



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

Anne Waterhouse
CEO Wandle Housing Association
Second Floor, 230 Blackfriars Rd,
London
SE1 8NW

30 January 2024

Dear Anne,

I write to you again following two findings of severe maladministration by the Housing Ombudsman. Both cases concerned your failure to make the necessary repairs to homes, which left vulnerable residents living in poor conditions.

In the first case you failed to repair cracked walls and significant damp and mould for a resident receiving treatment for cancer. You left the family living with cracked walls for over 4 years and damp and mould for 2 years. I was shocked to read that there was such inaction by you in this instance, particularly where the resident was clearly vulnerable. Furthermore, during his investigation, the Ombudsman had to issue a Complaint Handling Failure Order to ensure that the orders made in this case were met. Residents should be confident that issues will be rectified when raised. You failed to deliver on this and to respond to the Ombudsman's orders in a timely way.

In the second case, a resident suffering with chronic asthma and her disabled child were left living in a home also affected by damp and mould. The heating had not been fully functional for at least 16 months. This is unacceptable. Some windows had been defective for 14 months and the ventilation system not fully functional for almost 2 years. When you arranged repairs you did not complete them.

Your handling of these cases fell well below the standard your residents should expect. Complaints must be acted upon swiftly and effectively, especially when the residents concerned are vulnerable. The tragic death of Awaab Ishak has shown that there is no room for complacency about issues that risk residents' health. Social housing residents must be able to put their trust in their landlords to provide a decent home and deal with complaints 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. Landlords must become more reflective, improving their performance, and preventing residents from needing to use the services of the Housing Ombudsman in the first place.

I understand you have made some changes to your processes including completing the Ombudsman's damp and mould self-assessment and have improved your record keeping practices, to improve the quality of service you deliver. I will be taking a personal interest in the changes you make to improve the quality of service you deliver to your residents.

I am copying this letter to Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP, Stephen Hammond MP, Mayor Sarbaz Barznji, Councillor Claire Holland, Councillor Donna Harris, Councillor Ross Garrod, Councillor Anthony Fairclough, the Housing Ombudsman, and to 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 style with a large initial 'M'.

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