



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

Dawn Carter-McDonald
CEO Hackney Council
1 Hillman St,
London
E8 1DY

9 February 2024

Dear Dawn,

I write following a finding of severe maladministration by the Housing Ombudsman. The case concerns your failure to make the necessary repairs to a home which left vulnerable residents living in poor conditions.

In this case you failed to repair properly a leaking roof for over three years, causing mildew, furniture mould and bad odours. Often, all five members of the family had to sleep in one room. These conditions caused the family substantial distress and contributed to one of the children developing respiratory issues.

You failed to address the root causes of the issue and when a repair was made to the leak, the problem reoccurred. Following further failed repairs, the leak returned after the resident had re-decorated her home. After dealing with her subsequent complaint, you failed to act swiftly to make additional and necessary repairs, only partially completing them 21 months after the leak was first reported. Because of the ongoing nature of the problem, the resident's ability to claim on her insurance for some of the damage to her home was also affected.

Your handling of this case fell significantly below the standard your residents should expect and I understand that the Ombudsman has also been concerned about your overall handling of complaints regarding leaks. 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 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. 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 that you have made some changes to your processes including launching an action plan committing to inspect all reports of damp and mould within five working days and introducing an Alternative Dispute Resolution approach. 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 Diane Abbott MP, Dame Meg Hillier MP, Mayor Caroline Woodley, Councillor Michael Levy, Councillor Zoe Garbett, 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