



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

Jon Rouse
City Director, Stoke on Trent Council
The Civic Centre
Glebe Street
Stoke-on-Trent
ST4 1HH

4 September 2023

Dear Jon,

I write following a finding of severe maladministration by the Housing Ombudsman, for your failure to respond, on two separate occasions, to a stage one complaint. Your failure left a resident and her two vulnerable children in a home with damp and mould.

In this case, your resident did not receive a formal response to her stage one complaint, which concerned your failure to act on the damp and mould in her property. The resident raised her complaint again after the problem persisted, and she again received no formal response. It was only after the Ombudsman was forced to intervene that you responded to the resident, but you still did not address fully the issues she had raised. You also failed to act in accordance with the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

Your inaction left your resident and her two vulnerable children in damp and mouldy conditions. This is unacceptable. You failed to provide the level of service your residents should expect to receive. This is deeply disappointing. When your residents report an issue, especially when vulnerable people are involved, it should be acted upon swiftly and effectively. The tragic case of Awaab Ishak has shown that we must not be complacent about issues that have the potential to damage residents' health.

I 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 swiftly and effectively. The Social Housing Regulation Act is bringing in a tough 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 expect the changes you are implementing to make a significant difference to the service you deliver to your residents. I will be taking a personal interest in how your organisation continues to deliver its responsibilities to its residents.

I am copying this letter to Jonathan Gullis MP, Jack Brereton MP, Jo Gideon MP, Councillor Jane Ashworth, and Councillor Daniel Jellyman, the Select Committee for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and the Housing Ombudsman.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Gove". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'G'.

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