over two and a half years. You failed to treat this as an urgent complaint despite the family having health issues, including asthma, and there being a one-year-old in the home. The condition of the home became so bad that they were eventually forced to share a single bedroom.

The delays in carrying out the necessary repairs caused by your mishandling of their complaint, understandably caused the family distress, inconvenience, and put their health at risk. Even when it was known that the family was living in one room and having had medical advice, there was no evidence that you had given consideration of a decant to temporary accommodation while the repairs were undertaken.

You have failed your residents. Everyone should be able to expect to live in a decent home, to have complaints taken seriously and repairs carried out in reasonable time. Where residents are especially vulnerable, this should be recognised, and repairs should be prioritised.

We have been clear that social housing residents must be able to put their trust in their landlords to provide a decent home and deal with complaints effectively. The health and safety of residents should be paramount. The Social Housing Regulation Act will bring in a tough new regulatory regime to support this Government's commitment to driving up standards and holding landlords to account for providing social housing residents with decent homes.

I expect you to implement changes to ensure this does not happen again. I will take a personal interest in whether these changes make a tangible difference to your residents.

I am copying this letter to the Rt Hon Dame Margaret Hodge MP, John Cruddas MP, Councillor Darren Rodwell, Councillor Lynda Rice, the Select Committee for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and to the Housing Ombudsman.

Yours ever,

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
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