



# Tenants News



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# Welcome

**Bobby Duffy**  
Ark Chief Executive



Welcome to the Winter edition of the Ark Newsletter.

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

In the summer and autumn editions of the newsletter, I told you about the Programme for Improvement 2021/22; our programme for delivering the quality improvements we have identified across Ark.

We continue to make good progress in the areas for improvement we have identified; we are currently working on a high number of areas at the moment where we are seeking to make improvements for our tenants and supported people and i wish to highlight a few for you.

## For our tenants:

- Our strategic planning group continues to meet to put our plans in place that will ensure we are working towards our target and providing high quality, energy efficient, affordable homes. The information from our stock conditions survey is currently being assessed and then plans will be created to make necessary improvements in our homes.

The details of this plan will be shared with our tenants when it has been completed.

- We have created a Community Benefit Fund to be used by our Housing and Asset Officers to deliver local improvements within communities. This will provide the option for local communities to access funding and make decisions about what minor improvements can be made in common areas of your communities.
- We have enabled the asset team to work more flexible by implementing the use of mobile technology to allow them to carry out stock condition surveys and access and record live information whilst carrying out property visits. This means that when tenants are having conversation with our asset officers and repairs are being reported, they are going onto our system in real time which will speed up the time to get the repair completed.
- We have established the tenant scrutiny group with the support of the Tenant Improvement Service (TIS). This group have taken on the task of reviewing the tender and the proposed new contract

for the ground maintenance works. This should have the benefit of ensuring that the contractors focus on improving ground maintenance as directly requested by tenants, which is a huge step forwards for this service.

#### **A message for our supported people:**

I had a conversation with a supported person last week and he shared with me his concerns about some changes that had been made in his local service and how this is a sign that services will be cut and people will end up back in long term institutional care.

It struck me that despite the fact that he left hospital care a long time ago, the fear of community services being cut and supported people being returned to long term institutional care, has never left him and that must be a great deal of anxiety to continually live with. I believe that I was able to reassure him that would not be the case.

Ark would never allow any person we support to be placed in long term hospital care, without any clinical need for them to be there.

Finally on this point, no government in Scotland would survive politically, if they introduced a policy of building large institutions and reducing community care services, we will simply not return to those times.

I hope this offers all of our supported people some reassurance that whilst we all may need hospital care at some point in our life, people will not be moved to hospital to live, when they can live perfectly well in their home.

Finally, if you are struggling to meet the cost of heating your home, please do not hesitate to contact us and we will do all we can to get you the support you need to ensure your home is warm this winter.

Please also continue to take all the necessary steps to protect yourself from Covid-19 as the numbers are remaining stubbornly high and we hear of new variants emerging in parts of the world.

I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas and I look forward to updating you again in the New Year,

**Bobby**

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# Annual House Visits



The Housing Teams plan to visit each of our tenants in their home each year as part of our efforts to improve the service we provide as a landlord.

Annual House Visits are an opportunity for you to keep in touch with us and discuss any concerns you may have.

It also gives us the chance to check that our homes are not being used for anything that breaches tenancy conditions and are kept in a good condition.

## Annual House Visits April 2021- June 2021

4 house visits were carried out in the first quarter.

- 1 visit Oxgangs Bank, Edinburgh
- 1 visit Albany Street, Dunfermline
- 2 visits Muirs Court & Uphall

Issues discussed at visits:

- Garden contractory
- Repairs

The reason that only 4 visits were carried out:

- Housing Officers were awaiting update on COVID 19 restrictions.
- Co-ordinating visits with Asset Officers doing surveys



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## Annual House Visits June - September 2021

75 annual house visits were carried out in the second quarter:

- Alloa - 10
- Linlithgow - 9
- Musselburgh - 1
- Dalkeith - 2
- Fraserburgh 13
- Portlethen - 14
- MacDuff - 17
- Peterhead - 9

Issues discussed at visit:

- Maintenance issues
- Furniture packages
- Rent accounts
- Guardian details
- Neighbour disputes
- Properties in poor condition
- Hoarding issue

If you were not home for the arranged annual house visit and would like to rearrange or you would like your visit prioritised please call the housing team on:

0131 478 8146

or you can email:  
[housing@arkha.org.uk](mailto:housing@arkha.org.uk)

## What work has been done to address issues raised?

- Feedback has been given to the asset team to support them with retendering the garden contract to prevent future issues with the landscaping contract.
  - All repairs were reported to the asset team to raise works orders.
  - Furniture packages were removed when not utilised or new items of furniture were ordered when required.
  - Advice/support offered to tenants in financial difficulty.
  - Tenancy records/contact details updated.
  - Housing officers working with tenants to improve the condition of their tenancy and improve their living conditions with support from 3rd party agencies
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# Health & Safety



## Going out safely during Winter

During winter the weather can vary from calm conditions to high winds, heavy snow, black ice and blizzard conditions.



## How to stay healthy and safe?

- It is important to listen to TV or Radio to see if there are winter weather warnings coming to your area.
- Always listen to police advice if they say it is too dangerous to go outside.
- Make sure that you have warm clothing and suitable footwear if you decide to go outside during winter weather.
- Try to keep your paths and steps at your home are clear by removing snow using a shovel and place rock salt on paths and steps to prevent ice forming.
- Have regular hot food and drinks during times of severe weather to give you energy.
- Speak with family, neighbours and Ark staff how we can all check on each other during winter





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# Housing Update

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## Information sharing & gathering

We recently sent you a letter with a couple of very important documents.

### Rent Consultation Paper

This sets out the 2 options we are considering for 2022-23. Please give us your feedback by:

- E-mailing us at [housing@arkha.org.uk](mailto:housing@arkha.org.uk)
- Completing the reply form and posting it back to us in the prepaid envelope
- Deadline is 14th January 2022
- We will report back to the Board of Management to make the final decisions.

## Equality Monitoring Form

In the last newsletter we told you we would be sending a form to every tenant.

It is really important that we know all these details about our tenants as it helps us to assess if we are treating everyone equally and allows us to shape our services to suit your specific needs.

Please be assured that this information will be treated with the utmost confidence and will not be shared with anyone other than those who need to know.

Again, a pre-paid envelope is enclosed to allow you to send this back to us and we hope that you will do so before 31st January 2022.



# Tenant Led Estate Visits



With many Covid restrictions easing, staff are thankful to be able to start getting out to Ark Housing developments more regularly.

We are aiming to have carried out several tenant led sessions at developments between January - end of March 2022 subject to COVID 19 restrictions.

## What is Estate Management?

How the Housing Officer and Property Officer work together to manage properties, common areas and the local environment.

This allows any repairs or improvements to be highlighted and contractors can carry out work that needs to be done.

It ensures Ark developments are well maintained.





## What are Tenant Led Estate Visits?

These are opportunities for tenants to get involved. We invite you to walk around with Ark staff and be involved in the management of your local area.



We encourage you to give feedback on services and highlight areas you feel there are issues that should be prioritised.



We will be onsite for about 90 minutes and you can come for a chat or accompany us for the full visit. If you would rather not attend but still want to give feedback then you can email [housing@arkha.org.uk](mailto:housing@arkha.org.uk)

Letters will be sent out with proposed dates for tenant led inspection in the New-Year, look out for these in the post and please have a think about joining us at your development.



## What are the benefits of effective Estate Management?

Regular visits and actions help to maintain our properties and the local environment.  
By involving tenants it allows for residents to be involved and participate.

Tenants can help their local community by providing feedback and ideas, as well as encouraging positive relationships between Ark and tenants.

Being proactive and making sure there is quick response to the estate management problems.

Regular visits provide clear rights and responsibilities for staff and tenants in order to achieve and maintain high property and environmental standards.

Tenant led visits provide the opportunity for feedback so Ark can ensure contractors are providing quality of service, which represents value for money.



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# How to report a Complaint

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## Tenancy Matters

If you have a concern or complaint about your tenancy you can contact the team on **0131 478 8146**

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## Property and Repairs

If you have a complaint about the property you live in or getting repairs carried out you can phone the asset team on **0131 478 8143** or email repairs - [repairs@arkha.org.uk](mailto:repairs@arkha.org.uk)

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## Ark Care & Support

If you have a complaint about the Ark Care and Support staff, this can be directly reported to the local service manager or you can phone Ark head office on **0131 477 9027**

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## A complaint about Our service

- Speak to your local Ark Care & Support team, Housing services team or Asset team
  - Telephone us on **0131 4779027**
  - Write to us- Ark, The Priory, Canaan Lane, Edinburgh, EH10 4SG
  - Online at - [www.arkha.org.uk/how-we-work/how-to-make-a-complaint](http://www.arkha.org.uk/how-we-work/how-to-make-a-complaint)
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We will speak to you about your complaint within 5 working days or we will write to you to let you know we have received your complaint and that we will respond in 20 working days.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman by telephone **0800 377 7330** or by post **99 McDonald Road, Edinburgh, EH7 4NS**

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# Significant Failures



All tenants receive the significant performance failures leaflet in their sign up pack. We would hope that any issues that you have can be dealt with internally through Ark's complaints procedure but we have provided some information below as a reminder.

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) can consider issues raised with them about 'significant performance failures'.

## What is a significant performance failure? (SPF)

The Scottish Housing Regulator have set out what could constitute a SPF.

- consistently and repeatedly fails to achieve outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter or outcomes agreed locally with tenants; or
- has not reported its performance annually to its tenants or the annual reported performance does not reflect actual performance;
- has materially failed to meet our Regulatory Standards;
- the landlord's action (s), or failure to take action, puts tenants' interests at risk and this significantly affects a number of the landlord's tenants.
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## An SPF could happen where ARK:

- fails to carry out health and safety requirements, such as annual gas safety checks;
- is not maintaining tenants' homes or carrying out repairs in line with its legislative duties and published policies;
- fails to have appropriate governance and financial procedures in place or apply them; or
- does not consult tenants about issues such as proposed rent increases and other policies that affect tenants.

## Complaints about ARK

An SPF is not an individual tenant complaint about services.

If you have a complaint, for example if you are unhappy about how Ark carried out repairs to your own home, then you should raise this directly with Ark through our complaints procedure.

You can get a copy of the complaints procedure from a member of our team.

## What should I do if I think there is an SPF?

If you think there is an SPF you firstly need to raise the issue directly with Ark. You should give Ark the chance to respond within its published timescale and reasonable time to address the issue.

If Ark has not dealt with the issue then you can report an SPF to Scottish Housing Regulator.

## How do I report an SPF?

To report an SPF, you should complete the form available from the Regulator. You should tell them exactly what the issue is and demonstrate that it significantly affects a number of the landlord's tenants.

You should also tell them when you raised it with Ark and how Ark responded.

The Regulator will contact you within five working days of receiving your reported SPF to tell you what we will do and our timescales.



### What will we do?

The Regulator will:

- look at the information to decide whether it is, or could be, an SPF;
- ask you for further information if we need it; · ask the landlord for information if we need it;
- decide whether we need to contact other regulatory bodies;
- keep you updated about progress and tell you when we aim to make a decision; and
- write to tell you and the landlord our decision and the reasons.

The Regulator will decide whether it is an SPF as quickly as possible. The length of time it takes will depend on:

- how complex the issue is;
- the amount of information we need to gather and look at; and
- how quickly we get the information we need.

### What will happen if we decide it is an SPF?

This will depend on the circumstances. The Regulator will decide whether they need to engage with Ark to ensure it takes action to address the issue.

If the Regulator needs to engage with Ark about an SPF the Regulator will say this in a regulation plan. Where there has been an SPF they publish the findings on the Regulator website.

### If you disagree with the regulator decision

You can ask the Regulator to review their decision. Further information about their review process and how you can request a review is contained in the regulator guidance, How to request a review of a regulatory decision – March 2016, on their website.

### How to contact The Scottish Housing Regulator

If you would like to report an SPF please complete the required form providing as much information as possible. You can send this information by:

Email: [shr@scottishhousingregulator.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:shr@scottishhousingregulator.gsi.gov.uk)

Website: [www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk](http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk)

Telephone: 0141 242 5642

Postal Address:

Scottish Housing Regulator,  
Buchanan House,  
58 Port Dundas Rd, Glasgow G4 0HF



# Repairs & Maintenance



During the festive season, only emergency repairs will be carried out.

It is important that we know if you have the Covid-19 virus, or symptoms, or are self isolating.

When you call our emergency numbers you will be asked for information on your current Covid 19 status.

You must be able to give access during the next 24 hours after you contact us, the target time for carrying out emergency repairs.

Most of the contractor's operatives are working individually although on some occasions they may need another trade present.

The operative will take appropriate action to ensure your and their own safety and if they ask you to stay in another room while they carry out the repair, please respect this request.

## Useful Emergency Contact Numbers:

Gas Freephone - 0800 111 999

NHS 24 - Call free on 111 if you are ill and it can't wait until your regular NHS service reopens

Police Scotland – 101 (for all services)

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service - 01463 240999 (24 hours)

## Electricity power cuts:

Scottish Hydro: 0800 300 999

SP Energy Networks: 0800 092 9290 (landline) 0330 1010 222 (mobile)

Scottish Water - 0800 0778 778 (24 hours)

SEPA Floodline - 0345 988 1188

SEPA Pollution hotline – 0800 807060 (24 hours)

## What is an emergency repair?



Fire – especially around the fuse box



Burst water pipes or tanks



Gas leaks – contact Scottish Gas immediately on 0800 111 999



Broken windows



Ground floor windows or doors not closing



Serious water penetration



Dangerous structures

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# Moving into an Ark Property

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A warm welcome to all new tenants who joined us at Ark Housing this year and who will be celebrating their first Christmas in a new home.

Finding a new home and moving in can be a stressful experience but you can be supported by friends, family and the Housing staff at Ark.

Usually within eight weeks of a new tenancy starting, a Housing Officer carries out a **Settling In Visit** at the tenants new home to find out how they are getting on and to answer any questions they have.

It is also an opportunity to discuss any issues they may have whether that relates to benefits, rent, repairs or accessing other services within the community.

Any feedback new tenants may have can also be made in the Moving In Satisfaction Survey.

This questionnaire asks about tenants experiences of the allocation and sign up process, standard of the property when moving in, estate and communal areas and any maintenance issues.

Data from the survey and tenant's comments are used to evaluate how well Ark supports tenants throughout this process and to improve services for all tenants.



In 2020/21:

- 50% of new tenants were satisfied with the standard of their new home
- 36% of new tenants were very satisfied with the standard of their new home.

Ark housing also was highly rated by new tenants for giving enough information about the property, arranging viewing at times convenient to applicants and explaining tenancy agreements clearly- achieving over 80% rating by new tenants in each of these areas.

The Housing Team recently met to discuss Moving In Satisfaction Surveys recognising that they are an important part of helping tenants feel at home and welcomed to their new property.

Currently the team are reviewing the content of the form and the way in which they are sent out to tenants, going forward we would like to introduce online Moving In Satisfaction Surveys for tenants to complete.

If you have any comments, feedback or suggestions on the moving in process please feel free to contact the

Housing Team on 0131 478 8146

or email [housing@arkha.org.uk](mailto:housing@arkha.org.uk)



# Complaints Update



## Complaints Update for July to September 2021

Here is our update on what has been happening with complaints in Ark between July and September 2021. During this period Ark received a total of 26 complaints and these are summarised as follows:

Ark Dept.	Total Complaints	Complaints Upheld	Complaints Partially Upheld	Complaints Not Upheld
Care & Support	17	7	7	3
Asset Team	5	3	1	1
Finance	2	2		
Housing	1			1
ACIL	1	1		
Total	26	13	8	5

Twenty of these complaints received a frontline response, also known as Stage One. Frontline responses are provided for relatively straightforward issues, normally within 5 working days.

During July to September one of our frontline responses required an additional 4 days due to unforeseen challenges within the local service. The remaining six complaints required an investigation, also known as Stage 2. Investigations take place when a complaint is more complex, with responses given within 20 working days unless additional time is needed.

In this period two extensions were approved to allow for additional staff interviews and a fuller examination of relevant documentation.

### Additional Information about Complaints

In the autumn edition of the newsletter, we told you about the revised Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP), which is published by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. Our customer guide to the complaint handling procedure can be accessed at: [www.arkha.org.uk/media/3422/complaints-customer-guide.pdf](http://www.arkha.org.uk/media/3422/complaints-customer-guide.pdf)

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

In this and future editions of the newsletter we are going to provide some additional information, by publishing the number of points we have recorded for each of the complaints we have received in the quarter.

These are shown below in the table:

Ark Dept.		No of points of complaint	Points of complaint upheld	Points Partially Upheld	Points Not Upheld
Care and Support	1	2	-	-	2
	2	1	1	-	-
	3	3	3	-	-
	4	2	2	-	-
	5	3	-	-	3
	6	4	2	2	-
	7	2	1	1	
	8	13	8	2	3
	9	2	2	-	-
	10	1	1	-	-
	11	1	1	-	-
	12	1	1	-	-
	13	1	-	1	-
	14	1	-	-	1
	15	7	-	1	6
	16	3	1	-	2
	17	3	2	-	1
Asset Team	1	3	3	-	-
	2	1	1	-	-
	3	1	-	1	-
	4	1	1		
	5	1	-	-	1
Finance	1	1	1	-	-
	2	1	1	-	-
Housing	1	2	-	-	2
	2	4	4	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>21</b>

One of the main requirements of the complaints procedure is for public bodies to use complaints as a means of improving their services wherever possible.

Within Ark our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) regularly reviews the information we gather from complaints, and considers whether our services can be improved.

Complaints are also analysed to identify any specific themes, and during July to September these included matters such as:

- Financial Processes
- Neighbourhood Relations
- Poor Communication
- Non delivery of Planned Services
- Unsatisfactory Standard of Care Practice
- Contractor Working Condition
- Grounds Maintenance
- Covid Protocols
- Cleaning Standards for Equipment

A number of financial processes have been changed to avoid any issues in future.

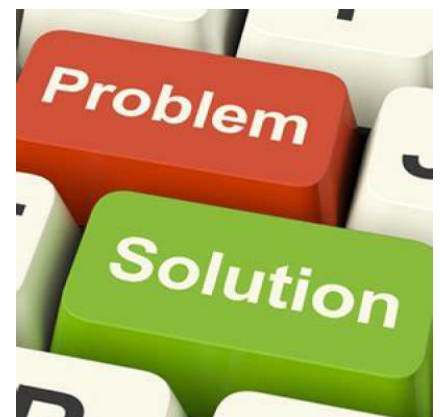
If you want to know more about the complaints process please contact the Compliance and Improvement Team who will be happy to help.

Details can be found on the Ark website

[www.arkha.org.uk](http://www.arkha.org.uk)

You can also contact

David Boucher  
Compliance & Improvement  
Business Partner  
07510923318



Full report on our  
website



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# Energy Advice

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**Home Energy Scotland** is a free and impartial service funded by the Scottish Government to help everyone create warmer homes, reduce energy bills and tackle climate change. Once again, we are working with Citizens Advice Scotland to help people save energy, cut their bills, and get the financial support they are entitled to.

## Energy saving tips

Switch off things like TVs and games consoles. Switching them off at the switch or the wall when they're not in use could save you around £40 a year.

## Watch your water use

The cost of heating water makes up around 11% of your energy bills, around £140 per year on average. The less you waste, the less you pay.

## Location, location, location

If you're still working from home, locate your desk or workstation somewhere that's free of draughts and in a bright sunny spot. You might find that being close to a window was great in the summer but is chillier now there's a nip in the air. Opting for a spot with good natural light will also reduce the need to have the lights on during the day.

## Dress for success

After months (almost years!) of staying at home you may have accrued a large collection of elasticated-waist loungewear the cosier the better. Layering up can help your body insulate heat and regulate temperature so multiple thin layers can be better than one gigantic Sherpa fleece.

Heat is lost most easily through our extremities so get some fluffy socks and slippers (not too tight as this can actually restrict warm air flow). Depending on how practical it is you could also accessorise with a cosy snood.

## Accessorise

Blankets are an obvious cosy choice and draping one on your lap while sitting can keep your legs and feet warm. If you've got cold floors (non-carpeted for example) get a good rug to improve your thermal comfort. Curtains and blinds are not just there to look pretty – they reduce heat loss so as the nights draw in remember to close them before the sun goes down, even if that's before you log off. The other must-have accessory for this season is the hot water bottle – Roisin in our team has two on rotation and swears by them for warming up while working.

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### Keep the heat in

If you do have draughts getting in, it can be easier than you might think to tackle them. The main culprits are doors and windows, letterboxes and chimneys, as well as lofts and basements. Draughts can make our homes feel a lot colder than they actually are.

### Shake it off

Some activity to warm your body up is not only good for staying cosy, it's great for your mood too. Yoga, crazy dancing, a run around the garden or just a nice walk can all get your circulation flowing so your own internal central heating kicks in as well as your gas boiler.

### Time for a cuppa?

We're a nation fuelled by tea and coffee. But you can also increase your hot drink quota to include hot orange squash, hot chocolate or even just hot water and stay hydrated without getting chilly. Don't boil more than you need though – if the kettle's going all day this will cost you!

### Advice for everyone

As well as advice for yourself, you can get in touch with us on behalf of someone else; like a family member you're caring for or a friend you're helping out. We never cold call, so will only contact you if you request it.

For more information from Home Energy Scotland call free on

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



# Christmas Closure



We would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas & a very Happy New-Year.

This year we will close on **Friday the 24th of december 2021 at 1.30pm** and we will re-open **Wednesday the 5th of january 2022 at 9am.**

Detailed below is a list of telephone numbers, so tht any **emergency repairs** you may have can be dealt with while the office is closed.

AREA	REPAIR	CONTRACTOR	TELEPHONE
<b>All Areas</b>	<b>Gas Central Heating</b>	<b>Heatcare</b>	<b>01343 842 042</b>
Buckie Forres	Emergency Only	Heatcare	01343 842 042
MacDuff Peterhead Fraserburgh Inverurie Aberdeen Portlethen	Emergency Only	Heatcare	01343 842 042
Arbroath, Blairgowrie, Forfar, Perth, Clackmannanshire Falkirk , Fife, Lothians and Scottish Borders	Emergency Only	All in 1 Property Maintenance	07756 147 365 or 07810 883 676



### Housing Team Contacts

[housing@arkha.org.uk](mailto:housing@arkha.org.uk)

0131 478 8146



### Asset Team Contacts

[repairs@arkha.org.uk](mailto:repairs@arkha.org.uk)

0131 478 8143

## 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](mailto:housing@arkha.org.uk) and we will add your updated contact details onto our system.



0131 447 9027