



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

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

30 January 2024

Dear Mark,

I write again following four findings of severe maladministration by the Housing Ombudsman. These cases involved inaction and delays in responding to complaints. You have continued to fail your residents.

In the first of the latest cases, you delayed resolving damp and mould issues in your resident's home for over 2 years. The resident suffered with a lung infection and significant upset and distress from the prolonged inaction. He also lost the use of his only bedroom. You failed to follow your own complaints process and your eventual response to the complaints was inadequate as well as delayed.

In the second case, again your complaint handling fell short in responding to a pest infestation. It took 7 years to address the issues in full. A year after establishing that work was needed, the resident was still chasing you to carry it out. You failed also to act on the advice of a pest controller that monthly inspections be carried out. Unbelievably, 6 years after the resident reported the issue, structural issues remained outstanding, and rats had returned. It took another year for you to conduct the works.

The Ombudsman found that you had either dismissed, delayed, or deflected your resident's complaints. This is unacceptable. You should act swiftly and effectively to your resident's complaints especially when the resident concerned is vulnerable.

I understand that you have made some changes, including initiatives to prioritise complex repairs, considering vulnerable resident's needs, and reviewing how you deal with pest infestations and complaints, to improve the quality of service you deliver. I continue to take a personal interest in how you will make the changes needed to give your residents confidence that you will act when they raise concerns with you.

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

Yours ever,

RT HON MICHAEL GOVE MP

Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

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