



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

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Bayo Dosunmu (CEO Lambeth Council)
Claire Holland (Leader of Lambeth Council)
Lambeth Town Hall
1 Brixton Hill
London
SW2 1RW

9 February 2024

Dear Bayo and Claire,

I write again following six findings of severe maladministration by the Housing Ombudsman, who is also carrying out further scrutiny of your complaints handling. All cases involved an inadequate response to complaints and an unacceptable amount of time taken to carry out repairs. You have seriously failed your residents once again.

In the first of the latest cases, it took 196 days to register the complaint from your resident and 197 weeks to carry out the repair of a broken pipe and associated plastering and redecorating. You did not provide an explanation to your resident as to why it took almost 4 years for you to complete the necessary repairs to their home. Your record keeping also fell short.

In the second case, you took 8 months to respond to your resident's concerns about a damaged window. Despite the surveyor approving the replacement window, you took 1,315 days to do so, when this should have been completed within 90 days. Various excuses were given for the delay by the contractors carrying out the work, including telling your resident that the replacement window had been stolen in transit. You marked the work as having been completed when it had not even started and put-up scaffolding for a year and a half without conducting any works, before removing it again as it was not needed for the replacement. Again, 4 years after the fault was reported, the repair remained outstanding, despite your resident chasing on numerous occasions.

In a third case, the Ombudsman found severe maladministration for your response to a vulnerable resident's outstanding repairs. You left them living with damp and mould, a damaged door, and blocked drains. You failed to consider the resident's vulnerability when proposing a decant and your lack of movement on this issue unreasonably delayed repairs. Unbelievably, this situation was not rectified for 5 years. Yet again, you missed the opportunity to put things right at an early stage and prevent the frustration and distress suffered by your residents.

Your handling of these cases fell well below the standard of service your residents should expect to receive. The Ombudsman found excessive delays and inadequate responses in all the cases. Residents' reports should be acted upon swiftly and effectively, especially when the resident concerned is vulnerable. The repeated failure to take the necessary action expected of you is reflected in the Ombudsman's decision to start an additional investigation.

I expect the changes you have made, including initiatives to address damp and mould, Home MOTs and dedicated complaints officers, to improve the quality of service you deliver. Following the

publication of the paragraph 11 investigation by the Ombudsman, I request that you meet with Baroness Scott to provide an update on the effectiveness of these actions.

I am copying this letter to Helen Hayes MP, Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP, and Florence Eshalomi MP. I am also copying Councillor Donna Harris and Mayor Sarbaz Barznji, 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 style with a large initial 'M'.

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