



Annual Tenants' Report



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Welcome

Bobby Duffy
Ark Chief Executive



Welcome to Ark's annual report which provides information to you, our tenants on Ark's performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter and reports on your levels of satisfaction with Ark as your Landlord.

This report covers the period from April 2020 to March 2021, which is the period when Covid-19 had the greatest impact on all of our lives.

I reported last year the initial steps we took to ensure our more vulnerable tenants were kept safe during lockdown and little did we know at that time, the extent and timescale the restrictions would be applied.

Let me use this opportunity to say I hope you and your families have stayed well since Covid-19 impacted all of our lives.

The restrictions meant that all non-essential housing activities and property maintenance activities were suspended and only emergency and regulatory compliance activities such as gas safety checks, were carried out. The housing and asset management teams remained focused on providing excellent services throughout this period and I wish to thank them for their

diligence and commitment during a very difficult period.

I was delighted that we were able to carry out a tenant's satisfaction survey at the end of 2020, which meant we had more up to date information on how satisfied you are with Ark as your landlord. Thank you if you responded to this and if you did not respond, can I urge you to do so the next time we carry out a survey, as the information you provide us with, identifies the key areas where we need to make the improvements we know you want to see.

I will pick out a few highlights from the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) performance report to demonstrate areas we did well in and areas where we remain committed to making improvements:

- 73% of our tenants who responded to the survey said we were good at keeping you informed about services and decisions
- 94% of tenants who moved into their home in the previous year were still in that home a year later
- 70% of tenants are satisfied with how we are managing your neighbourhoods
- 97% of repairs were completed right first time

These areas are important to you and we are pleased with the performance, but want to do better and will remain focused on making improvements.

There are also a number of areas you told us we can improve on and we remain committed to continuing to focus our energy on getting better in these areas:

- 54% of those who responded to the survey said you were satisfied with opportunities to participate in the landlords decision making; whilst there are a number of caveats to this result, we will remain focused on improving in this area
- 80% said you were satisfied with the quality of your home
- It took a little longer to respond to emergency repairs, moving to 5.42 hours from 3.81 the previous year. This can in part, be explained by the challenges for all trades having access to skilled labour, as we have seen the impact of Brexit and Covid-19 hit the property maintenance and construction industry

We will continue to remain focused on improving our results in these areas and I am confident you will see a notable difference in performance levels across all of our landlord services, in the coming year.

I updated you on the launch of our 5 year business plan last year, which has a key focus upon improving our tenants services and ensuring our housing is of good quality.

We are now in year 2 of the business plan and are very active in a number of areas that should bring benefits to you, our tenants and I have selected a few areas that you should hear more about in the next 6 months; we plan to:

- Continue working on putting together a tenant scrutiny group and our hope is that this group will be established and will offer the level of scrutiny necessary on our performance as landlord, on behalf of all tenants
- Complete a survey of 100% of our housing stock that will feed into our asset management strategy and ensure we invest in the right areas over the coming years to provide the best quality of housing to you
- Create a Community Benefit Fund to be used by our Housing and Maintenance Officers to deliver local improvements within communities
- Review and redesign our property repair service, to implement improvement to deliver a customer focused service, with a right first time repairs strategy

I hope you enjoy reading this annual report and if you have any questions, please speak to colleagues from the housing and asset management teams.

Thank you for continuing to choose Ark as your landlord.

Bobby

Background



As required by Section 31 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010, the Scottish Social Housing Charter set the standards and outcomes that all social landlords like Ark should aim to achieve when performing their housing activities.

We are responsible for meeting the standards and outcomes set out in the Charter.

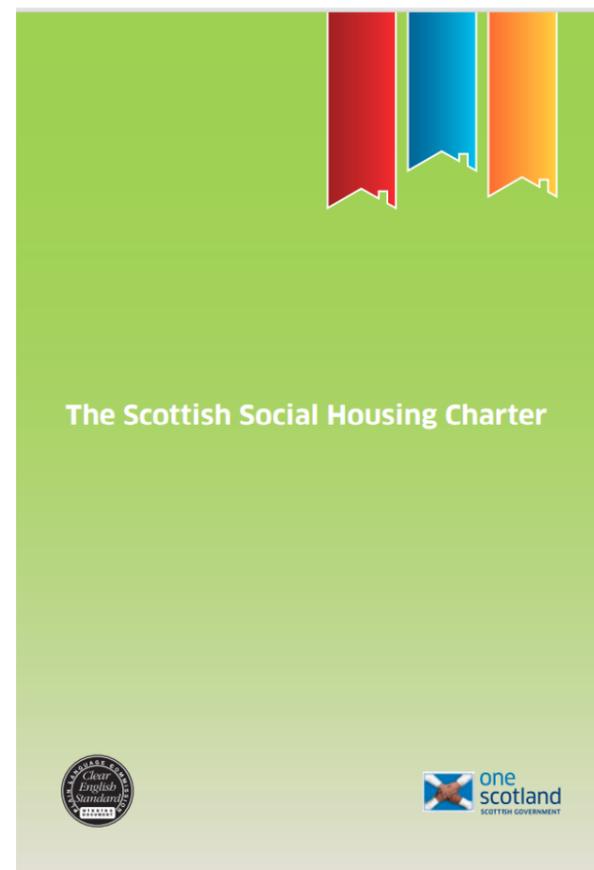
We are accountable to our tenants and other customers for how well we meet these standards and outcomes.

We should ensure our performance management and reporting systems show how well we are achieving the outcomes; identify any areas where we need to improve; and enable us to report to you and the Scottish Housing Regulator.

We must then produce a report to all our tenants to detail our annual performance.

In this report we have compared the performance to the previous year 2019-2020 and compared to the Scottish Average.

The Scottish Average is the average for all Housing Associations and Local Authorities in Scotland. This figure is calculated by the Scottish Housing Regulator.



This year we consulted tenants to find out what they wanted to feature in the annual report. We received feedback from 25 tenants.

We listened to this feedback and we have included information that tenants said was important to them:

- Developments
- Value for money
- Quality of housing
- Repairs and maintenance
- How Ark spends tenants money
- Information on Scottish Housing Quality Standards
- Tenant participation
- Neighbourhood and communities
- Tenancy sustainment
- Complaints

The report has been broken down into sections:

- Ark's Assets
- Customer Service
- Finance

Keys and Symbols

This year's report shows performance by the traffic light colouring system:

GREEN—indicates that we are exceeding our target and there has been an improvement from the last financial year.

YELLOW—indicates that we are not meeting our target and our performance has remained the same since the last financial year.

RED—indicates that we are out with our target and that our results have underperformed from the last financial year.

Ark's Assets



Quality of housing

The Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)

it is the main way the Scottish Government measure housing quality. It means social landlords must make sure their tenants' homes:

- are energy efficient, safe and secure
- not seriously damaged
- have kitchens and bathrooms that are in good condition

Over the last few years we have instructed an external consultant to carry out an annual survey of about 20% of our properties. In our annual returns to the charter this year we declared:

- 74% of our stock meeting SHQS
- 31 properties are exempt
- 1 property declared as an abeyance*

	TREND	2020-2021	2019-2020	SCOTTISH AVERAGE
Ark properties which meet SHQS	↑	74%	73%	91%
Tenants who are satisfied with the quality of their home	↓	80%	86%	87%
Ark properties which fail to meet SHQS	→	14%	14%	N/A
Ark properties exempt from SHQS	↑	11%	13%	N/A

*Abeyance – when work cannot be done for ‘social’ reasons relating to tenants’ behaviour to make a property meet SHQS. An element in abeyance is neither compliant nor non-compliant with SHQS, it is in suspension. The element in abeyance should be turned into a pass once the co-operation of tenant is secured.

This year we had a reduction in the number of properties which are considered within the scope of SHQS. This is because we converted one of our developments into a large HMO property, and as such the units were re-classified.

We are continually reviewing our stock to identify any future works required to ensure we continue to achieve SHQS compliance, alongside seeking opportunities to claim available grant funding to assist with the investment.

Capital investment plans to bring the remaining properties back up to SHQS standard were affected due to Covid-19 restrictions with the non emergency works

prohibited for the majority of the year. Plans to catch up on this work have been phased into the next 4 years.

During the financial year 2021-22 we will be carrying out a full survey of all of our stock which will enable us to create an asset management strategy for all planned maintenance over the next 5-10 years.

Coming soon in our Winter Newsletter

In our forthcoming Winter Newsletter due for release later this year, we will have an update on our two new build sites at Penicuik and Livingston. We will also have an update on how we procure our services and supplies ensuring we demonstrate value for money.



Ark's Assets



Quality of housing



Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH)

While maintaining the SHQS, the challenge ahead is to meet the Scottish Government's Energy Efficiency Standard in Social Housing (EESH), which will require energy efficiency in certain dwellings to meet higher standards than the SHQS.

Information	Self-contained properties
EESH Compliant	230
EESH Fail	41
EESH Exemption	1
Total	272
Amount invested in bringing properties up to the EESH during 2020-21	£40,391

- We have reduced the number of properties which are classed as EESH exemptions. Previously, we had considered some of our properties to be exempt due to the significant financial investment which would be required to bring them up to EESH standard. However, we are now exploring opportunities with renewable technologies, alongside potential grant funding, which we believe these properties will be eligible for.
- We will continue to invest in our assets to ensure those which are identified as failing the EESH standard are upgraded as soon as possible. This will improve the quality of living for our residents and help with savings on their fuel bills.

Ark's Assets



Repairs and Maintenance

During 2020/21 we spent the following on upgrading and maintaining properties:

Boiler Replacements	42k
Heating upgrades	6k
Bathrooms	57k
Responsive Repairs	381k

Due to COVID-19, we were unable to carry out non-emergency repairs, cyclical works (including grounds maintenance), capital works or planned works.

We will be investing during 2021-22 in ad-hoc pieces of work to catch up on the grounds maintenance within our communities which fell behind during the pandemic.

GAS SAFETY CHECKS COMPLETED: 99%

We couldn't carry out 1 service due to lack of access to the property.

TOTAL INVESTED IN PROPERTIES IMPROVEMENTS:

£486k

- 383 emergency repairs were completed in an average of 5.42 hours
- 1,212 non-emergency repairs were completed in an average of 5.29 days
- 96.5% repairs were completed right first time

	TREND	2020-2021	2019-2020	SCOTTISH AVERAGE
Average time to complete emergency repairs	↓	5 hours	3 hours	4 hours
Average time to complete non emergency repairs	→	5 days	5 days	6.7 days
Repairs completed right first time	→	97%	97%	92%

Customer Service



Tenant Participation

Tenant participation gives tenants an opportunity to influence decisions about the housing services they receive and it gives landlords better links to the community and the opportunity to work with others.

The introduction of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 created a legal requirement for landlords to actively develop and support tenant participation and engagement.



Ark tenants in Inverurie planting trees for Scottish Housing Day. Ark funded this activity through the Utilita Community Fund.

What has Ark done in 2020-2021 to engage with tenants?

Despite the global pandemic our housing management team have taken steps to continue to engage with tenants wherever possible. We have continued to produce a quarterly newsletter, made welfare calls to all of our tenants, offered tenants the opportunity to attend virtual events, completed tenant consultations and carried out our 3 yearly tenant satisfaction survey.

In addition to the above we put plans in place to set up a **Tenant Improvement Group**. This group gives tenants the chance to look in detail at the way Ark does things and make recommendations to the Ark Board of Management and as a result will have a say in the decision making and governance within Ark.

	TREND	2020-2021	2019-2020	SCOTTISH AVERAGE
Percentage of tenants who feel Ark is good at keeping them informed about services and decisions	↑	73%	70%	91.7%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with opportunities given to participate in decision making	↓	54%	70%	87%

We are always looking to get more of our tenants to engage with us and be involved in tenant participation. If you would like to become involved please contact a member of the housing team.

The number of tenants who thought we were good at keeping them informed increased from 70% to 73% in the most recent survey, whilst 9% said we were poor.

Around a fifth (18%) were ambivalent, feeling we are neither good nor poor at keeping them informed.

Analysis of agreement levels by age shows that tenants aged 18-34 were the most likely to disagree that they are kept informed (17%).

We therefore need to consider how we can engage better with tenants in this age group.

Although only 54% of tenants said they were satisfied with the opportunities to participate, only 6% were dissatisfied and a large proportion (40%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

It is common to find a large proportion stating 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' for this question as tenants may not have attempted to participate in decision making processes or make their views known and therefore feel unable to provide a 'satisfied' or 'dissatisfied' response.

Satisfaction was also low for those aged 18-34 and 55-64, though dissatisfaction was highest amongst those 35-44 (11%).

Tenants who have been with Ark a long time (20 years or more) were significantly more satisfied than those with a tenancy length of 6-10 years. It may make sense that their awareness or experience of participating is higher, given they've been with Ark longer.

Customer Service



Positive feedback & complaints



'Thanks again for all your help over the past year and a bit. It was delightful having you as a housing officer!'

'I used to tell my colleagues to think, not just of technicalities but, how would you hope to be treated if you were in the same position. You have done this in this instance and my wife and I are exceedingly grateful!'

	1st stage	2nd stage	Total
Housing and Maintenance complaints received in 2020/2021	8	3	11
Complaints carried forward from 2019/2020	0	0	0
Number of complaints responded in full by Ark in 2020/2021	7	3	10
Time taken in working days to provide a full response	31	83	114



	TREND	2020-2021	2019-2020	SCOTTISH AVERAGE
Percentage of all complaints responded to in full at stage 1	↓	87.5%	100%	97%
Percentage of all complaints responded to in full at stage 2	→	100%	100%	93%
The average time in working days for a full response at stage 1	↓	4	3	5
The average time in working days for a full response at stage 2	↓	28	24	19



Learning from complaints

The issue: one of our tenants was not happy about the lack of flexibility they experienced with the appointment system of one of our contractors.

What we did: the Maintenance Officer was able to resolve their complaint and as part of our annual improvement plan a full review of our repairs service is currently underway.

The issue: the relative of a supported tenant made a complaint as he was frustrated at the lack of some elements of building repair and decoration while he could see other areas progress.

What we did: one of the outcomes of this complaint was a recommendation for a review to improve customer communication.

Customer Service



Tenancy Sustainment

Tenancy sustainment is the provision of a range of measures which gives tenants the necessary support to manage their tenancy.

The Scottish Charter Outcome 11 relates to ‘Tenancy Sustainment’ which states:

‘Social landlords must ensure that tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home and ensure suitable support is available, including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations’.



The table below provides information about Ark’s performance, a comparison to the previous year and the Scottish average performance.

	TREND	2020-2021	2019-2020	SCOTTISH AVERAGE
Percentage of tenancies began in previous year remained more than a year	↑	94%	93%	91%

What is Ark doing to help tenancy sustainment?

Allocating Ark Properties

To ensure that tenancies are sustained, Ark works to make suitable allocations when properties become available. We always work in accordance with our allocation policy and ensure that all pre-allocation checks are completed. These include carrying out pre-allocation visits to the prospective applicant’s current property, ensure we receive satisfactory references from their current landlord and carry out an income and expenditure assessment to check that the property being allocated is affordable for the applicant.

In addition to the pre-allocation checks we provide new tenants with a comprehensive sign up pack and carry out face to face sign ups interviews to explain the terms and conditions of the tenancy agreement they are signing with Ark.

Once new tenants have moved into the property we will carry out a settling in visits within 8 weeks of the tenancy start date.

We also carry out annual house visits to all of our existing tenants. Unfortunately due to the COVID-19 pandemic we postponed the non-essential visits to all tenants and these will be carried out in 21/22. Each of these visits provide us the opportunity to engage with tenants, get their feedback or signpost them to services that they may need to be able to sustain their tenancy.

Between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021 we carried out 27 ‘settling in visits’.

The majority of these visits were carried out virtually or via a telephone call due to COVID 19 pandemic.

Below is information about the allocations that Ark made in 2020- 2021:

- 11 new tenancies were let to existing Ark tenants
- 13 new tenancies were let to other applicants
- 2 new tenancy were let to applicants from Ark’s waiting list
- 1 new tenancy was let from a nomination from a Local Authority

Customer Service



Anti-social behaviour

We want you to be happy in your home. We work to ensure that any issues of anti-social behaviour are dealt with as quickly as possible.



The table below provides information about Ark's performance, a comparison to the previous year and the Scottish average performance.

	TREND	2020-2021	2019-2020	SCOTTISH AVERAGE
Percentage of tenants satisfied with management of neighbourhood	→	70%	70%	86%
Anti-social behaviour cases reported	↑	11	14	100%
Percentage of anti-social behaviour cases which were resolved	→	100%	100%	94%
Percentage of court actions initiated which resulted in eviction due to antisocial behaviour	→	0	0	15%

When we receive a report of an incident of anti-social behaviour, we will categorise it to ensure that we have a consistent approach to all incidents. It should be recognised however that not all cases will be easily categorised.

of cases of anti-social behaviour which has been categorised, the response targets and resolution targets. Whilst we will respond quickly to Category A incidents, the more serious nature of these incidents and the need to involve a range of partners means that they can take longer to reach a satisfactory resolution.

The table below gives general descriptions

Category A	Category B	Category C
Incidents of a very serious nature	Incidents of a serious nature	Nuisance behaviour - breach of tenancy conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criminal behaviour in or around the property including drug dealing. Physical assault. Threat of violence. Harassment. Serious damage to property. Other criminal behaviour such as prostitution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent and/or serious noise disturbance. Allegations of threatening / aggressive / abusive behaviour. Ongoing failure to control children. Ongoing failure to control pets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One – off noise disturbance. Pet nuisance Keeping pets without permission. Untidy gardens. Stairs not being cleaned.
Response: Immediate or within 1 working day if an immediate response is not possible.	Response: Within 5 working days	Response: Within 5 working days
Resolution: Within 12 months	Resolution: Within 6 months	Resolution: Within 1 month

Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

In 2019-2020 we made the decisions to change 1 tenancy from a Scottish Secure Tenancy to a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy (SSST) due to ongoing anti-social behaviour incidents.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 allows for creation of Short Scottish secure tenancy for anti-social behaviour.

When a tenant is issued with a SSST it means that, if they continue to act in an anti-social manner, Ark can repossess their property.

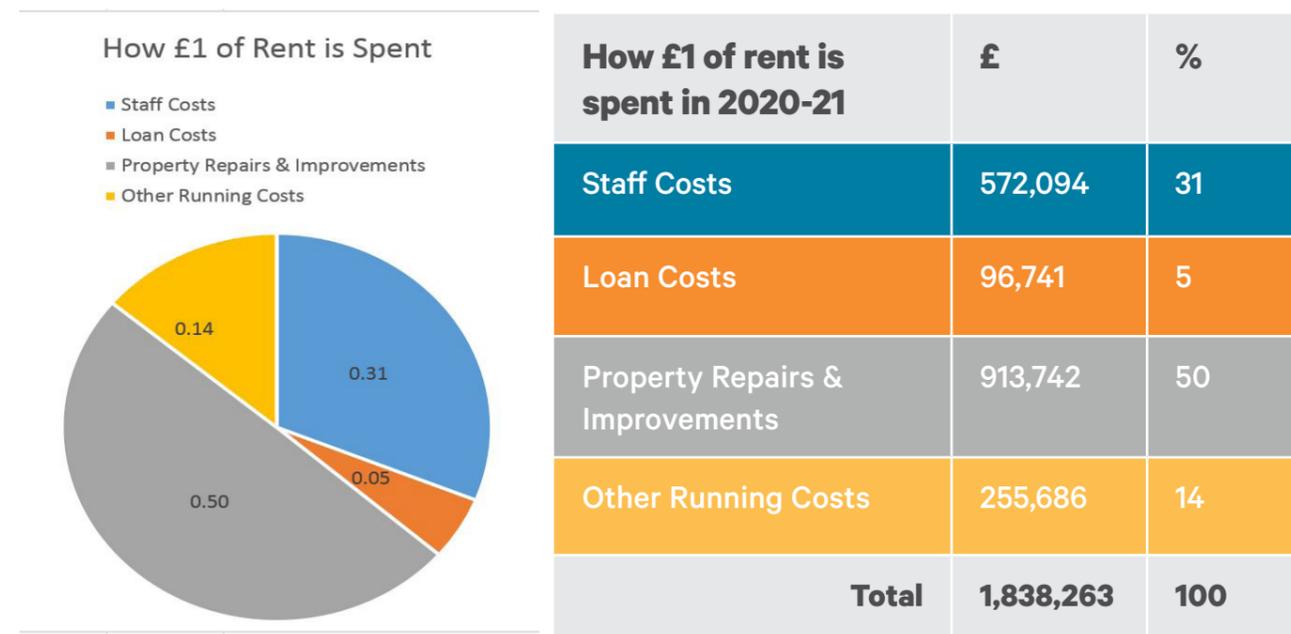
Finance



How do we spend your rent?

All of the money that is collected through rent charges gets reinvested back into services and improving properties.

The pie chart below details how Ark spent every £1 of rent that was collected. The table below also gives the breakdown of these costs.



- Staff costs are the salaries for the Housing and Maintenance teams.
- Loan costs is the interest paid and the amount of loan repaid. The loans were taken to purchase properties.
- Property repairs and improvements are investment in existing properties, for example bathroom or kitchen upgrades. It also include repairs, cycle maintenance and work done to re-let empty properties.
- Other running costs include staff travel expenses, training, subscriptions, computer costs, North Office rent, equipment, and other office running costs.

The table below provides information about Ark's performance, a comparison to the previous year and the Scottish average performance.

	TREND	2020-2021	2019-2020	SCOTTISH AVERAGE
Average time to re-let properties	↓	32 days	26 days	56 days
Percentage of rent lost due to empty homes	↑	0.54%	1.14%	1.37%
Percentage collected of rent due	↑	100%	99%	99%
Current arrears percentage of rent due	↑	1.06%	1.68%	6.14%
Percentage of court actions which resulted in eviction due to non-payment of rent	↑	0%*	100%	5%

*Ark did not take court action against any tenants for non-payment.

The average time it took us to re-let properties increased from 26 days to 32 days because of the initial lockdown restrictions which prevented people from moving between local authority areas.

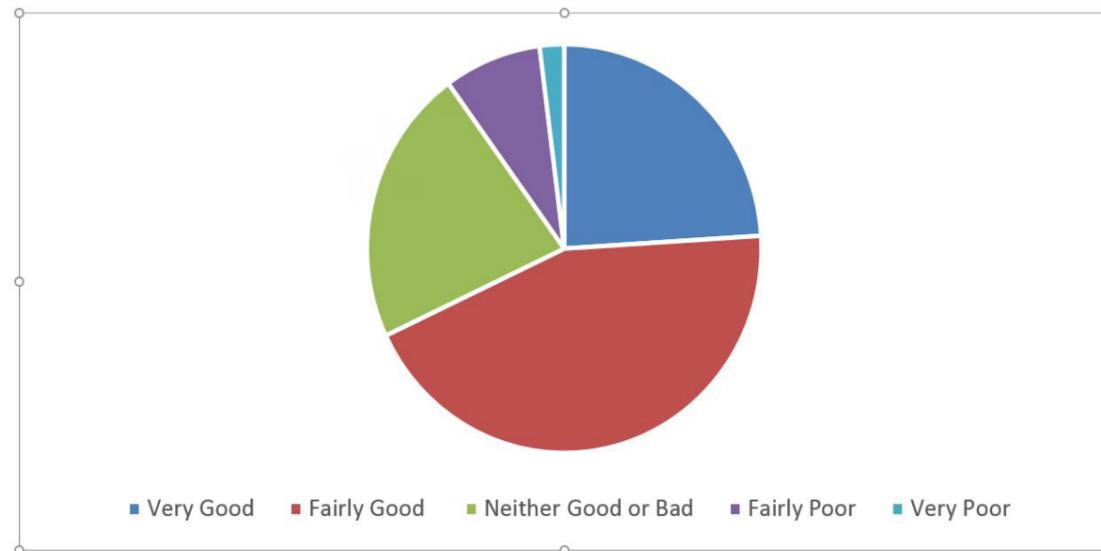
Finance



Value for money

The Scottish Housing Charter Outcome 13 value for money sets out that social landlords manage all aspects of their businesses so that tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.

As part of the tenant satisfaction survey that we carried out in 2020 tenants were asked if they thought that the accommodation and services we provide represent value for money. The chart below provides the responses of the 169 tenants that took part in the survey.



PERCENTAGE OF ARK TENANTS WHO FEEL RENT FOR THEIR PROPERTY REPRESENTS GOOD VALUE FOR MONEY



68%



In December 2020 we consulted tenants on the rent increase and asked them if they preferred an increase of 2.6% or 3.1%.

The rent questionnaire was sent to 421 tenants: 29 tenants responded, which was 28 less than the previous year. 18 tenants stated their preference for the lower increase of 2.6%, whilst 4 tenants chose

the higher increase of 3.1% and 6 did not answer the question.

The rent increase of 2.6% was approved by Ark's Board of Management for 2021-2022.

In the table below we have compared Ark's weekly rent charge to peers who provide specialist social housing.

PROPERTY SIZE	ARK'S WEEKLY CHARGE 2020-2021	ARK'S WEEKLY CHARGE 2019-2020	PEER RSL AVERAGE
Studio	£89.75	£87.67	£114.40
1 bedroom	£97.95	£99.24	£122.02
2 bedrooms	£111.78	£110.36	£117.10
3 bedrooms	£105.30	£102.70	£115.88
4 bedrooms	£108.67	£106.13	£142.51

Ark's rents include service charges which can result in them being higher than other RSL's.

As part of the business plan 2020-2025 the assets and housing team will be reviewing all of the service charges to ensure that they demonstrate value for money.

Tenant Feedback

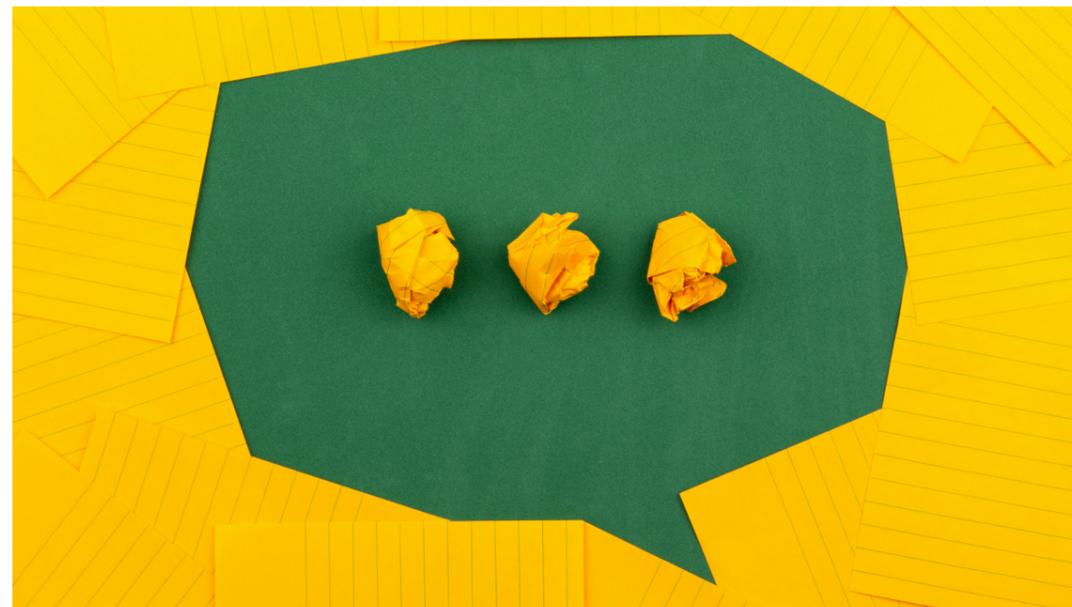


We hope that you enjoyed reading our 2020/2021 Annual Report.

Please let us know what you thought about this year's report by completing the enclosed feedback form or emailing feedback to housing@arkha.org.uk

Each year we consult with tenants to find out what they want the report to include.

If you would like to be involved in producing next year's annual report please contact the Housing Team on 0131 478 8146





Housing Services Team Contacts

housing@arkha.org.uk

0131 478 8146



Property Services Team Contacts

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 and we will add your updated contact details onto our system.



housing@arkha.org.uk