



Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing & Communities

**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP**  
*Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and  
Communities*  
*Minister for Intergovernmental Relations*  
Fry Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF

Sharon Lea  
Chief Executive  
Hammersmith & Fulham Council  
Town Hall, King Street  
Hammersmith  
London  
W6 9JU

22 March 2024

Dear Sharon,

I write again to set out my grave concerns following the Housing Ombudsman's Special Report on Hammersmith and Fulham Council.

The report was prompted by the Ombudsman making twelve findings of severe maladministration between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023. These cases involved repairs and complaint handling. The Ombudsman was also concerned about your communication, attitude, and lack of accountability to your residents.

I was very concerned to read that more recent analysis by the Ombudsman has shown residents waiting many months, even years, for you to respond to complaints and carry out repairs. I was incredibly disappointed to read that you had a maladministration rate of 88%. Your complaint handling also fell short, resulting in 40% of cases not being investigated as they should have been and compensation offered was not in line with your own policy.

The effect of your failings on your residents cannot be underestimated, together with the distress and frustration they must have suffered. Many were left feeling unsafe in their own homes, fearful not only for their safety, but that of their children. You failed to recognise or understand the detrimental impact ongoing issues had on both the mental and physical wellbeing of your residents. You failed to consider the impact of not only poor-quality repairs, but extensive delays, inadequate responses, and broken promises, particularly on vulnerable residents.

You missed opportunities to put things right at an early stage, in one case resulting in rodents having unfettered access to a resident's home. In another case one of your residents who had two children, one under one year old, was left with windows in a poor state of disrepair to the degree that they were letting in water and causing damp and mould. Such was the state of disrepair, the resident was fearful that the glass would fall out. Unbelievably, it took you 91 weeks to carry out the necessary works. In 26 of the 33 cases listed in the report, there were delays, often extensive, in the resident receiving a complaint response at either stage 1 or 2, or sometimes both. You cannot be complacent where the safety of your residents is at stake. This is unacceptable.

I note that you have fully accepted the Ombudsman's findings, are working with them to put things right and have apologised and compensated the residents concerned.

You have undertaken to deliver the recommendations, including setting up a 'Housing Hub' to improve customer service and establishing a Chief Executive-led Taskforce to look more broadly at your provision. I expect these and the other changes you are planning to improve the service you deliver.

Given the severity of the findings in this report, I understand that the Ombudsman has brought this to the attention of the Regulator of Social Housing to consider whether there is evidence of any breach of the regulatory standards. My officials will monitor developments. We cannot allow this wholly unacceptable situation to recur.

I would like you to meet as soon as possible with the Minister for Social Housing to discuss the findings of the Ombudsman's report and the steps you are taking to improve your performance. Officials will be in contact to arrange this.

I am copying this letter to Andy Slaughter MP, Rt Hon Greg Hands MP, Councillor Stephen Cowen, Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler, the Housing Ombudsman, and 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  
and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations