



Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

Minister for Intergovernmental Relations

2 Marsham Street

London

SW1P 4DF

Ruth Cooke
CEO
GreenSquareAccord
Methuen Park
Chippenham
Sn14 0GU

Our reference: MC2023/05214

8 December 2023

Dear Ms Cooke,

I write following six findings of severe maladministration and the launch of a special investigation by the Housing Ombudsman. Six findings of severe maladministration is quite simply appalling. You have failed your residents.

In one case, you failed to deal with a pest infestation for several years. The resident had to repeatedly contact you before you took any action. You inspected a drainpipe and roof space but took no action – eight months after the resident had reported the issue. By the time the resident approached the Ombudsman, 31 months had passed since the issue had been first reported.

In another case, you failed to appropriately deal with a noise complaint from a vulnerable resident. It took seven months to respond, after she took recordings of the noise. I am saddened to hear that your correspondence with the resident was heavy handed and unsympathetic. Your actions caused great distress and inconvenience.

In a third case, the Ombudsman found severe maladministration for your handling of repairs before and after a vulnerable resident moved into a home. You did not properly inspect the property, leaving them with multiple issues including a faulty boiler. Your resident was forced manually to re-start the boiler from the garden, something that was hard to do because of her mobility issues. You knew that roof repairs were needed but there was no evidence that you planned to carry out the repairs, nor that you had discussed them with the resident.

Your handling of these cases fell well below the standard your residents should expect to receive. The Ombudsman found common failings across them all: excessive delays, poor communication together with poor record keeping and a failure to act in accordance with your own policies. Residents' reports should be acted upon swiftly and effectively, especially when the resident concerned is vulnerable. Your repeated failure to take the necessary action expected of you is reflected in the Ombudsman's decision to start a special investigation. I am shocked by the level of failings on your part.

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 have made, including putting in place a more robust complaints handling process, to improve the quality of service you deliver. You must treat all residents with respect and dignity. I will be taking a personal interest in the outcome of the Ombudsman's investigation. My officials will be in touch to arrange for you to meet with the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Housing to discuss your failings.

I am copying this letter to The Rt Hon Michelle Donelan MP, Councillor Richard Clewer (Wiltshire Council), Councillor Ian Thorn (Wiltshire Council), the Housing Ombudsman, and to the Select Committee for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Gove". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

RT HON MICHAEL GOVE MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
Minister for Intergovernmental Relations