



Ark[®]
People
Housing
Care

Your Tenants' Handbook



Contacting us:

Write to us:

“The Priory”
Canaan Lane
Edinburgh EH10 4SG



Phone us:

Housing: 0131 478 8146

Repairs: 0131 478 8143



Our opening times

Monday to Thursday

9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

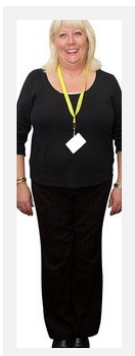
Friday

9.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.



E-mail: admin@arkha.org.uk

Website: www.arkha.org.uk



Or speak to Ark support staff

Welcome to Ark



This handbook aims to be an easy-to-read guide to the main services that Ark provides.

Your Scottish secure tenancy or Occupancy agreement provides more detailed information about your rights and responsibilities as our tenant. If there is anything in your tenancy agreement or this handbook that you would like to discuss or you need us to explain, please contact your housing services officer or support staff.



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Section 1

About Ark



Ark is a not-for-profit Registered Social Landlord and our purpose is to provide housing, care and support for our tenants in Edinburgh, Fife, Lothians, Perth, Angus, Aberdeenshire, Borders, Western Isles and Moray.

As well as general needs housing for people aged 16 and over, we provide supported housing and registered care homes for people with learning disabilities and other support needs. The type of housing and level of support we provide depends on each individual's needs.



Ark was founded in 1977 by a group of Edinburgh parishioners concerned about a homeless person with learning difficulties. We now have over 400 properties to rent throughout Scotland.

Our aim is for our homes to meet the needs of our tenants by being good quality, sustainable and affordable.

Our management

A voluntary board of management is responsible for directing our affairs and meets regularly with our Chief Executive. Board members have a firm interest in housing, support and care services for people with support needs. The board decide the policies that we must follow, agree the day-to-day work we do and make sure that we know our legal responsibilities.



Our Chief Executive, supported by a team of directors and other professional staff, is responsible for our day to day running.

Membership of the association

Anyone can help support the work we do by becoming a member of the association. To become a member you must buy a £1 share which will give you lifetime membership, the right to vote at annual general meetings and the right to stand for election to become a board member. We do not pay dividends to shareholding members as we reinvest any money left into our services.

If you want to become a member, you can get more details by phoning the personal assistant to the chief executive on: 0131 478 8141



Section 2

Moving in

“We know that moving house can be stressful. We are here to help.”

Keys

When you are moving into your new home, we will give you two sets of keys. If you need an extra key, please contact our maintenance team on 0131 478 8143.

If you loose you keys, you will have to pay for us to change the locks and give you new keys.

Never leave your keys in a “secret” hiding place. If you have to, leave your keys with a neighbour you trust.



Council Tax

You must pay your own Council Tax. We will tell the local council that you have moved into the property but please contact them yourself to agree a payment arrangement. Your local council will tell you what your Council Tax band will be and the charges due. If you are eligible for Housing Benefit, you will also be entitled to Council Tax Benefit which will reduce the amount you pay.



TV licence



Unless you stay in one of our registered care homes you must pay your TV licence fee. Please contact TV Licensing Centre. Section 10 gives details on how to tell them about your new address. If you are aged over 75, you do not have to pay for a TV licence.

Electricity

You must pay your own electricity bill unless we tell you otherwise when you sign your tenancy agreement. Please take a meter reading when you move into the property and tell the electricity company. If you receive a bill for the period before you moved in, please pass it to your housing services officer or support staff.



Gas

Some of our properties have gas central heating. You have to pay your own heating charges. You will need to contact the gas supplier with a meter reading. Contact your housing services officer or support staff for more information.



Settling in visits



Within the first six weeks of moving into your home, your housing services officer will arrange to visit you. This is an ideal opportunity to discuss any issues you may have for example, rent payments, repairs or support services.

Safety and Security

We recognise that safety and security is of utmost importance to our tenants.

Arks housing is specifically designed to provide tenants with additional security and safety. Features such as Door Entry Systems, Fire and Smoke Alarms all help provide a safer environment for you and other tenants.

Entry Phone

If your stair has an entry phone system, make sure all outside doors are kept locked at all times and **allow ONLY your visitors into the stair.**

Stairs

You must ensure that landings and stairs are kept clear. You must not leave rubbish bags, toys, furniture in these areas. These could cause someone to trip, or be a fire hazard.

Please keep the stair, landings and communal areas free from rubbish.



Insurance

**Ark insure the structure of your home.
You have to insure the contents of your home.**



Why should I get contents insurance?



In case of damage to your belongings (for example: furniture, clothing, carpets, TVs, computers, etc.) caused by fire, flooding or break-ins.

We recommend that all tenants have contents insurance.

Where will I get Insurance?

There are lots of contents insurance packages tenants can choose from. The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations offers discounted rates for tenants.

The Scottish Federation can be contacted on 0845 601 7007 for further information.

You could be responsible for repair costs if you or a visitor cause damage (accidentally or deliberately). You may want to make sure any insurance cover you get includes accidental damage.



Fire

Keeping safe

There are number of precautions that everybody can take to make their home safer from fire:

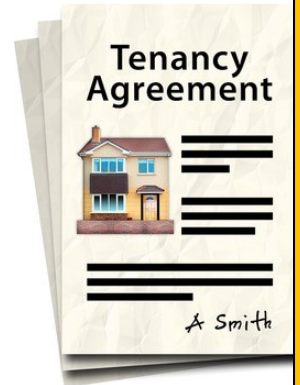
- ♦ Never leave your cooker unattended.
- ♦ Take special care when cooking especially with chip pans, grills and toasters.
- ♦ Put out cigarettes properly and never smoke in bed.
- ♦ Before emptying ashtrays, make sure the contents are cold.
- ♦ Do not overload electrical appliances by using multi-plug adapters.
- ♦ At night switch off all electrical appliances you will not need through the night.
- ♦ Never leave candles unattended. Use a torch if the lights go out.
- ♦ Never use the lift during a fire evacuation.
- ♦ Doormats and furniture left in corridors are dangerous if there is a fire as they can prevent people from escaping.



Section 3

Your tenancy - responsibilities and rights

Our tenants have a Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement (SST), or an Occupancy Agreement. You will have signed this before getting your keys for your new home. This is a legal contract between you and Ark Housing Association that describes your rights and responsibilities as a tenant and our duties as a landlord.



Your tenancy agreement cannot be changed without you knowing and agreeing.

Read through it and make sure you understand what is expected of you and what you can expect from us. If there is anything in it you are unsure of please get in touch with your housing services officer on 0131 478 8146.

If you have a joint tenancy, each person has equal rights and responsibilities.

Our responsibilities

- ♦ We must keep properties in good repair.
- ♦ We must make sure properties are secure and warm.
- ♦ We will involve you wherever possible in decisions that affect your home and area.
- ♦ We will give you information about your tenancy.
- ♦ We will consult you about rent increases and change to policies that will significantly affect the service we provide.
- ♦ We will give you at least four weeks notice of any rent increase.



Your responsibilities:



- ♦ You must live in the property as your only and main home.
- ♦ You must pay your rent on the first day of each month for the month to come.
- ♦ You must report repairs quickly.
- ♦ You must get rid of rubbish responsibly. The phone numbers for getting rid of bulky items in your area are in Section 10.
- ♦ You must be a good neighbour. Do not cause a nuisance, annoy or disturb others who live near you. You will disturb neighbours if you make lots of noise such as playing loud music, using DIY tools, shouting, banging, allowing dogs to bark and so on.
- ♦ You must not overcrowd your home. Your tenancy agreement tells you how many people can live in your home. If you plan to have anyone else living in your home, please contact a your housing services officer on 0131 478 8146 to discuss your housing options.
- ♦ If you move away, you must end the tenancy by giving us 28 days' notice in writing. If you are planning a long trip, perhaps to stay with family abroad, please let your housing services officer know before you go.



Your tenancy agreement gives full details of your responsibilities.

Your rights

Your tenancy offers security and can only be ended in one of the following ways.

- ♦ If you give four weeks' notice.
- ♦ If you die.
- ♦ If you and we agree in writing for example, if for any reason your home is structurally unsafe and we have to offer you another place to live.
- ♦ If we take court actions to get back possession of the house because you have broken the terms of your tenancy agreement.
- ♦ If we take action because you have abandoned the house.
- ♦ If you are subject to an antisocial behaviour order.

Right to succession

If you die, the tenancy may be inherited by your husband, wife, co-habitee or member of your household who lives with you. Ark will only allow successions on two occasions.

Do I have the right to buy my home?

NO Ark Housing Association has charitable status which means our tenants **cannot** buy their home.

Please contact your housing services officer on 0131 478 8146 for more information.

Can I Take In a Lodger?

YES If you have enough room in your house. A lodger is someone who is not related to you but lives as part of your household and pays you money towards their keep.

You MUST ask permission from us before taking in a lodger. Phone 0131 478 8146 to speak to your housing services officer.



If you get housing benefit/universal credit to pay your rent, you must tell the council/DWP you have a lodger. Having a lodger will effect the amount of housing benefit you receive.

Can I Sub-let My Home?

YES If you are going away from your home for some time, for example 6 months, and you don't want to leave your home empty. You have the right to sub-let it.



You MUST ask permission from us first.

If we agree to you subletting, you will be responsible for your tenancy. This means making sure the rent is paid and your sub-tenant does not cause nuisance or annoyance to other tenants.

Can I keep pets?

You must write to us or phone us on 0131 478 8146 to ask for permission to keep a pet.



If you are allowed to have a pet, it is your responsibility at all times to make sure that it doesn't cause a nuisance to neighbours for example: barking or fouling in common areas. Pets must not damage the associations property including the garden.

If you are having a problem with your neighbours pet, please get in touch with your housing services officer on 0131 478 8146 and we will look into this.



Gardens



Not everyone enjoys gardening but if you do have a garden you must keep it clean and tidy. If you share a garden you pay a service charge for its upkeep.

If you are an older tenant or a disabled person who receives benefits and you're struggling to look after your garden get in touch with us and we may be able to help. Please phone your housing services officer on 0131 478 8146 to find out more about this.

Section 4

Money Matters

It is your responsibility to make sure your rent is paid on time.

We try to make sure that people on low incomes can afford our rents.

Everyone pays a basic rent for their home, and some tenants have to pay a service charge as well.

Rent is due in advance on the 1st of each month.



What does my rent pay for?

The rent you pay is used by us to manage, repair and maintain your home and communal areas. In return we expect you to pay your rent on time.



What does my service charge pay for?

Service charges vary according to area, but some common charges are listed below:

- ♦ Communal landscaping
- ♦ Stair cleaning
- ♦ Landlord Electricity Supply
- ♦ Garden maintenance



You can find a list of your service charges at the back of your tenancy agreement.

Changes to rent

We look at your rent each year to see if it should go up or stay the same.

Ark tries to keep increases as low as possible. If we increase your rent we have to show how we will spend this. Rent increases are worked out using the rate of inflation (which the government tells us) our rent increases are normally limited to the rate of inflation plus a percentage. We always ask for tenants' opinions before we make any changes to rent. This is called our 'rent increase consultation'.

We send the 'rent increase consultation' in the Christmas Newsletter. It is very important that you take the time to let us know what you think about the rent increase.

How do I pay my rent?

There are lots of ways to pay your rent. You can choose the one that's best for you.

Direct Debit: One of the easiest ways. You can set up a direct debit by calling the housing team on 0131 478 8146 who will take your details over the phone with no need for any paperwork.



Allpay Card: An Allpay card, will be given to you once you have signed your tenancy agreement. Your Allpay card can be used at any Post Office, Pay point Outlet or if you have access to the Internet log onto :



www.allpayments.net/allpayments/





By Phone: If you want to pay your rent over the phone please call: **0844 557 8321**. You will need your Allpay card and debit/credit card to do this. If you do not have an Allpay card contact housing on 0131 478 8146 to get one sent to you free of charge.



Standing Order: You can set up regular payments with your bank if you give them Ark's bank details



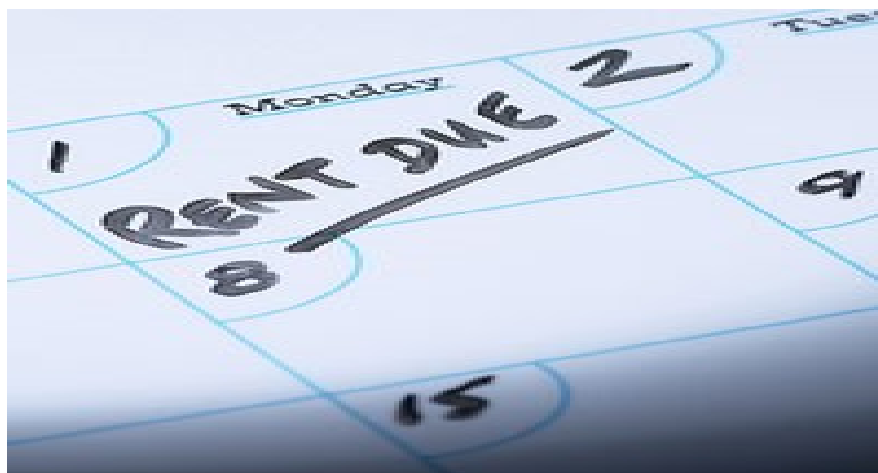
One off payments

You can make one off payments by phoning the Ark office on 0131 478 8146. We can take payments via the Worldpay website. You will need your debit/credit card to do this.

The BIG But

If you don't pay your rent or arrears, and do not stick to your repayment plan, we will have to take legal action against you. This could cause you to lose your home.

Please don't let it get to this point.



Help with your rent: housing benefit/Universal Credit:

You could be entitled to help with your rent if you are unemployed, or if you are on a low income. You may also be able to claim if you have a disability or you are on long-term sick leave.

Your claim will depend on your income, any benefits you receive and how many people live in your home.

Due to new changes by the government if you are under-occupying your home (have more bedrooms than you need) you will get less housing benefit. If you want to swap to a smaller property there are a number of home swap schemes you can take part in. Please contact your housing services officer on 0131 478 8146 for more information about doing a swap.

Changes in money you receive or number of people living in your home:

If you're claiming housing benefit /universal credit housing costs and your situation changes you need to tell the housing benefit department/DWP straight away.

A change could be someone in your household moving out, a new person arriving, or a change in anyone in your household's financial situation. All these things can affect how much help you are allowed to claim.

Difficulties Paying Rent



We understand that sometimes our tenants can have problems with money.

We are here to help!

If you're having money problems and are likely to fall behind with your rent payments, the best thing you can do is tell us straight away. If you speak with us we can work out a payment plan that you can afford, and stop yourself getting into more debt.

You can speak to a member of the housing team who can offer confidential advice and support and also give details on where to get debt advice. We can arrange for a welfare officer to visit you at home.



We Can:

agree repayment terms to help you get back on track;
point you towards support/advice services, who can make sure you are receiving all the support and benefit that you should be.



Budgeting help and tips

Work out a budget: add up all the money you have coming into your home weekly/monthly. Work out all the things you spend your money on e.g. food, electricity, rent, council tax , to stay on top of rent and arrears. **Don't bury your head in the sand.** There are different organisations that can offer you support and advice e.g. citizens advice bureaux and Shelter housing advice centres. See the back of your handbook for useful numbers.

The Money Advice Service



This service offer a money advice service with trained money advisers who can help you manage your money. The advice is unbiased and FREE.

They can help you with:

- Budgeting
- Credit and borrowing
- Mortgages
- Insurance
- Pensions and retirement planning.



They can also point you in the right direction if you are having any debt worries.

To book an appointment you can find your local office contact details in the “useful contacts” section OR call 0800 738 1777

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The BIG But

If you don't pay your rent or arrears, and do not stick to your repayment plan, we will have to take legal action against you. This could cause you to lose your home.

Please don't let it get to this point

Section 5

Repairs and Maintenance

It is important that you report repairs as soon as possible.

How to report a repair

1. E-mail repairs@arkha.org.uk

OR

2. During office hours phone **0131 478 8143**



Give as much detail as you can e.g.

- ♦ Your name and address
- ♦ A contact telephone number
- ♦ Where and what the fault is
- ♦ When you might be in so a contractor can get access to your home.

For ALL Gas Central Heating Repairs, please contact:

For ALL Gas Central Heating Repairs, please contact

Heatcare on 01343 842 042

For Gas Escapes call 0800 111 999

Repairs, Emergency Repairs and Gas Central Heating

11Parkend
Stornoway

Hebridean Housing
Partnership
0300 123 0773

Reporting an Emergency Repair at : Night, Weekends and Holidays

You should phone the Contractor who covers your area, see below.

You may have to pay call out costs if you use a contractor not on our list or if the repair is not an emergency!!!

Area	Emergency Contractor
Forres, Buckie, MacDuff, Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Inverurie, Portlethen and Aberdeen	Heatcare Oil & Gas Ltd on 01343 842 042
Clackmannanshire, Falkirk, Fife, Lothians and Borders	HF Group Ltd on 0131 337 4011 or Freephone 0800 783 9480
Arbroath, Forfar, Blairgowrie, and Perth	Logie Glazing & Building Services Ltd. on 0131 608 2006

Who is responsible for the repair?

As your landlord we are responsible for all repairs and maintenance to the structure and exterior of your home. As part of your tenancy agreement you must decorate and carry out any repairs that you are responsible for. If you, your family or your visitors cause any damage to your home, you will be expected to put these right yourself.

Who is responsible for the repair.?

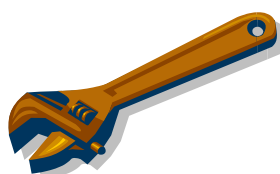
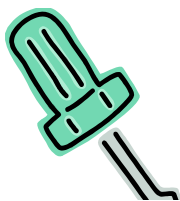
ITEM	ARK	YOU	EXCEPTIONS
All damage caused wilfully/ accidentally or negligently by you or your visitors.		✓	
Drains, gutters and external pipes	✓		<i>Not including clearance of blockages due to tenants negligence</i>
The roof/ outside walls/ outside doors/windowsills/ window catches/sash cords and window frames (This includes external painting and decoration	✓		
Installation of: Basin/sinks/ baths/toilets/flushing systems/ waste pipes/ showers and water tanks	✓		.
Blocked waste pipes/ drains/ sinks and toilets		✓	<i>We will maintain and keep in proper working order any installations Ark have provided for space heating , water heating and sanitation</i>
Chimneys/ chimney stacks/ flues	✓		<i>Not including sweeping</i>
Replacement of: plug/ chain/pull cord/ (and fitting of) tap washer/		✓	
Repair/placement of toilet seats/plugs and chains for baths and basins.		✓	
Pathway/steps or other means of access.	✓		
Integral gardens and stores	✓		
Plaster work	✓		
Boundary walls and fences	✓		

Who is responsible for the repair.?

ITEM	ARK	YOU	EXCEPTIONS
Making good of any damage caused by vandalism or criminal activity (provided the police have been notified within a 24hr period by the tenant or someone acting on their behalf)	✓		
Internal Walls/Floors and Ceilings/Doors/Door Frames/ Internal Staircases and Landings	✓		<i>Not including painting and decoration.</i>
Damage caused by leaks from tenants washing machines and dishwashers.		✓	
Internal door handles (including drawer handles)/ window handles		✓	
Replacement: Carbon monoxide and smoke alarm batteries/ internal light bulbs/tubes and starter switches		✓	
Resetting tripped electrics/ electric plugs and fuses (if caused by tenant appliance)		✓	<i>If due to an Ark appliance/installation</i>
TV aerial		✓	Communal aerials
Internal decoration		✓	

Who is responsible for the repair.?

ITEM	ARK	YOU	EXCEPTIONS
Pest problems (mice, ants, etc)		✓	
Replacement/ additional keys		✓	
Forced entry/door repairs (e.g. being locked out/loss of keys/police forced entry etc.)		✓	
Whirly gigs/ washing line poles/pulleys/whirly gig ropes/ clothes lines		✓	
Carrying out annual gas servicing and other checks	✓		



Right to Repair — Our commitment to you

Under the terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, certain repairs are treated as ‘qualifying repairs’. We have a legal responsibility to meet certain timescales for qualifying repairs. If your repair is a qualifying repair, we will tell you this when you report it. You have a right to call out a second contractor and to claim compensation if we fail to meet the timescale. Please contact the maintenance team for more information 0131 478 8143.

Repair Timescales

Emergency Response: 24 Hours

Repairs which if not attended would affect the structure/security of the property or pose a danger to your health e.g.

Type Of Repair	Right To Repair?
Total loss of Hot and Cold water supplies	✓
Total loss of heating*	✓
Insecure or broken external doors or windows	✓
Fire damage	x
Choked drains	✓
Severe leaks	✓
Loss of electric power *	✓
Blocked flue to open fire or boiler	✓
Unsafe access to path or step	✓
Loss or partial loss of gas supply.	✓
Toilet not flushing *	✓
Dangerous or unsafe electrical fittings	✓

*Where no alternative is available in the house.

We, or the emergency out-of-hour's contractor will respond within 24 hours. If door keys are lost and we have to gain entry you will have to pay these costs.



Urgent Repairs: 3 Days

These are repairs which require quick attention and could pose health or safety hazards but are not serious enough to be an emergency repair for example:

Type of Repair	Right To Repair?
Partial loss of hot or cold water	✓
Partial loss of heating	✓
Most roof leaks	✓
Constantly running overflows in flats.	✗
Partial loss of electric power	✓

Routine Repairs: 14 Days

This respond time is for any other repair you tell us about.

Rechargeable Repairs

Normally Ark do not carry out repairs which are your responsibility.

However we will carry out repairs if there is a risk to you or others safety and security or a possibility of further damage to your home or surroundings.



An invoice will be sent to you for the cost of these repairs.



Alterations and Improvements

If you're thinking about altering or improving your home, you must talk to us first. You need our permission before you can carry any work out.

We will let you know quickly, send your request in writing with details of the changes you want to make to Ark's maintenance officer at The Priory, Canaan Lane, Edinburgh EH10 4SG.



We will be able to give you some advice which will help make sure your plans are safe and you and do not break any building or planning regulations.

Medical Aids and Adaptations

You might want to make changes to your home for medical reasons such as a wet floor shower or grab rails to assist you living in your home.



We are given annual funds from the Scottish Government to cover some of this work . We will only be able to make these adaptations if the funds are available to us.



If you feel that you need any of these put into your home, please get in touch with your local social work department who will send out an occupational therapist to assess what you need. The occupational therapist will send Ark a report letting us know what needs to be done.

Condensation

What is Condensation?

Caused by too much water in the air, when moist air meets a cold surface such as a wall or window sill it turns into water. If this happens, it can cause black mould to grow.

What to do if you get Condensation.

Heating: keep your home warm, (ask your local gas or electricity supplier about budget schemes if this is a worry).

Ventilation: Ventilation is important to stop condensation. Open the windows and make sure any wall vents are clear and not covered up.

Chimneys: Never block up a chimney completely. If you are closing off a fireplace make sure an air vent is fitted (ALWAYS contact us before closing off your fireplace).



Hints and Tips:

DRY clothes outside if possible
IF you use a tumble dryer make sure you have an outside vent or open a window.



KEEP kitchen and window doors closed.

OPEN windows when you can.

DON'T overfill cupboards/wardrobes.

USE extractor fans if you have them.



Section 6

Being a good neighbour



What we think:

We all have our own ideas on what it means to be a good neighbour. Some tenants may be close friends with the people they live next to whilst others may be polite but keep to themselves,

We believe that you have a right to enjoy living in your home in a safe and secure environment. Nobody should make persistent loud noise or cause nuisance and disturb others.

Problems with neighbours

Neighbour problems can cover a wide range of issues and we will try to avoid all possible disputes by managing our tenancies considerately.



Neighbour complaints can cover a wide range of issues such as:

- ♦ noise;
- ♦ vehicles being parked inconsiderately;
- ♦ pet issues such as constant barking or fouling;
- ♦ people of any age causing a nuisance or disturbance;
- ♦ rubbish and waste being dumped, which can be harmful to people's health;
- ♦ discriminating against tenants and their families for any reason.

What to do if you have problems with your neighbours

First

If the disturbance is new and you feel you can talk to your neighbour, this is often the easiest and best way to sort the problem out. Sometimes your neighbour may not be aware of how their actions are affecting you. They are often pleased that you have brought this to their attention, without making this issue too formal.

If you feel uncomfortable about speaking to your neighbour, please contact your housing services officer or support staff.

Second

If you have spoken to your neighbour and this has not helped to sort the problem out, you should contact your housing services officer during office hours.

If it is an Ark tenant who is causing the problem we will carry out an investigation to see if other tenants have also been disturbed. We will then speak to the tenant to first get their side of the story. We will remind them of their tenancy/ occupancy agreement and “Good Neighbour Charter” which they have signed. We may issue them with a written warning for their behaviour.

Serious anti-social behaviour

If the anti-social behaviour is very serious or if a tenant ignores our warning letters we may have to consider legal action which could result in them losing their home.

If you feel you or others may be in danger and you cannot contact our staff at night time or at the weekend, you should contact the Police immediately on 101 or 999

Mediation services can also help if you are finding it difficult to sort out a problem with a neighbour such as a clash in lifestyles. Contact details are in Section 10.



Harassment and Discrimination

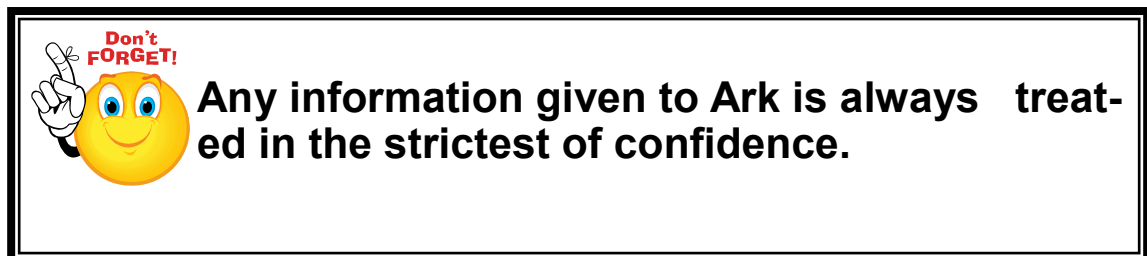
As part of your tenancy agreement you must make sure you **do not** take part in any type of harassment or discrimination towards other people.



Harassment includes any behaviours to annoy/intimidate or harm any individual family or group and where the harassment takes place either in or close to the associations property.

Ark may take legal action to evict any tenant who has taken part in harassment or discrimination.

If you feel that you are the victim of harassment or discrimination please get in touch with your housing services officer as soon as possible on 0131 478 8146



Why not say “Hello”?

If you have just moved in or a new neighbour has moved next door, go and say “Hello”. As you get to know one another you should develop a relationship that suits you both.

Vandalism

Anyone who witnesses vandalism to an Ark property should report this to the police. We will repair damage caused to a communal area as soon as possible.

If the responsible person is an Ark tenant we will take serious action including sending an invoice for the cost of the damage and even taking legal action!!!



Living In Flats

If you live in a flat or a property with a shared communal area, use the space fairly and properly and **keep it tidy**

If there is an entry phone please make sure all outside doors are closed properly and locked at all times. Only allow your visitors into the stair.

Stairways and hallways must be kept clear so people can leave safely and quickly in case of a fire.



Section 7

Get involved, have your say



Ark believes in encouraging tenants to become involved with the decisions affecting their tenancies, homes and wider community.

We want to include you in:



Decision making;

Sharing information, comments, compliments and complaints;

Providing safe communities where everyone feels included and their input valued.

What We Give You:

- a written tenancy agreement;
- a newsletter 4 times a year;
- a tenants' handbook;
- a copy of our annual report and regular information about our comments and complaints procedures.

On request we can give you:

Information on housing management policies for example: waiting list, allocations, rent settings, transfer and exchanges, repairs and maintenance. There are leaflets available about these issues which you can get by contacting the your housing services officer on 0131 478 8146.

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Information on housing management policies e.g. waiting list, allocations, rent settings, transfer and exchanges, repairs and maintenance.

A range of information leaflets are available and these can be obtained by contacting the office.



How Do I Get Involved?

If you and other tenants want to form a tenants group we can help you do this.

What is a Tenants' Group?

A tenants group is a group of tenants who live in the same area who work together to represent the views of all tenants in the area to help make their neighbourhood a better place to live.

How do I set up a Tenants' Group?

Tenants' groups are set up by volunteers. These volunteers live in the community and want to have a say in how it is run and make a difference. There may be a tenants group already set up in your area. You could ask your housing services officer about this.

If you would like to set a Group up you could start by finding out if any of your neighbours are interested by speaking. Ark can support you to advertise the group and encourage others to get involved.

What next?

You then need to have a meeting to see how many people are interested and decide what the aims of the group will be and how the group will work. If you decided to be a registered residents association you can get more information about this from your housing services officer or Shelter.org.uk.





Are there other ways to get involved?

We want to know what you are thinking about the service you receive. Tenant scrutiny is an important part of how Ark assesses and improves its services and housing. If you want to have your say but don't like the idea of a tenants group there are other options:

Focus Groups – we often hold focus groups on specific issues affecting the service you receive and would be delighted to hear what you think.

Tenant Satisfaction Surveys – these are sent to tenants every year and give you a chance to have your say without attending meetings, handy if you are busy or just shy.

In Writing – you could write to us directly by letter or email and let us know what you think about the housing services we provide. This could be a compliment, comment or complaint.

By Phone – you could phone your housing officer to discuss what is important to you.

♦



Section 8

Complaints

This section explains Ark's complaints procedure and how we deal with any complaints that we receive about our services.



Why do we have a complaints procedure?

We aim to deliver a first class service to our tenants at all times. However we realise that there may be times in which you are unhappy with the services we provide. We want you tell us when you are unhappy and we will work to resolve any issues as quickly as possible.

We are committed to constantly working towards improving the delivery of our services.

Who Can Make A Complaint?

Anyone who receives or requests a service from Ark can make a complaint (e.g. a tenant, applicant or service user)

In the first instance ALWAYS get in touch with us first and we can try and resolve the issue informally. You do have the right to ask someone to act on your behalf, such as a councillor, MP, MSP, advice agency or solicitor.



What Can I Complain About?

You can complain about any part of the delivery of our services that you are unhappy with.

For Example:

- ♦ **A repair has not been carried out properly.**
- ♦ You haven't received information that you asked for
- ♦ **You feel that a member of staff/contractor/board member has behaved in an unacceptable manner.**
- ♦ You feel your housing application has not been dealt with correctly.
- ♦ **You feel someone has treated you unfairly in the delivery of a service.**



Neighbour or Anti-social behaviour complaints

If it is a complaint about your neighbour or anti social behaviour this will be dealt with using our anti social behaviour policy and we ask you get in touch with your housing services officer on 0131 478 8146 (please refer to section 6 “being a good neighbour”).

Steps To Deal With A Complaint:

Step 1: Trying to sort out a complaint informally:



To try and sort out a problem informally the first thing to do is get in touch with the right member of staff, if the staff member is unable or unwilling to fix the problem then the formal complaints procedure should be used.

Your comment or complaint will be passed to the relevant section and staff members who will get in touch within 10 working days. If we cannot resolve your comment or complaint in this time, we will write to you to tell you why and also to let you know how long we will take to investigate and respond to you

Step 2: The Formal Complaints Procedure

The first part of the formal complaints procedure is to get in touch with Ark at The Priory. Your complaint will be investigated.

We will acknowledge receipt within 3 working days and let you know how long it should take for the problem to be considered and hopefully fixed.



Step 3 Scottish Public Service Ombudsman



If you are still unhappy with the result of your complaint you have the right to contact the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman as a final stage of the complaints procedure.

The service is free, you **must** have gone through the Association's complaints procedure before contacting the Ombudsman.

Contact information for this service is

The **Scottish Public Services Ombudsman**

**Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Bridgeside House
99 McDonald Road
Edinburgh
EH7 4NS**



Freephone 0800 377 7330

or

call 0131 225 5300



Website: <https://www.spsso.org.uk/>

The Ombudsman will usually only consider your complaint if it is submitted within 12 months of the decision which you are unhappy with. Only in exceptional circumstances will cases outwith this time period be considered.

Who Will Know About My Complaint?

We will respect the confidentiality of your complaint. While we are making investigations we will try **not** to reveal your name any more than is necessary.

HOWEVER if your complaint involves a member of staff or tenant it may be difficult for us to investigate the matter without talking to the tenant/board member/staff member.

Getting Independent Advice

You may feel it is important for you to get independent advice before you decide whether to complain to us formally. Advice agencies may include:-

- Welfare Benefits Service
- Housing Benefit Section of Local Authority
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Tenant's Group or Federation
- Solicitor



Section 9

Moving Out

If you want to leave your tenancy, we need at least 28 days written notice (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 get your notice we will write to tell you the end date of the tenancy and make an appointment to visit. We will be visiting to make sure the house is in a good condition. We will let you know if you have to decorate or carry out any repairs before you leave.

Before you leave you must:

- ♦ Allow the Ark staff in to inspect the property.
- ♦ Pay all rent and monies due to us.
- ♦ Return all keys for the property to us on or before the day your tenancy ends.
- ♦ The property and garden should be left clean and tidy.
- ♦ Let Housing Benefit and Council Tax know you are moving.
- ♦ Take final meter readings.

If you are required to carry out repairs and these are not done, we will do the repairs and charge you the full cost.

Abandoned Homes

Sometimes tenants leave their homes without telling us. If we have reason to believe that you are not longer living in the property we can take action to end your tenancy without going to court.

We would do this by serving a '**Notice of Abandonment**' to your house. This will tell you that we think you have abandoned your house and give you **28 days** to contact us.



If you do not contact us with the **28 days**, we will serve a second notice which end your tenancy with ARK.

If there is a joint tenancy and we have reason to think one tenant no longer lives in or plans to live in the house we will serve a notice on the abandoned tenant. They will have 28 days to reply, if not we will serve another notice and the tenancy will end 8 weeks later. Copies will also be sent to the remaining tenant.

If your tenancy ends and you are unhappy you can make a formal complaint to the Head of Housing Services on 0131 478 8146 within 6 months of the end of tenancy.

You also have the right of appeal to the sheriff court within 6 months of the end of tenancy.

Mutual Exchanges

A mutual exchange is when you arrange to swap homes with someone else.

It is up to you to find someone to exchange with, they can be Ark tenants or tenants of another landlord e.g. the council.



Let us know in writing if you want to do a mutual exchange. We will reply within 28 days with a decision.

House Exchange

House exchange is a scheme for tenants who want a house swap, flat swap or to exchange their home.



You can register online at:

www.houseexchange.org.uk. If you live in Edinburgh please say Ark is your landlord so you don't get charged a joining fee. In all other areas you will have to pay to join.

Once you have registered, you can put information about your home up on the website including photos, and look at other homes. You can do searches online for information on people wanting to move into your area, so you can see if their homes are suitable for you.

If you want any more information about this national mobility scheme please contact your housing services officer. : 0131 478 8146.

Why might Ark not agree to an exchange?

Ark may not agree if you or the tenant you are exchanging with:

- has been served with a notice of proceedings;
- if the house has been designed/adapted for disabilities;
- have not keep the garden/house in a good state;
- have very high arrears and no payment arrangement in place for at least 13 weeks;
- by exchanging you will be under-occupying/over occupying your property.

Transfers

If you want to move to another house we own you can apply to transfer.

You will need to complete an application which we will assess based on your re-housing need and allocate points.

For more details on transferring please get in touch with your housing services officer on 0131 478 8146.

Section 10

Useful Contacts



General

ARK Housing Association	0131 447 9027
<i>Emergency Gas Leaks</i>	0800 111 999
Scottish Power	0800 027 0072
Scottish Water	0800 0778 778
Scottish Public Service Ombudsman	0800 377 7330
National Debtline	0808 808 4000
Job Centre Plus <i>To make a new claim for benefit</i>	0800 055 6688
Job Centre plus <i>To check on an existing claim</i>	0845 608 8630
Emergency Services	999
Local Police Office	101
Pension Service <i>For pension and pension credit claims</i>	0845 606 0265
Childline	0800 11 11

Samaritans	116 123
Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance - <i>can help you find an advocacy service to suit your needs.</i>	0131 260 5380
The Money Advice Service	0808 800 0118
Shelter Scotland	0344 515 2000
Scottish Womens Aid	0800 027 1234
Citizens Advice Scotland	0131 550 1000
Legal Advice: Govan Law Centre	0141 440 2503
NHS 24	08454 24 24 24

Aberdeen	
Aberdeen City Council	01224 52 20 00
Environmental Services	0845 6080919
Housing Benefit/ Council Tax	08456 08 09 21
Social Work Department	01224 522055
Police	101
Citizens Advice Bureau	01224 569750
Aberdeen Mediation Services (Problems with neighbours)	01224 560570

Aberdeenshire	
Aberdeenshire Council	08456 08 12 07
Environmental Services	08456 08 12 03
Housing Benefit/Council Tax	08456 08 01 49
Social Work Department	08458 40 00 70
Aberdeenshire Citizens Advice Fraserburgh MacDuff Peterhead	01888 562 495 01888 562495 01779 478586
Aberdeenshire Mediation Services (Problems with neighbours)	08456 08 12 07

Angus	
Angus Council	08452 777 778
Environmental Services <i>Forfar</i> <i>Arbroath</i>	01307 473913 01241 435600
Housing Benefit/Council Tax	08452 777 778
Social Work Department	01307 474839
Citizens Advice Bureau <i>Forfar</i> <i>Arbroath</i>	01307 467096 01241 870661
Angus Mediation Services (Problems with neighbours)	01382 459252

Edinburgh	
Edinburgh Council	0131 200 2000
Environmental Services	0131 666 2623
Housing Benefit/Council Tax	0131 469 5000
Social Work Department	0131 200 2324
Edinburgh Citizens Advice Bureau	0131 332 9434 - Ferry Road 0131 557 1500 - Dundas Street
The Advice Shop	0131 200 2360
Edinburgh Mediation Services (Problems with neighbours)	0131 557 2101

Falkirk	
Falkirk Council	01324 506070
Environmental Services	01324 504982
Housing Benefit/Council Tax	01324 506070
Social Work Department	01324 506400
Falkirk Citizens Advice Bureau	01324 626070
Falkirk Mediation Services (Problems with neighbours)	01324 593700

Midlothian	
Midlothian Council	0131 270 7500
Environmental Services	0131 271 3336
Housing Benefit/Council Tax	0131 271 3201
Social Work Department	0131 270 7500
Citizens Advice Bureau	0131 660 1636
Midlothian Mediation Services (Problems with neighbours)	0131 271 3641

Moray	
Moray Council	01343 543451
Environmental Services	01343 563345
Housing Benefit/ Council Tax	01343 563456
Social Work Department Buckie Forres	01542 837200 01309 694000
Moray Citizens Advice Bureau	01343 550088
Moray Mediation Services (Problems with neighbours)	0300 1234566

Perth and Kinross	
Perth and Kinross Council	01738 475000
Environmental Services	01738 476476
Housing Benefit/Council Tax	01738 476049
Social Work Department	0845 30 111 20
Perth and Kinross Citizens Advice Bureau	01738 450580
Perth and Kinross Mediation Services (Problems with neighbours)	01738 445753

West Lothian	
West Lothian Council	01506 775 000
Environmental Services	01506 775 401
Housing Benefit/ Council Tax	01506 776 800
Social Work Department	01506 775 666
West Lothian Citizens Advice Bureau	01506 432 977

Contacting us:



Write to us:

“The Priory”
Canaan Lane
Edinburgh EH10 4SG

Phone us:



Housing: 0131 478 8146
Repairs: See Section 5, Page 27/28

Our opening times

Monday to Thursday

9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

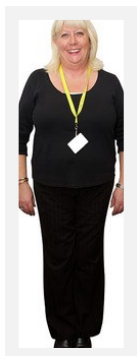
Friday

9.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.



E-mail: admin@arkha.org.uk

Website: www.arkha.org.uk



Or speak to ARK support staff