



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

Bronwen Rapley
CEO
Onward Homes
1A Enterprise Way
Accrington
BB5 0FL

Our reference: MC2023/05216

7 December 2023

Dear Ms Rapley,

I write following a finding of severe maladministration by the Housing Ombudsman. In this case, you failed to make the necessary repairs to a vulnerable resident's heating such that she was unable to turn it off during the summer months. The heat in her home was so extreme that it led to the radiator valves melting and caused her to collapse on more than one occasion. I am shocked and saddened to read that she also suffered a burn, and back and hip injuries as a result. Her son believed she would have died had he not found her.

You failed your resident. Your handling of this case fell well below the standard your residents should expect. It took you far too long to respond to your resident, leaving her in a vulnerable position, causing her significant distress and leading her to sustain injuries. This is completely unacceptable. Complaints must be acted upon swiftly and effectively, especially when the resident concerned is vulnerable. Further to your failures to make the repairs, your record keeping was substandard, and your offer of compensation was inadequate.

The Social Housing Regulation Act, which has just completed its passage through Parliament, 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.

I expect the changes you have made, including putting in place more support for vulnerable people, to improve the quality of service you deliver. You must treat all residents with respect and dignity. I will be taking a personal interest in how your organisation continues to deliver its responsibilities.

My officials will be in touch to arrange for you to meet with the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Housing to discuss your failings. I am copying this letter to the Housing Ombudsman, and to the Select Committee for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Yours,

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