



Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

*Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and
Communities*

Minister for Intergovernmental Relations

***Department for Levelling Up, Housing and
Communities***

4th Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Mark Washer
CEO Sovereign Housing Association
Sovereign House
Basing View
Basingstoke
RG21 4FA

Via email only

16 August 2023

Dear Mark,

I write following a finding of severe maladministration by the Housing Ombudsman, for your failure to act on a complaint about a leaking roof for 21 months leading to the property becoming uninhabitable.

I was shocked to learn that in this case, the resident contacted you at least thirty-seven times by telephone over 21 months. The ceiling had collapsed, the house was cold, and the resident was left to capture water in buckets every time it rained. You did not give any substantive consideration to the residents physical and mental health challenges and the distress being caused nor did you treat the matter with the urgency it required.

Despite contractor visits, the repairs were not carried out and no explanation given as to why this was. Your offer of compensation was not proportionate or reasonable given the circumstances.

You failed your resident. Your residents should expect their complaint to be acknowledged, the seriousness of it understood and action taken to remedy the issue. Residents should expect that when they report an issue, it will be acted upon with expedience and effectiveness.

This Government has 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 and speedily. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 has brought in a new regulatory regime to support this Government's commitment to driving up standards and holding landlords accountable for providing social housing residents with decent homes.

I understand you have made changes to improve the service that you deliver to your residents. I will be taking a personal interest in how your organisation delivers its responsibilities to its residents.

I am copying this letter to the Housing Ombudsman and the Select Committee for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Gove". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
Minister for Intergovernmental Relations