

April 2022

 With head
& heart



Tenants News



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Ark[®] People Housing Care



arkha.org.uk

Tenant Feedback



Annual Return Charter (ARC) Report 20-21 - Tenant Feedback

In October 2021, we sent our Landlord Report on Ark's performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter (for the year April 2020 to March 2021) to all tenants.

We also sent a feedback form so we could consider what we might need to change for the 2022-23 Report.

1. Early Consultation

Prior to the annual report being drafted, the housing management team set up an online survey to get feedback on what tenants would like the annual report to contain. The survey was completed by **19 tenants**

Tenants advised they would like the following to be contained in the annual report 20-21:

- Reasons for poor wait times for repairs
- Number of resolved/unresolved complaints
- Why repair complaints are ignored
- How garden and cleaning contractors are monitored as tenants do not feel they are getting value for money

In relation to the **presentation** of the report, **16 respondents** gave positive feedback, complementing the lay out and clear and informative information.

The above feedback from tenants was shared with members of the ARC report working group in advance of them preparing their departments sections for the ARC report.

2. Findings

46 tenants completed and returned the ARC feedback form.

- **87% of respondents** advised that they liked the 20-21 ARC report
- **13%** advising that they did not.

Presentation of ARC Report 21-22

- 75% respondents liked the presentation
- 9% respondents did not like the presentation
- 16% respondents did not comment on the presentation

The reasons tenants did not like the presentation are detailed below:

- Performance of the Repairs Service
- Not to my needs

Content of ARC Report 20-21

- 57% respondents advised they were happy with the content of the report
- 24% respondents advised that there should be more information included in the report
- 4% respondents advised that they were unsure if anything else should be included
- 15% respondents did not comment on the content

The feedback tenants provided about content is detailed below:

- Clearer information about what work Ark is planning on doing and where it will be carried out for the next year
- A breakdown of mainstream and supported tenant satisfaction responses
- Information on why Ark compare poorly against the Scottish average on meeting SHQS
- Information on future planning of green heating, heat pumps exchangers etc.

Tenant Involvement

- 13 respondents advised they would be interested in being involved in a focus group for future ARC reports
- 12 out of the 13 respondents were supported tenants and 1 mainstream tenant
- 29 respondents advised they would not be interested in being involved in a focus group for future ARC reports
- 4 respondents did not complete this question

The Housing and Asset team will work in partnership to address the issues that have been identified.



The Noise App



What is the Noise App? The Noise App is developed and powered by RHE Global. It is a tool designed for tenants to record noise nuisances on their Apple or Android smartphone. The App utilises the smartphone microphone(s) to record a sample of the “Noise Nuisance“ for a sample of up to 30 seconds, Tenants can make several recordings which can be associated with the same noise source or different sources.

The Noise App provides a very efficient means of taking good quality recordings of noise nuisances such as a dogs barking, loud music, parties, anti-social behaviour, machinery, vehicles, construction or industrial noise. This empowers noise sufferers to gather evidence for use by their Housing Officer.

How to access the Noise App? If you are experiencing noise nuisance you can report this to your housing officer through the Noise app.

Download

To download the app go to the ‘App Store’ for iPhone users or the ‘Play Store’ for android users. Search for ‘The Noise App’ and tap ‘Get’ or ‘Install’ to download the app.

Register

Open the app and click on ‘Get Started’, select your country of residence and then click ‘Create an Account’. First type in your Ark Housing Association as the investigator and choose it from the drop-down menu. You will then need to enter the email address you wish to use on the noise app service. If you have used another one of our services in the past you will be allowed to use those credentials to log in, if not you will need to complete the account creation process.

Once the required information has been entered an email will be sent to your email address asking you to confirm your account. Once your account has been confirmed please return to the app and login. Agree to the terms of service and enter you home address, this will be provided to your housing officer so they can process the complaint.

Language

To change language, once logged in choose the menu button on the top left of the ‘Noise Diary’ screen. You will see the option ‘Language’, here you can choose your desired language.

Submitting a noise complaint

There are 7 important steps to take for sending a noise complaint via the Noise App.

- Record
- Duration
- Source
- Location
- Intensity and commentary
- Address
- Confirmation

If you use the Noise App, please continue to make recordings and entries for as long as the problem continues.

Please contact the housing team to make them aware if you are experiencing any nuisance or disturbance and they can support you to sign up to the Noise App to send over recordings or discuss alternative methods of reporting.

The housing team are available on **0131 478 8146** or email housing@arkha.org.uk



New Tenant Experience



William moved into one of Ark's properties at the end of summer 2021.

William found lockdown really difficult and with the end of school approaching he moved into his own supported accommodation. This was a really big adjustment for William. Ark support staff and housing were really flexible they enabled him to move in gradually.

William is enjoying having his own independence, he is particularly enjoying doing household tasks.

Mr Currie moved into one of Ark's properties in Edinburgh.

As with all tenants the housing officer carried out a settling visit with Mr. Currie to get general feedback on becoming a new Ark tenant and check if there was any issues that he needed assistance with to help settling into his new home.

Mr Currie said that "the property was clean and freshly decorated, which took a lot of stress off me so that I could just move in and get settled. The application and sign up process was all very friendly and very helpful. Nothing seemed to be too much of a problem."



Health & Safety



About reporting an accident or incident



Always remember to speak to someone if you have suffered an injury, had an accident or been involved in an accident.

- An **accident** is an **unplanned event** that leads to injury damage or loss
- An **incident** is an **unplanned event** that had the potential to injure but didn't on this occasion.

Why do I have to report and talk about accidents and incidents?



- If you are being supported by Ark at the time of the incident or accident Ark has a legal duty to document this to investigate what went wrong and to try and prevent it from happening again.
 - Talking to Ark staff about incidents and accidents that have happened to you lets Ark staff know if you are having too many accidents and incidents during support. When not being supported, there may be a reason for this that needs to be discussed with other people.
 - It may mean that there may have to be changes to your care plan to keep you and Ark staff safe
 - Ark will help you to make your home and daily activities as safe as possible for you after an incident or accident.
-

Stock Condition Survey



Ark Stock Condition Survey 2021-2022

What is the stock condition survey?

Our stock condition surveys are carried out on average every 4 years and are used to assess the main internal and external parts of your home, including the kitchen, windows, roof covers etc. which tells us when they are likely to need replacing.

Why did we do it? Condition surveys help us plan what components need replacing and when. This ensures your home is maintained at the right time and that we have the funds in place to successfully carry out any replacements.

Any energy data collected will enable us to target the homes that need the most help in improving their efficiency, saving you money on your heating bills as well as benefiting the environment.

What happens next? We have recently completed our stock condition surveys and have now begun the process of analysing the data collected. The results from these surveys are being used to identify our short,

medium and long term plans for upgrading our properties, this will include works such as Kitchen, Bathroom, Window and Door Replacement Programmes. We hope to have completed analysing the data and have an investment plan produced in the first half of 2022.

Does this mean I will be getting improvement works? Not necessarily. We have collected all the information about the remaining life of various components such as kitchens, bathrooms, windows, boilers, etc. this information will give us a short, medium and long term views of future maintenance and improvement programmes. If your home is included in any improvement programmes we will be in touch with you to let you know. We also hope to have our short term improvement programme available for you to check if your home is included for any works.



Moving On



Give Notice in Writing

We need at least 28 days written notice. When we receive the written notice we will write to confirm the end date. There is a Tenancy Termination form that we will ask be completed.

Pre-Termination Home Visit

We will contact the tenant to and arrange an appointment to visit. This is a property inspection to make sure the house is in a good condition.

Rent

Rent must be paid up to and including the tenancy end date.

Keys

Return all keys for the property to us before or on the agreed day the tenancy ends.

After You Leave

Once the property has been vacated we will carry out an inspection.



Further Advice

If you are planning to move and you would like more information please contact the housing team, by phone on 0131 478 8146 or e-mail: housing@arkha.org.uk.

Looking for Ways to Find a Move?

The housing team can also give advice on some of the different housing options:

- Mutual exchange
- Transfer to another Ark property
- Apply to for rented housing with another registered social landlord
- Low cost home ownership initiatives out with Ark.

“We Expect the Property To Be Left in Good Condition”

Complaints Update



Between October & December Ark received 20 complaints..

Out of the 20 complaints-

- 16 about Care and Support
- 4 about other departments

Of these complaints-

- 11 we agreed with
- 3 we partly agreed with
- 6 we did not agree with

15 of these complaints were handled within 5 working days.

4 of these complaints required more investigation and were dealt within 20 working days. 1 of the complaints needed more examination.

If you would like further information you can visit Arks webpage and go to the “About Us” section.

There is now complaints training for staff. The Compliance and Improvement Business Partner will continue to provide support to individuals that manage complaints to ensure the procedure is followed.

If you want to know more about the complaints process please contact the Compliance and Improvement Team who will be happy to help.

David Boucher
Compliance & Improvement
Business Partner
07510923318



You can view the full Complaints Handling Procedure guide here-
<https://bit.ly/3KC1Jq7>

Or you can get intouch with your Care & Support Manager or Participation Officer

Near Me



During the past two years, organisations in housing, health and social care have developed their digital services to give improved access to appointments and advice previously delivered face to face.

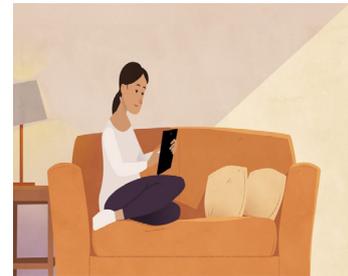
One example of this is Near Me, a video-consulting service which enables service-users to attend appointments from home or wherever they find private and convenient.

Near Me has been approved as confidential and safe by the Scottish Government and NHS Scotland. Appointments are not recorded and no personal information is stored by the system.

Recently, at Ark Housing both new and existing tenants have attended viewings, pre-allocation meetings, settling in visits and annual house visits using Near Me.

All that is required to access an appointment on Near Me is a device like a smart phone, tablet or laptop and an internet connection with up to date browser such as google, chrome or safari.

The benefits reported including no travel time to appointments and less time away from work or other obligations.



Importantly, as Covid 19 restrictions and guidance change, Near Me enables service users to attend appointments safely with no risk of infection.

Further information and instructions on this service are sent prior to appointments and although phone calls and some meetings in person are still happening, Near Me is another convenient service for tenants at Ark:

To find out more, please see:

www.nearme.scot

Energy Advice



Worried about your energy bills?

Home Energy Scotland may be able to help you.

Home Energy Scotland helps people in Scotland create warmer homes, reduce their energy bills, and lower their carbon footprint. We are funded by the Scottish Government and managed by Energy Saving Trust.

This increase in gas prices has forced some energy suppliers in Great Britain out of business. By the end of December last year, a total of 28 energy companies had gone bust.



What does it mean for your energy bills?

On 3 February, Ofgem announced that the cap will increase from 1 April 2022 for approximately 22 million customers.

What can I do to reduce my energy bills?

We recommend that you try and reduce how much energy you currently use at home – for example, turning off the lights when you leave the room or reducing the number of times you use your washing machine in one week.

What can the government do about the energy crisis?

We're calling on the UK Government to provide emergency funding for households that need it the most, helping to protect people from rising energy costs now.

Get advice you can trust

For more information from Home Energy Scotland call free on

0808 808 2282 lines are open Monday - Friday, 8am - 8pm, and Saturday 9am - 5pm.

Data Protection



In 2018 we wrote to all tenants to tell them about how Ark deals with information that we collect and hold about tenants and their families. We sent a copy of our Fair Processing Notice.

Following the changes in the Data Protection Regulations, we have now updated the Fair Processing Notice. It is now called the Privacy Notice and a copy of this, along with a copy of our Retention Policy and Data Protection Policy can be download from our website.

www.arkha.org.uk/freedom-of-information/guide-to-information/

As well as making you aware of how we process your data, we must also ensure that members of your family are aware that we will be processing their data too.

Accordingly for any children over 12, please can you ensure that they read a copy of the Privacy Notice. For any children under 12, please can you explain this to them and thereafter note that we will be processing data relating to your child/children under the terms of the Privacy Notice.

If you would like a copy/copies of the Privacy Notice, please contact us and we can send them to you. **0131 447 9027**

Housing Team Update



Kate McLoughlin joined the housing services team mid-February as a Temporary Housing Officer. Kate is based in the North of Scotland and will be hybrid working from home and Ark's Forres office. The areas that Kate will be predominantly covering will be Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray but will occasionally be covering other areas across Ark Housing stock.

Kate can be contacted by email Kate.mcloughlin@arkha.org.uk or by phone **07715069639**

Furniture Packages



Ark previously provided furniture packages at the start of a tenancy but it has come to Arks attention that service users had not requested replacement bedroom furniture.

This could cause potential issues with the current furniture package system whereby, there are service users claiming Housing Benefit for the charge and not using the furniture package as they are buying their own furniture as they have funds available or are not fully aware of their package entitlement which effectively means Ark are collecting Housing Benefit for the charge but not using it.

Tenants financial circumstances/needs may change over time therefore it shows the importance of reviewing the furniture packages.

Following a recent review of the furniture package Ark Housing Department are looking to streamline the furniture process wherever possible and cut down on inventory items to minimise the package entitlement and subsequent service charge

To ensure value for money Ark will therefore **remove the furniture charge from the monthly service charges from 1st April 2022.**

The full details of the new charges will be provided with the annual rent increase notification.

Ark will continue to provide items of furniture in the communal areas of the property tenants live in so there will therefore still be a reduced furniture charge as part of the monthly charges for these communal items.

Any new sole tenants will now not receive a furniture package – should tenants need financial assistance they should approach DWP for grants.

Furniture packages will remain in place for shared properties, however for any new shared tenancy this will be for communal goods only and we will aim to phase out those who have packages including bedroom items wherever possible.



Changes to Tenancy



Changes to Tenancy Charges 2022-23

Each year Ark has to consider whether it needs to make any changes to the rents or service charges.

The Finance Sub Committee was presented with a proposal paper in November 2021. Following this discussion, it was agreed that we would consult with tenants on 2 options; a 2.5% increase or a 3% increase.

In mid-December a Rent Increase Proposal Briefing Paper, which explained the rationale behind the options, and questionnaire were sent to 428 tenants:

- 142 general needs tenants
- 206 supported tenants and 80 guardians were sent an Easy Read version

This year we received 44 responses, 15 more than last year. 24 were from general needs tenants and 20 were from supported tenants and more detail about the responses is given below.

By mid January we had also got some more detailed information about what other landlords were thinking about.

- 8 councils said they were consulting on options between 1.8% and 4.5%; however, 2 said they were planning to maintain a rent freeze (Midlothian & Aberdeen).
- 27 RSLs said they were consulting on options between 1.9% and 5%.

Based on the feedback and comparability with other organisations we agreed that the rents should be increased by 2.5%.

What happens next?

Letters have been sent to all Ark tenants to advise them of their individual rent and service charges that they will be liable to pay from 1st April 2022.

This year, Ark staff will have to verify any change of housing costs on the Landlord Portal.

If you experience any difficulty updating your journal please contact a member of the housing team on **0131 478 8146** and they will be able to support you to make the changes.



Reporting Repairs



Monday to Friday: 8:30am to 4:30pm

Please telephone 0131 478 8143.

When reporting a repair you should give as much detail as possible in order that the work required can be properly assessed.

You will be informed of the length of time in which your repairs should be completed and the name of the Contractor who will attend. You should also give a contact telephone number, to enable the Contractor to contact you to arrange access.

To confirm your reported repair has been processed ARK will post you a Maintenance Works Order Acknowledgement form which will provide details of: the Contractor, the Fault Reported, and the Target Date for the Contractor to attend; as well as giving you the opportunity to provide feedback upon our performance in dealing with the repair.



Reporting an Emergency Repair at Night, Weekends and Holidays:

All Emergency Repairs required **outside normal Office Hours** should be reported by telephoning:

Area	Emergency Contractor
Forres	Heatcare 01343 842 042
Aberdeen, Buckie, Fraserburgh, Inverurie, Macduff, Peterhead and Portlethen	Heatcare 01343 842 042
Arbroath, Blairgowrie, Forfar and Perth, Clackmannanshire, Falkirk, Fife, Lothian's, Scottish Borders	All in 1 Property Maintenance 07756 147 365 or 07810 883 676

TIS Scrutiny



Ark's Tenant Scrutiny Group

Why you should get involved?

Tenant Scrutiny is about tenants being actively involved in reviewing how housing services are being delivered, and even more importantly, how they can be improved.

Tenants of housing associations and councils across Scotland have been part of scrutiny groups for many years now, leading to improved housing services, policies, and procedures for all their landlord tenants.

An update from Ark on what has happened to date is included below but to summarise the newly formed scrutiny group has been looking at how to improve the open spaces and landscaped areas near tenants' homes.

This has led to the new contract specification being developed, having their views included and hopefully a better service in the months and years ahead.

We would love to see more tenants join the group to review how Ark services are working, how satisfied tenants are and to give your views on how Ark could improve things for you, your neighbours and other Ark tenants across Scotland.

Meetings are once a month for 1 - 2 hours, online via zoom, so no need to leave the comfort of your own home. If you would like to find out more and get involved, please contact Ark's housing team on **0131 478 8160**.

This is a fantastic opportunity to meet fellow tenants, Ark staff and TIS to share your views and ideas. So, go on, why not give it a go?

The logo for TIS, with 'T' in purple, 'I' in orange, and 'S' in orange. The 'I' is stylized with a small house shape at its base.

Scrutiny Update



Update on the work of the Tenant Scrutiny Group

In the summer of 2021, we appointed **Tenants Information Services (TIS)** to support us with relaunching our Tenant Scrutiny Group. We advertised for tenant volunteers and managed to get a number of tenants interested in being involved. These tenants come from a wide range of developments across the county. TIS held a number of introductory sessions in the summer of 2021. These were done over Zoom.



Progress to Date

The group held their first meeting in autumn. At this first meeting there was a wide ranging discussion about what areas of service the group wanted to look at in more details.

At the second meeting it was agreed that the key area they wanted to focus on was the Landscaping Contract as those in the group agreed that this was one area of service provision that they felt was inconsistent and did not deliver value for money.





Meeting 3 was held on 25th January 2022. 4 tenants attended from 3 sites (Forfar/ Forres/ Grangemouth) and 2 lots of apologies were received.

Dave Gray, Head of Asset Management, attended to give an overview of the procurement for the new landscaping contract. TIS gave feedback that:

- The meeting went well and tenants were thrilled to hear about the new landscape specification/ tender process
- They are keen to be involved in monitoring this when it is in place .
- Having input into the type of improvements to be made in local areas and seek other tenant views on this
- They are keen to meet with other Heads of Service, find out more and look at other service areas, especially repairs and this will be considered once this project is completed.

Next steps

- Members are going to take some photos of current landscaped areas.
- Dave is going to ask officers to do same when they are on site.
- Group will give views on improvements to be made.
- Group will review sheets to be used by inspectors when checking work done / quality etc.
- Group are considering if they could do a survey of tenants to find out what they think of service / improvements they may like and this will be discussed at the next meeting.
- A minimum of another 3 meetings are still due to be held at the end of which the group will provide a report on their findings and recommendations.

Richard Hopkins, Forres.

I am a member of the Ark tenant's scrutiny group. I have been a tenant at Forres for over 28 years. Over that time I have become more dissatisfied and critical of Ark than ever before. Ark does not have any real kind of effective scrutiny other than complaints in my opinion. I think a scrutiny group is long overdue and I would urge tenants to join the scrutiny group as we are very short of members. If you think Ark is great then fine but quite a few of my friends and neighbours are very cynical about Ark yet aren't part of the scrutiny group. Please give the group a chance and take part to give your opinions and complaints/compliments about Ark. It's an opportunity for tenants to say what they think of Ark and maybe influence Ark.



Housing Team Contacts
housing@arkha.org.uk
0131 478 8146



Asset Team Contacts
repairs@arkha.org.uk
0131 478 8143

The Scottish Housing Regulator checks that Ark is providing a good Housing Service. Their Significant Performance Failures factsheet provides more information on how to raise concerns with them. This can be found on our website but if you want a copy, contact us and we can send one to you.



**Scottish Housing
Regulator**

www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk
shr@scottishhousingregulator.gsi.gov.uk
0141 242 5642

If you made a complaint to Ark and you want something more to be done, you can ask the Ombudsman to look at your complaint.



enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk
0800 377 7330