



Tenants News



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Welcome

Bobby Duffy
Ark Chief Executive



Welcome to the Spring edition of the Ark Newsletter.

I hope you are well and continue to be satisfied with the services we provide to you.

In previous editions of the newsletter, I told you about the Programme for Improvement; our programme for delivering the quality improvements we have identified across Ark. During this period we have again made steady progress against delivering the improvements detailed in our business plan, in particular the recruitment and retention of our employees and making Ark a good place to work.

We have improved our recruitment processes; we have improved recruitment methods to make the process more efficient for prospective employees and we have identified the key issues employees told us is important to them in their employment experience with Ark and we will work to put measures in place that ensures Ark remains a good place to work. For anyone in employment, the pandemic has thrown up many challenges as they have had to adjust to significant and immediate changes to working practices and had to balance that between following Government rules,

particularly around self-isolation and worrying about the impact of Covid-19 on themselves and their families; this is a lot of pressure for anyone to contend with and our people that work for Ark are no different, this too has been their experience of working throughout the pandemic.

As customers of Ark, I have no doubt that you experienced some disruption to the services we provide to you at the beginning of the pandemic, as we moved to providing critical services only. Later in 2020 guidance changed and we were able to begin more face to face service provision and services that had been stopped, started up again; however the rollercoaster of the pandemic throughout 2021 and the increase in restrictions periodically, meant that our people had to continually change or delay some services; I know they worked hard to keep this to a minimum, but this was not always in our control, as our supply chains were also severely impacted by the pandemic.

One of the main themes that has emerged through this period is that employees have re-evaluated what is important to them in their employment and many across sectors have made decisions to move employer to ensure their changed employment expectations can be met; what employees now want more than before is flexibility

and work life balance and the pre Covid-19 time spent travelling to and from a work place is now seen as unnecessary and not a good use of time. The past two years has brought about permanent changes in employment that we at Ark now need to respond to.

We have not escaped this change in expectation at Ark and we will respond positively to it; some colleagues have made decisions to move jobs and we have brought in new colleagues to take on their roles; however the employment markets in which Ark operates have become more challenging and it may have taken a little longer to fill some posts; our social care posts in particular are challenging to recruit to and we are implementing a range of measures that will enable us to fill these posts as quickly as possible.

So what does this mean for our customers?

I would like to think the disruption to your service has been kept to a minimum and where you have experienced disruption it has not negatively impacted you. Delivering excellent customer service remains a key priority and if we are not meeting your expectations, please tell us about it. Despite the many challenges they

have faced throughout this pandemic from both a work and a personal perspective, our teams have worked very hard to ensure good quality customer services continued to be provided and it is right that we recognise that.

So the key messages from me today are to thank all Ark customers for your patience and understanding for the changes we have had to make to your services at times, over this very challenging period; to ask you to join me in saying a massive thank you to every single employee in Ark for their huge efforts and commitment and for doing their very best during this period and to reassure you we are working very hard to ensure we can recruit and retain excellent people in Ark, that will deliver the high quality services to you, our customers.

Bobby

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.
-

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**

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



There may come a time when you want to move on, perhaps if your home is too big or too small for your needs or you need to move to be nearer family or friends. Before you leave your home there are steps that must be followed to end your tenancy:

Give Notice in Writing

We need at least 28 days written notice which is taken from the date we receive the notice. If the tenancy is joint, the other tenant must give us notice at the same time or continue the tenancy. 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. At the visit we will discuss and let tenants know if they have to decorate or carry out any repairs before they leave.



Condition We Expect the Property To Be Left in

- Everything belonging to the tenant must be removed from the property and garden, including any rubbish, unwanted furniture etc.
- If the tenant planned to remove any items they have fitted, such as a door, door handle, light switch, or special light fitting etc., they must ensure that they replace the item with a suitable alternative.
- All nails, screws, tacks, posters etc. must be removed from walls, doors, ceilings and floors, and any damage repaired.
- Floor coverings laid by the tenant must be removed, unless, it has been agreed that the items may be left for the next tenant.
- Shelving units that are no longer required may be left in place, so long as this is agreed at the pre-termination inspection.
- Property should be left in a clean and tidy condition, especially the kitchen units, worktops and sanitary ware.



Rent

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

- Any standing order or direct debit for rent payments will need to be cancelled after the last rent payment is due.
- Tell the council for Housing Benefit or the D.W.P for Universal Credit that you are moving.

Keys

Return all keys for the property to us before or on the agreed day the tenancy ends. Rent will be charged at the daily rate for each day after the tenancy end date if keys are received late.



Other Important Tasks to Do

- **Meter Readings:** Arrange for a final meter reading for gas and electricity supplies. Notify the utility supplier of the move date and tell us who the supplier is too.
- **Redirection of Mail:** Arrange with Royal Mail to re-direct the mail, giving at least 1 week's notice.
- **Telephone & TV:** Contact any telephone, cable or satellite TV suppliers to arrange for final bills. Update the T.V licence if applicable
- **Council Tax:** Notify the local authority for Council Tax that you have moved home.

After You Leave

Once the property has been vacated we will carry out an inspection. If repairs and redecoration which were recorded at the pre-termination inspection as being the tenant's responsibility were not carried out, or we find things left behind, then we will arrange for any work required to be done, and the tenant will be sent an account for the full costs of the work.



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.

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 at their meeting of 24th 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.

Q1- What Option should Ark increase the rent level by? 9 respondents left this question blank, with 5 of those stating the said that there should be a rent freeze.

- 3 respondents said because Ark is a charity that will also struggle with rising costs the increase should be 3%.
- 32 respondents said the rents should increase by 2.5%.

Q2-Do you think the increase represents value for money?

- 6 respondents left this question blank
- 15 respondents said no
- 23 said yes

Q3 – Did the briefing paper give you enough information?

- 12 respondents left this question blank
- 4 respondents said no
- 28 said yes

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 RSL'S 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.

If you pay by [Direct Debit](#) Ark will ensure that the charge is updated automatically.

If you are entitled to [Housing Benefit](#) which gets paid directly to Ark, we will have notified the Local Authority of the change and you will get a letter from them confirming the change. However if you get housing benefit paid directly to you, you must notify the Local Authority of the change.

If you pay by [standing order](#) you will need to update your payment order with your bank directly.

If you get [universal credit housing costs](#) you will need to use your journal to complete the [to-do by the end of your current assessment period](#), to ensure you get the correct housing payment.

Once you have selected '[Confirm your housing costs](#)' you should complete the '[Confirm your housing costs](#)' to-do, on the '[date of change](#)' of rent.



It is important you do not use the '[Change of circumstances](#)' to-do to report an annual rent change.

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

Near Me



During the past two years, a number of organisations in housing, health and social care have developed their digital services to give tenants, patients and service-users 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. They have also received housing advice on issues like debt, arrears and benefits on this platform. 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. There is no need to set up an account or download an app. A link is sent to your email or mobile and by tapping or clicking on it; you enter a virtual waiting room. Instructions appear on screen directing you to select the tab highlighted and give permissions for your use of the camera and microphone, enabling you to access the appointment.

Feedback from a wide range of service users at a recent training session on Near Me revealed wider use of Near Me, particularly amongst the over-fifties. It also highlighted the benefits reported including no travel time to appointments and less time away from work or other obligations. In surveys, service users also said that the video-call format of Near Me enabled them to be supported by a second person attending remotely and meant that they would not have to arrange transport or support to attend. 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



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. This article tells you the key themes that came from the feedback.

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**

- **12 tenants** confirmed that the annual report is useful as it provides them with all the information they want to know about
- **2 tenants** advised that it did not provide them with enough information
- **5 tenants** advised that they did not read the report.

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
- 79% respondents wanted the report to include information on repairs and maintenance
- 74% respondents wanted the report to include information on how Ark spends their money
- 68% respondents wanted the report to include information about value for money
- 63% respondents wanted the report to include information on Scottish Housing Quality Standards
- 58% respondents wanted the report to include information about upcoming Ark developments
- 47% respondents wanted the report to include information about tenant engagement and participation
- 37% respondents wanted the report to include information about their neighbourhood and communities
- 37% respondents wanted the report to include information on tenancy sustainment

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.

The reasons 13% did not like the report are detailed below:

- Some of the jargon was hard to understand
- It was perceived as a box ticking exercise dressed up as consultation to fulfil regulatory requirements
- Because of covid, report not a true reflection of repairs to property, response times etc. No mention of which regions are better/worse than others.

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.

Complaints Update



Complaints Update for October to December 2021

Here is our update on what has been happening with complaints in Ark between October and December 2021. During this period Ark received a total of 20 complaints and these are summarised as follows:

Ark Dept.	Total Complaints	Resolved	Complaints Upheld	Complaints Partially Upheld	Complaints Not Upheld
Care & Support	16	7	2	3	4
C & I Team	1				1
Asset Team	1	1			
Housing	1				1
O.D	1		1		
Total	20	8	3	3	6

Fifteen of the complaints received a frontline response. Frontline responses are provided for relatively straightforward issues, normally within 5 working days. All fifteen complaints were responded to within 5 days. The five remaining complaints were responded to at the investigation stage. These are often more complex and are normally responded to within 20 working days.

During this period four complaints received a response within 20 days, and one required an extension of 2 days due to staff absence.

Additional Information about Complaints

Ark uses complaints as a means of improving our services whenever possible. Complaints in this quarter have been analysed, and as result of mistakes being made in relation to the way in which staff implemented policies and procedures, plans have been put in place to rectify this.

When we receive a complaint one of the first things we do is identify what is described as the 'points of complaint'. Although there may be a number of points within a complaint, it is standard practice for public service organisations such as Ark to regard this as being one complaint.

As we mentioned in the last newsletter, we will continue to provide additional information, by publishing the number of points we have recorded for each of the complaints received in the quarter.

They are showed in the following table.

Ark Dept.		No of points of complaint	Points Resolved	Points of complaint upheld	Points Partially Upheld	Points Not Upheld
Care and Support	1	1			1	
	2	2		2		
	3	1	1			
	4	1	1			
	5	1				1
	6	5		3	1	1
	7	1				1
	8	6	6			
	9	3				3
	10	1	1			
	11	1	1			
	12	1	1			
	13	1		1		
	14	1	1			
	15	3	3			
	16	2		1		1
Asset Team	1	1	1			
C & I	1	3				3
Housing	1	1				1
OD	1	1		1		
Total	20	37	16	8	2	11

Resolving Complaints

Between October and December 2021 eight frontline complaints were successfully resolved. To ensure learning is gathered, analysed and shared within Ark it has been agreed that the complaints which are resolved, will be included in the quarterly summary provided to the SLT.

The Compliance and Improvement Business Partner has included the resolution of complaints in our complaints training programme for staff, and will continue to provide support to individuals managing complaints to ensure that 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.

Ark's customer guide to the complaint handling procedure can be accessed online at <https://bit.ly/3KC1Jq7>



Energy Advice



Are you, or is anyone you know, struggling to pay energy bills?



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.

It's been hard to miss news about energy bills over the past few months, and you may have seen reports about the ongoing energy crisis. But what is the energy crisis and what does it mean for your energy bills?

The energy crisis is an ongoing shortage of energy across the world, which is affecting many countries including the UK.

As countries began to recover from the pandemic, demand for gas started to increase again and could not be met due to a shortage in supply, causing gas prices to increase in 2021.

The problem was made worse by renewable sources like wind and solar producing less power and cold weather during the winter months forcing more people to turn their heating up.

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, including bigger companies like Bulb, affecting over two million customers. If your energy supplier collapses, you don't need to do anything. You will still receive your gas and electricity as usual. Ofgem, the energy regulator, will move your account to a new supplier. They will let you know which one this is.

What does it mean for your energy bills?

Ofgem introduced an 'energy price cap' in Great Britain in January 2019 following concerns that many people, particularly those who did not switch supplier to find cheaper deals, were paying too much for their energy. The cap is the maximum amount energy suppliers can charge for their energy.

The cap is reviewed twice a year, in April and October. On 3 February, Ofgem announced that the cap will increase from 1 April 2022 for approximately 22 million customers. Those on default tariffs paying by direct debit will see an increase of £693 from £1,277 to £1,971 per year. Prepayment customers will see an increase of £708 from £1,309 to £2,017.

What can I do to reduce my energy bills?

When prices rise, it's predicted that the number of households who can't afford to heat their homes to the temperature needed to keep them warm and healthy will increase from 4 million to 6 million. At Energy Saving Trust, we're here to help. Millions of householders are already saving energy and money by following our tips and advice.

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. Our quick tips all add up and could help you start saving on your energy bills today.

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. Other measures like cutting VAT on energy bills, for example, could help the average household save around £90.

In the longer term, the UK Government needs to increase efforts to insulate our homes, which will reduce the amount of energy we need, as well as increase the pace of the roll out of renewable energy. Moving to renewable energy sources like wind and solar power will reduce our dependence on fossil fuels like gas, helping to avoid future energy crises.

Get advice you can trust

If you're struggling to keep warm at home and keep up with your energy costs, we're here to help you. As well as tips on how to save energy and advice on making your home warmer, we can check if you're eligible for special discounts from energy suppliers and other funding.

We can also help you get a benefits and tax credit check so you're not missing out on additional income.



For more information from Home Energy Scotland call free on

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

The Noise App



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.

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



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](tel:01314788160).

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?



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 and 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.



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0131 478 8146



Asset Team Contacts
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Don't miss out on important updates...

Our housing team are sending regular updates via email to tenants and we want to ensure that we reach as many of you as possible.

If you do not already receive emails from Ark please send us an email to housing@arkha.org.uk and we will add your updated contact details onto our system.



0131 447 9027