



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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Ian McDermott
Chief Executive
Peabody
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London
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22 March 2024

Dear Ian,

I write again with concern following a further four findings of severe maladministration by the Housing Ombudsman regarding how you handled complaints, adaptations, and repairs. This follows my letter of 30 January this year and my most recent letter of 11 March regarding outstanding remediation works.

In the first case you took 211 working days to respond to a complaint about cladding. It took 9 months for you to escalate the complaint to stage 1, only doing this following 24 emails from the resident and the intervention of her MP. Even then, you failed to address the resident's concerns. The complaint was escalated to stage 2, but you performed no better. In the first instance you offered no compensation before eventually awarding the full amount available under your policy.

In the second case your failures caused significant distress and inconvenience to a family who were left in a cold, damp, and mouldy home for two years. The family included a disabled member who had to go without the use of their wet room. You took 14 months to repair the leaking roof and a further 12 months to install insulation. There was a six-month delay in obtaining asbestos reports and another 6 months delay in the roof being replaced.

The third case saw a resident and his severely disabled daughter left in 'intolerable' conditions after you failed to carry out adaptation work to their home. This meant your resident was forced to carry his daughter up and down stairs as their property was not adapted to meet their needs. You failed to understand the urgency, nor did you assess the impact of the process on your residents. I was shocked to learn that the necessary adaptations had still not been carried out at the time the Ombudsman made his determination.

The fourth case concerned your failure to investigate your handling of repairs to a resident's property in a timely way, leaving her living in horrible conditions. Damp and mould destroyed personal items, food, and furniture. Worryingly, your own report described her home as being in a "very dangerous state". Despite this you took no formal action to resolve the issues. The compensation you offered was also inadequate.

Your handling of these cases fell significantly below the standard your residents should expect to receive. When your residents raise an issue, especially when vulnerable people are involved, it should be acted upon swiftly, effectively and with the appropriate level of care. 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.

I expect the changes you are making, which include formulation of specialist, centralised complaint and record handling teams and review of your vulnerabilities policy, to improve the quality of service you deliver to your residents. My officials will be in contact to arrange a meeting with Baroness Scott to discuss the findings of the Ombudsman's report and the steps you are taking to improve your services.

I am copying this letter to the Housing Ombudsman and to 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
Minister for Intergovernmental Relations