

Ark[®] NEWSLETTER

Update from Chief Executive



Welcome to our first newsletter of 2023.

We have been reviewing the production of the newsletter and the content from previous editions and we hope this packed edition gives you a real flavour of the work going on across Ark for the communities we serve.

This edition provides updates on our workforce and recognises some key achievements of colleagues across Ark; it details how we are progressing participation and tenant involvement; it focuses upon Governance and demonstrates how we are performing in key areas such as complaints and for our tenants provides a detailed update on key areas of focus and delivery for the housing and asset teams at Ark.

It is important to provide you with information on how Ark is performing across a number of key business areas and we hope this edition gives you a clear sense of how we are focused upon improving the quality of our services to you and delivering

excellent customer service to everyone at Ark; if this is not your experience please let us know.

As always, we have been busy planning for the future. We have worked with the Board and created a new Corporate Strategy 2023-2026. This strategy replaces the business plan, although much of the work we began over the last couple of years is continued as part of the new strategy.

We felt it was important to refresh our strategic aims at this time, given the amount of change we have all been through in the last couple of years and in response to the challenges that have emerged during that time too.

We remain ambitious for Ark and in turn determined to provide you with the high quality services you should expect from us. We want to grow both the care and the housing businesses to provide us with greater flexibility for future investment across care and housing.



We have identified a number of strategic priorities for the next three years and I wish to highlight a few key areas for you at this time:

- ▶ We have created a Housing Development Strategy and plan to build over 100 new homes in the next 5 years. This will provide much needed social housing in key areas of Scotland and generate new income for Ark to reinvest in our existing homes and services;
- ▶ We have created an Asset Management Strategy designed to improve the quality and energy efficiency of our existing homes and improve tenant's satisfaction with their home. We have agreed a 10 year investment plan with the Board and will bring you more news on how you will directly benefit from this in the future;
- ▶ We have created a Digital Strategy designed to continue our digital development as an organisation and the use of technology to improve the quality of our services across Ark;

- ▶ We will implement a Care and Support Development Strategy which aims to create a new model of delivery and evidence based practice that will enhance the lives of people we support; and
- ▶ We will implement a new People Strategy that aims to create an environment and culture where our people are appropriately rewarded for the job they do; that ensures our people feel valued, where they can develop, grow and thrive, leading to improved retention.

I am sure you will see something in these strategic priorities that will directly and positively impact you and we will bring you more detailed updates as the year progresses.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of the Ark Newsletter and please get in touch to provide us with feedback on the content.

Best wishes

Bobby

Please tell us about what you think by e-mailing us at admin@arkha.org.uk, using the **CONTACT US function on the website or by phoning us on **0131 478 8146**. Please also tell us what information you would like to get from us in future editions.**



Organisational Updates

Ark Care & Support Talent & Engagement Pilot Project



Lindsay Fallon started in the role of Talent & Engagement coordinator in December. This is a 1 year pilot project focused on supporting the Ark

Care and Support Services with recruitment and retention in the Edinburgh & the Lothian's. Lindsay is currently working with the Support Workers and Care & Support Managers in the pilot area to gather feedback which will help to improve Arks recruitment and induction processes.

The project aim is to increase staffing levels in the pilot area. This has already

been achieved in two of Ark's lower staffed services in the pilot area at Hoseasons Gardens in Edinburgh and in Livingston. The Hoseasons Gardens team are currently not recruiting any more staff due to the success of recruitment. Lindsay is now working with the other Care and Support Services in the pilot area to help them to also increase their staffing levels.

Ark is looking for dedicated and caring individuals to become Support Workers and our current job vacancies can be viewed on our website – <https://www.arkha.org.uk/work-with-us/vacancies/>

We would like to congratulate staff members who completed their Scottish Vocational Qualifications since our latest issue of the Ark Newsletter.

Social Services and Healthcare – SCQF Level 6 (SVQ2)

Emily B, Jennifer R, Florence A, Michelle R, Stacey D, Iain M, Lucy H, Adelle F, Christopher B, Catherine T, Lawren R, Pamela G, Rebecca C, Melanie O, Okechukwu I, Lauren B, Samantha D, Siobhan D, Thomas V, Samantha M, Kate H, Chloe P, Anne A, Cheyanne L, Catherine Mary M, Rebecca T, Clare H, Shannon B, Cynthia G, Erin H, Angela R, Beth S, Faizan R, Gwen B, Mandy R, Michelle P, Alasdair C, Elaine D, Agnes M, Tracey L, Theresa M, Carol D, Richard W, Carly M

SCQF Level 7 (SVQ3)
Dawn S

SVQ 3 Learning and Development
George J

SVQ 4 Management (at SCQF Level 9)
Theresa C

SVQ 4 Management +2 LMC Units
Shaun S, Rhona G

SCQF Level 9 (SVQ 4)
Gayna C, Kirstie M, Christine S

Ark's Strategic Leadership & Management Programme
Aysha C, Yvonne D

We would also like to congratulate staff across Ark who are progressing in their studies:

Paul K (Finance Assistant) passed his 'AAT Introduction to Bookkeeping' exam back in December and is progressing towards the AAT Level 2 Qualification in Accounting.

Participation

Voices Update

The Voices Group is back! Supported people from across Scotland came together on the 17th March. It was great to see everyone again.

We talked about Ark Values and how people see them put into practice.

We had special guests from the National Involvement Network who talked to us about our rights to take part. They run groups in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee. If you would like to join them, let Gloria know!

We finished off with a game of bingo and we had some lucky winners who went home with their precious prizes.



Speak Out Groups Update

In February, supported people in Grangemouth received **Staff Recruitment Training**. Tracy, William, Margaret, Alex and Kieran learned about how to help Ark to choose the right person for the job!

They said they enjoyed being included and coming up with their own questions.

Other supported people also had an opportunity to take part in interviewing candidates for 2 roles in Ark.

Fee and Lizzie interviewed people for the role of Assistant Director of Care & Support.

Tracy, Charlotte and David interviewed people for the role of Head of Compliance & Improvement.

They were all great at asking their questions and scoring candidates.

Their involvement made a huge difference in making sure the jobs went to the right people.



The Galashiels Speak Out Group

had a busy start of the year!

While the group is planning a trip to East Links Family Park and North Berwick, Layla and Gemma took to Eyemouth to explore historic landmarks and hidden castles.

The group added new members to their WhatsApp group. Members felt this was really important and offered words of support and comfort via the app to a group member who recently had to deal with a very difficult time.

Christine enjoyed her 81st Birthday and in true tradition the group yet again set out to make it a day to remember!

Go to our website to read the full article!



Ark Rainbow Service Improvement Group

The Scrutiny Group now has 6 members coming from a wide range of areas across Scotland: including Forres in Moray; Forfar in Angus; Grangemouth in Falkirk and Uphall in West Lothian.

Since the group was first established in May 2022 it has met 9 times. They have completed their first scrutiny activity, which was to look at the way the landscaping contract was set up and run. They have produced their first report and a detailed action plan is being agreed. Once this has been finalised the Report will be made available on Ark's website.

They have started their second activity which is to look at the way Ark provides a repairs service. This is a large project to look at in detail so it will be broken down into smaller manageable areas.

If you would like to get involved in the group, please contact Sharon Donohoe from TIS on **0141 248 1242** or by e-mailing her at sdonohoe@tis.org.uk

You can get more information on the activities of TIS on their website www.tis.org.uk.



Governance

Becoming a member of Ark

Ark Housing Association Ltd. is a membership based company. Members apply to have a share in Ark and are noted in the Register of Members.

We aim to have a broad-based membership which matches our purpose and objects and the communities we serve.

We welcome membership applications from tenants, service users, community groups and other residents of the towns and villages in which we are active.

If you have an interest in our work and can bring your skills, views and experience to help the way Ark is run, please apply to become a member.

Members are entitled to:

- ▶ attend and vote at Annual or Special General Meetings of the Association;
- ▶ seek election to the Board of Management;
- ▶ vote at meetings on issues such as elections to the Board



Would you like to become a member of Ark?

If so, contact Mary Bell at mary.bell@arkha.org.uk, or on **0131 478 8150**.

You will be sent an:

- ▶ application form;
- ▶ a data protection consent form;
- ▶ a covering letter giving details of how the application should be sent to us and how it will be processed.

The Board of Management will look at each application at their first meeting

following receipt of the application form, or as soon as possible thereafter.

If the application is approved, membership will take effect immediately, and within 7 working days the applicant will:

- ▶ get written confirmation of the decision;
- ▶ have their name entered in the Register of Members;
- ▶ get a Share Certificate.

Complaints Update for October to December 2022

Here is our update about complaints received by Ark between October and December 2022.

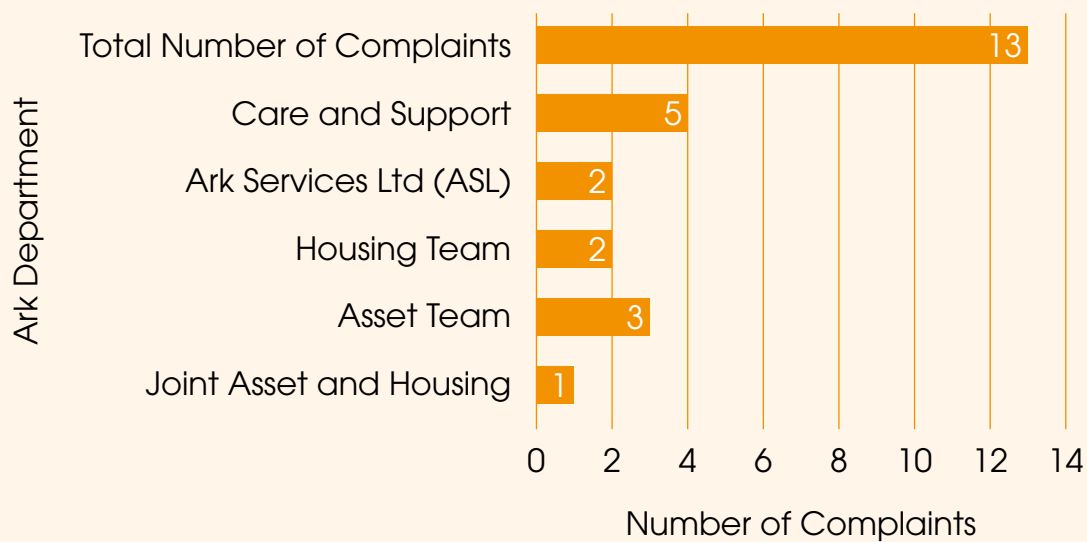
There has been a change of staff within the Compliance and Improvement Team which means we can't at this stage provide information to the end of March

2023. This will be provided in the next newsletter.

During this period Ark received a total of 13 complaints.

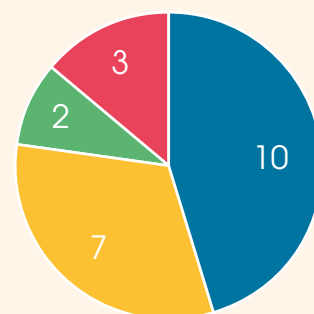
The number of complaints for each department and the resulting outcomes is summarised as follows:

Complaints Received Oct - Dec 2022



Of these thirteen complaints we responded to ten under stage one of Ark's complaints procedure, with all receiving a response within 5 working days. The remaining three complaints were investigated under stage two of the complaints procedure, with two receiving a response within 20 working days and the third requiring an extension to 30 days in order to fully investigate the range of issues involved.

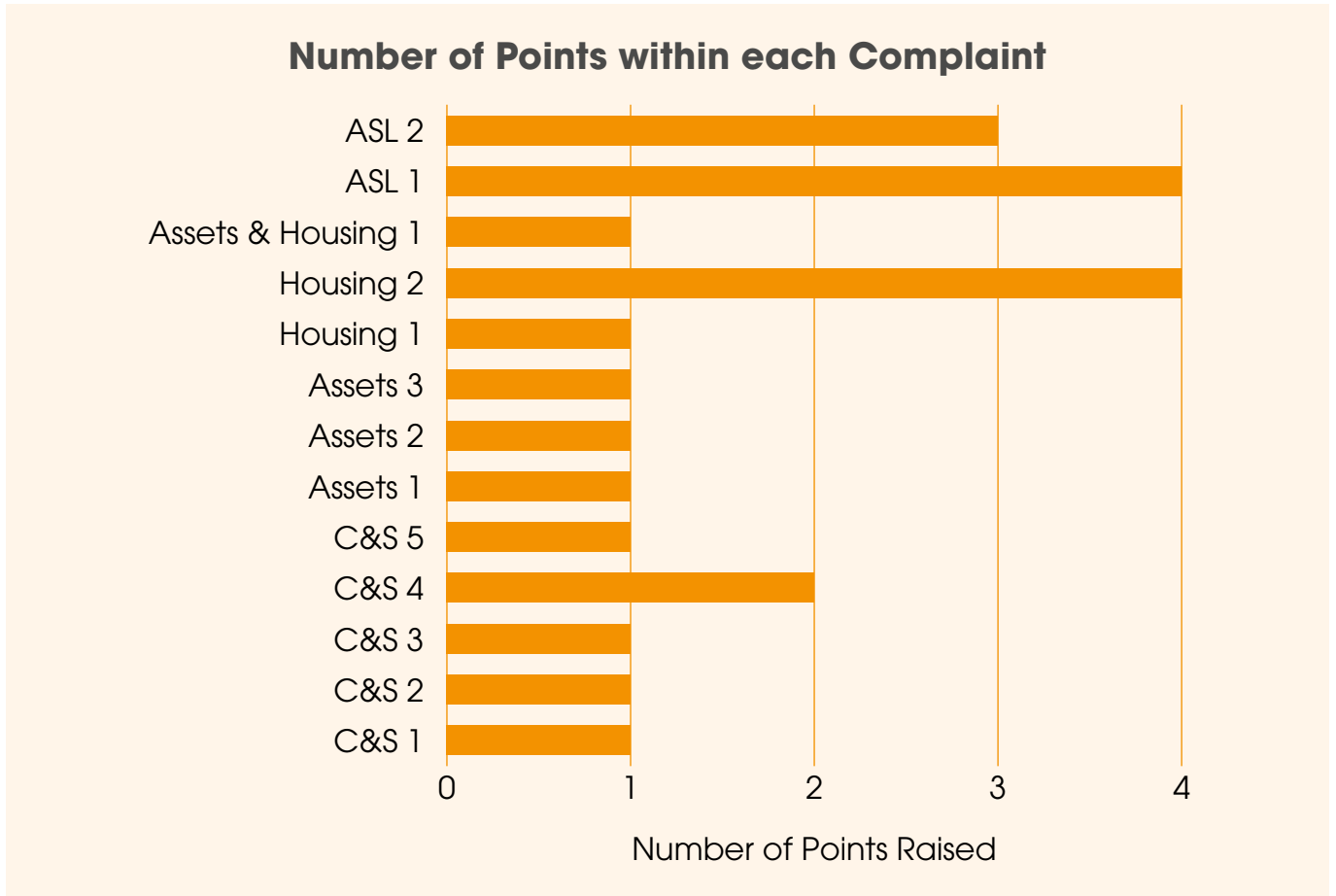
Complaint Outcomes Oct - Dec 2022



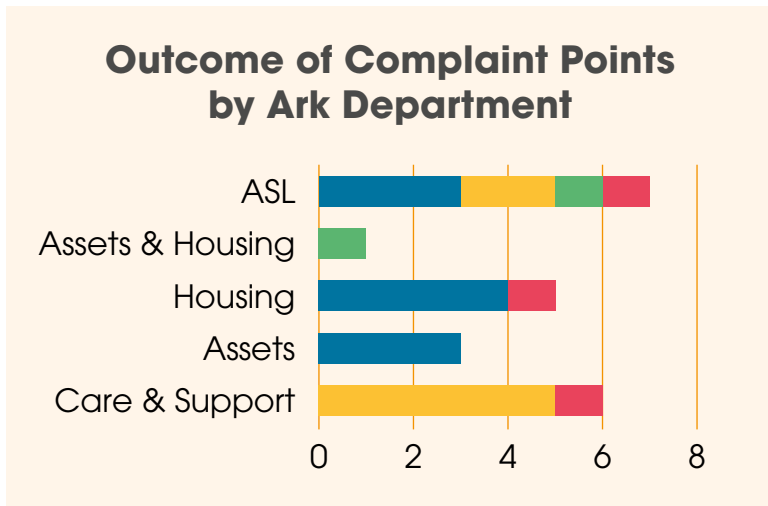
■ No of Points Resolved
 ■ No of Points Upheld
 ■ No of Points Partially Upheld
 ■ No of Points Not Upheld

Additional Information about Complaints

When Ark receives a complaint one of the first things we do is identify what is described within the procedure as “the points of complaint”. The following bar chart sets out the number of points within each complaint during this quarter.



The bar graph shows the outcome for each complaint point in each department. The pie chart shows the number of complaint points per outcome.



■ No of Points Resolved
 ■ No of Points Upheld
 ■ No of Points Partially Upheld
 ■ No of Points Not Upheld

Using complaints to improve service delivery

Since October 2022, **Housing Services** has received **4** complaints regarding the service the team provides. **3** of the complaints were upheld and we have taken action to improve the service that we provide and prevent future

complaints, the **1** complaint that we did not uphold was due to us acting within our rights as a registered social landlord and following the appropriate legislation to ensure all tenants live in a safe environment.

Complaint	Action we have taken
<p>Intensive Housing Management Charges for tenants in supported living and the increasing costs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provided complainant with full explanation of the charges. ▶ Provided training to members of the housing team to be able to answer any questions relating to the charges. ▶ Clear process in place for housing team to remove charges when tenants are no longer in receipt of housing benefit to ensure tenants are not financially disadvantaged.
<p>The timescale to respond to housing application review letters and the attitude of staff members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Amended the response times provide to applicants on the waiting list. ▶ Provided training to the housing team on the review of waiting list process. ▶ Staff member attended external training course on dealing with customers on the frontline.
<p>Unable to contact members of the housing team via phone</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Voicemail message for the main reception phone line updated. ▶ Each member of the housing team voicemail messages personalised to include alternative methods of contact and detailed opening hours. ▶ Main housing voicemail box updated to reflect hours of business and clear that you are contacting Ark.

Since October 2022, **Asset Services** have received **9** complaints. The majority of complaints raised were reporting work not being completed within the timescales.

The Asset Team are implementing new processes such as sending outstanding job reports to our contractors which will improve how the Asset team track timescales.

Complaint	Action we have taken
<p>Repairs reported were not completed within the allocated timescale</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Our Repairs Administrator ensured that the contractor completed the work as soon as possible. ▶ The Asset Team now meet with contractors every quarter to review their timescales.
<p>The contractor left a mess after completing work. They left marks on the walls and rubbish in the garden</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ark reminded the contractor that all jobs should be left tidy and clean. Contractors are asked to use a floor or shoe covering if completing work which requires it. ▶ Ark requested the contractor collect the rubbish which was left outside and reminded the contractor that this is not acceptable and rubbish should be removed from site following work.
<p>The laundry room is outdated and machines are old</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ark replaced the old washing machines and tumble driers with new. ▶ We arranged for the worktops to be renewed and additional shelving to be installed. ▶ We installed a cupboard to store materials.



Ark received a complaint from a group of tenants relating to their dissatisfaction with the repairs service and communication. The complaint process was managed under Stage 2 of our complaints procedure, with an independent Head of Service appointed to lead the investigation

and to identify and improve service delivery as a result of lessons learned from the issues raised.

Following the completion of the investigation the following improvement actions were identified and are being implemented as part of an action plan.

Complaint	Action we have taken
<p>Poor Repairs service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ All current/retained contractors, and going forward, new contractors to be placed on National Federation contractual rates to ensure quality and price certainty. ▶ Quarterly contract review meetings to be scheduled with all contractors.
<p>Poor Communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Notice boards to be reviewed ensuring there is up to date information. This will include up to date contractor numbers for Out of Hours procedure. ▶ Agree a communication procedure between Housing, Property and Contractors to ensure all parties are advised of works or part of any discussion. This will apply to care and support providers and supported tenants. ▶ Ensure the correct information is recorded on job reports being sent to Contractors. ▶ Notify Housing, Internal and External customers, supported people and their legal representatives of works required in other locations. ▶ Relationship management meetings to be scheduled with all external care providers. Ark's Housing Team to share any concerns or feedback they have received about contractors to their line manager as part of review meeting or immediately where necessary.

Information for Tenants

Meet the new team members who have recently joined the Property and Housing Departments

Victoria Hennessy

Senior Property Services Officer

Victoria joined Ark as a Property Services Officer in 2022 but has recently been promoted to the senior post. She will manage the Property team and day to day operational matters.



Alex Edwards

Senior Housing Services Officer

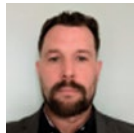
Alex joined Ark in May 2023. He has previously worked with another housing association as a Housing officer. He will manage the Housing team and day to day operational matters.



Brendan Thomson

Property Services Officer

Brendan joined Ark at the start of June 2023. He previously worked as a Property Manager in a private letting company where he dealt with all maintenance issues. He will deal with all property management issues in Peebles, Alloa, Dalkeith, Grangemouth, Hawick, Loanhead, Musselburgh, Uphall, Dunfermline, Cardenden, Broomhouse, Oxfangs, Restalrig, Niddrie Farm Grove, and West Adam/Richmond Street.



Claire Young

Housing Services Officer

Claire joined Ark in May 2023. She had previously worked with Aberdeenshire Council in the Homeless Assessment team. She will deal with all housing management issues in Moray, Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.



Ark has recently changed the way that the phones are answered within the Property & Housing Departments.

If you call our main reception number on **0131 447 9027** and choose **1** to report a property issue, or call the direct number of **0131 478 8143**, if the Property Services Assistant is on another call your call will be answered by the Housing Services Assistant who will take details of why you are calling and pass it over to the Property team.

If you call our main reception number of **0131 447 9027** and choose **2** to report a housing management issue, or call the direct number of **0131 478 8146**, if the Housing Services Assistant is on another call your call will be answered

by the Property Services Assistant who will take details of why you are calling and pass it over to the Housing team.

If both the Assistants are busy on calls you will be asked to leave your contact details and a short message of why you are calling. One of the Assistants will call you back as soon as they are free.

We hope that this change will help to improve the service that we offer and we welcome any feedback that you may want to give us about this change. You can e-mail us at admin@arkha.org.uk or do this through our contact us function on the website <https://www.arkha.org.uk/contact/>

Reporting Repairs

You can report repairs Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm by telephone to the Ark Repairs Number – **0131 478 8143** or via email to repairs@arkha.org.uk.

When reporting a repair you should provide as much information as possible about the repair to help us allocate the correct contractor. You will also be asked to provide your name, address and contact number to enable the contractor to contact you to arrange access.

A member of our Asset Team will discuss the repair with you or your representative

and they will inform you whether the repair is an Ark or tenant responsibility, which contractor will attend and a timescale for the repair to be completed.

If you would like to provide feedback from a recent repair you can complete the Maintenance Works Order Acknowledgement Form which is sent to you via post when a job is logged or you can email your feedback to repairs@arkha.org.uk. We greatly appreciate your feedback as it helps us to improve our customer service and our contractors performance.

Emergency Repair

Emergency Repair Numbers Out of Hours 5pm-9am

What is an Emergency Repair?

An Emergency Repair must be reported when there is either a risk to your Health and Safety or there is a risk of serious structural damage to the property. Emergency Repairs will be attended to as soon as possible to make safe, with any follow up work instructed the next working day.

Type	Area	Emergency Contact
Gas central heating breakdowns	All Areas	Richard Irvin 0131 654 4400
All other Emergency Repairs	Buckie, MacDuff, Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Inverurie, Aberdeen, Portlethen and Forres	Heatcare Oil & Gas Ltd 01343 842 042
	Arbroath, Blairgowrie, Fife, Forfar and Perth	Rogersons 07946 262427
	Clackmannanshire, Falkirk, Lothians and Borders	HF Group Ltd on 0131 337 4011 or Freephone 0800 783 9480

Right to Repair

Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 Scottish Secure Tenants have the right to have small urgent repairs carried out by their Landlord within a given timescale. This is called the Right to Repair Scheme. The scheme covers certain repairs known as “qualifying repairs” up to the value of £350.

Full details of the Right to Repair Regulations can be found the Scottish Government website – <https://www.gov.scot/publications/right-repair/>

Annual Safety Checks

Ark have a legal requirement to undertake a number of essential checks on the property to ensure your safety. These include the boilers annual gas service and electrical EICR test.

Ark entered in to a new Gas Servicing Contract with contractor Richard Irvin last year and if you have a gas boiler the Richard Irvin gas engineer will be in touch to arrange to complete the yearly service on your boiler.

The property Electrical EICR check takes place every 5 years and our electrical contractor will need access to your home to complete these checks. We appreciate your help providing access for these essential checks so that we can continue to keep our properties and tenants safe.

Ground Maintenance

Ark’s ground maintenance contractor Glendale have been continuing to complete the maintenance on our estates improving our communal garden areas.

Maintenance visits should be on a monthly basis, 12 visits per year with the exception of the summer months when grass cutting will be carried out between the end of April to the end of October at intervals of approximately 2 weeks.

Spring Actions include:

- ▶ Pruning shall be carried out after flowering in May to July
- ▶ Flower bedding plots will be planted out in Spring and Autumn
- ▶ Re-adjust all tree ties & stakes and lightly prune any dead or broken branches
- ▶ Water all Young trees
- ▶ Remove weed growth
- ▶ Apply Spring fertiliser
- ▶ Trim plants to tidy and cut back any winter damage
- ▶ Prune shrubs to promote summer flowering

Our Maintenance and Housing Officers will be continuing with the quarterly Estate Management visits and will notify you of when this will take place at your estate. Ark encourage our customers to meet with the Officers and to get involved in improving the garden spaces so that you can enjoy the outdoor areas.

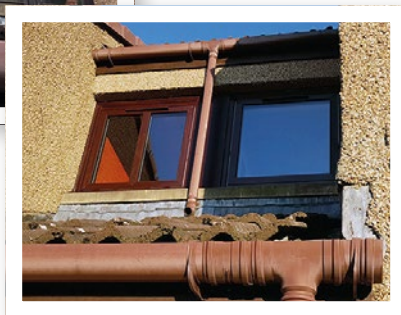
Planned Maintenance

Ark Housing Association - Oxgangs Windows and Doors

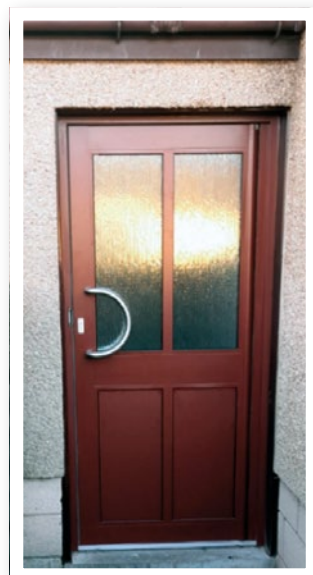
The planned programme for replacement Windows and Doors with contractor Sidey at our Oxgangs Bank properties is nearing completion. Installations have been praised by our customers and the new windows and doors have significantly improved the outside aesthetics. Our Maintenance Officers are working closely with Sidey to complete the project and will be gathering further feedback from Ark's customers on the improvements.



Example of Oxgangs windows before and after.



Example of Oxgangs doors before and after.

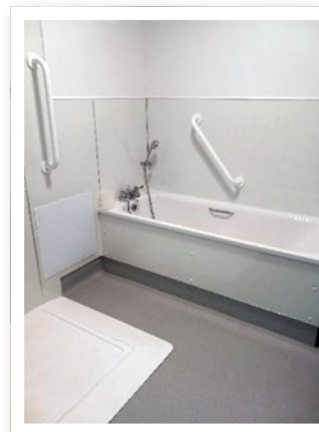


Ark Services Ltd. - Provost Mitchell Circle Bathrooms



Ark recently embarked on a planned bathroom replacement programme with contractor Everwarm. This took place in the Ark Services Ltd. Provost Mitchell Circle properties in Aberdeen. 22 new bathrooms were upgraded and completed in time for Christmas.

Ark gathered feedback from the supported people and support workers. Positive feedback received included that the bathroom upgrades have made a difference to supported people living within their home and praised the Maintenance Officer Debs for going "above and beyond at every opportunity". Any feedback highlighting issues from the bathroom installations have been taken seriously and the Asset team are working on resolutions to these issues.

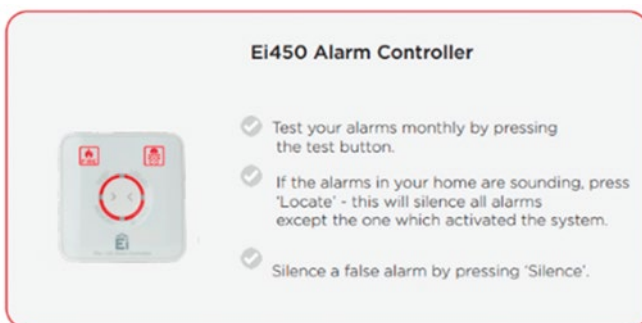


Kitchen Appliance Fire Safety Advice

Leaving large kitchen appliances switched on and unattended for long periods of time is a fire risk.

If you are out of the house and a fire starts there will be no one there to hear the alarm and call the Fire and Rescue Service (999). This could affect your neighbours and damage your home and belongings.

- ▶ Do not leave your appliances on when not at home.
- ▶ Do not overload electricity sockets in your home.
- ▶ Make sure your linked AICO smoke detectors in the home are checked regularly to see if they are working. They can all be tested together by pressing the Alarm Controller button.



Mould and Dampness

The fundamental role of social landlords such as Ark is to provide tenants with safe homes to live in. This includes resolving issues such as mould & damp. If mould & damp are not treated for long periods of time then this may lead to health problems and can be serious.

Ark have created a Mould & Damp Framework with an action plan to tackle any issues of mould & damp within your home. The Mould & Damp Framework is a way for Ark to record and track all reports of mould & damp on our risk register and create an action plan. As part of the action plan Ark will secure the services of an external consultant to survey all our properties. The consultant will contact you to arrange a convenient time to survey your home. The survey will report on any potential mould and dampness concerns within your home. To ensure we are proactive and dealing with the root cause we will progress with any work identified and will post inspect the work.

Ark will respond to any instances of mould & damp promptly, with compassion for the impact on your wellbeing, and with a focus on dealing with the issue and preventing it from reoccurring.

To raise any concerns on this issue please contact our Ark Repairs team on **0131 478 8143** or email repairs@arkha.org.uk who will be able to assist you.

For further advice on reducing condensation please see information from Changeworks online https://www.changeworks.org.uk/sites/default/files/Advice_Sheet_Condensation_Web_0.pdf

Mould and damp framework summary

Contact	Initial contact by customer or customers representative or following a visit by any party.
Questions	We will ask a series of questions to gain a better understanding of the problems. This will help us identify any immediate repairs.
Inspection	We will aim to carry out an inspection of your home within 7 working days. Our inspector will look at all rooms affected and complete an inspection form with the findings. They will take meter readings if possible and view your utility bill with your permission.
Mould Clean	Where mould is present in your home and cannot be cleaned easily with household products, we will arrange an appointment to clean these areas, regardless of the cause.
Repairs	Where we identify that repairs are needed, we will arrange appointments to have these carried out.
Follow Up	We will contact you to confirm that the problem has been resolved. This may involve a post inspection of any completed works.
Specialist	If the problem persists, we will arrange for a Damp and Mould Specialist to inspect your home. We will then look to carry out any works recommended by the report.
Follow Up	We will contact you to confirm that the problem has been resolved. This may involve a post inspection of any completed works.



New Development Crusader Rise

The new build at Crusader Rise in Livingston is progressing well. The timber kit has been erected to 1st floor level and the second floor will be added shortly. The end property is a 2 storey house and the roof trusses have been added. This is what can be seen in the picture above. The properties are expected to be handed over early in the New Year.

If you are interested in applying for housing you can complete a housing application form which can be downloaded from the Ark website <https://www.arkha.org.uk/housing-asset-management/homes-to-let/>

Energy Bills Support Scheme

All households with a domestic electricity connection should have received a £400 discount to help with energy bills over winter 2022 to 2023. This money does not need to be paid back. This is called the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS).

You'll still get the discount if:

- ▶ you change your payment method or tariff
- ▶ you switch electricity supplier or move to a new address
- ▶ your supplier goes bust
- ▶ you're in arrears on your electricity bill payments.

More information can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/cost-of-living>

- ▶ Millions will receive new cost of living support from Spring 2023, following up the £1,200 in support for over eight million low-income households in 2022.
- ▶ A £900 Cost of Living Payment for means-tested benefit claimants will go direct to bank accounts in three payments over the financial year.
- ▶ There will be a separate £150 for over six million disabled people.
- ▶ And £300 for over eight million pensioners on top of their Winter Fuel Payments.

To find out more information and check if you are eligible visit: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/cost-of-living-payment>

Rent Increase 2023-24

Ark Housing Association Tenants

We wrote to tenants at the end of February 2023 to confirm that following tenant consultation and feedback, the Board of Management agreed a rent increase of 6%, to take effect from 1st April 2023.

Ark Services Limited Tenants

We wrote to tenants at the end of April 2023 to confirm that a rent increase of 3% will take effect from 1st August 2023. The rent levels are higher than Ark Housing Association rents and the increase was limited by the Scottish Government.

If you need a reminder or a copy of the letter please contact us on **0131 478 8146** or email housing@arkha.org.uk. Here is a reminder of what you need to do to update your payment method:

- ▶ **Universal credit** – you will need to log onto your UC Journal and inform them of the increase of the rent charge.
- ▶ **Standing order** – you will need to contact your bank to increase the amount.
- ▶ **Housing benefit** – If you receive housing benefit directly to your bank account you will need to contact the local authority and inform them of the increased rent charges.

Ark will:

- ▶ update your **direct debit** amount
- ▶ notify the local authority of changes for **housing benefit** payments

Ways to pay your rent

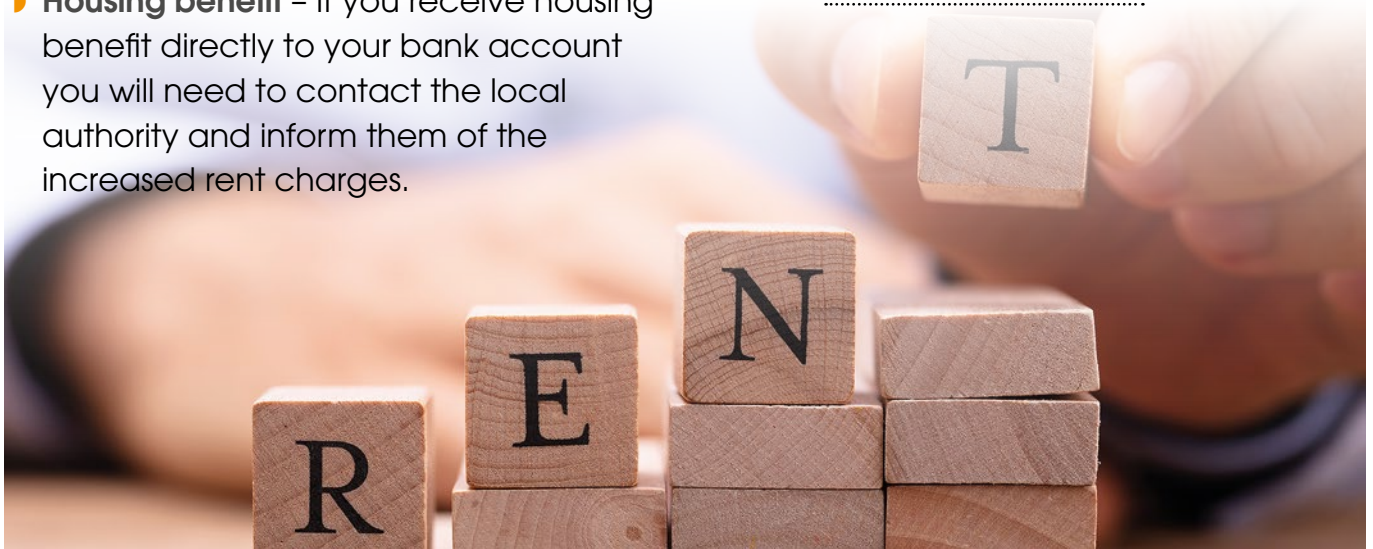
There are various options available to make it easier for you to pay your rent:

Direct Debit – if you wish to set up a Direct Debit please contact the Housing Team on **0131 478 8146**.

All Pay Card – contact the Housing Team to order a payment card. You can make payments at any shop/post office with a PayPoint symbol.

Telephone – you can telephone the Housing Team on **0131 478 8146** to make a payment using your debit card via World Pay.

Online – you can pay using your Allpay card and credit/debit card at www.allpayments.net. To download the Allpay app for your mobile phone please refer to www.allpay.net/app.



Ark Community Benefit Fund Projects

Ark has introduced a new budget to allow the Housing and Assets teams to work with tenants to work on specific projects to improve neighbourhoods. In 2022-23 we did 3 projects. Details on 2 of these are given below.



Garden and BBQ area upgrade at Longstone Grove, Edinburgh

Longstone Grove care staff and supported people enjoy spending time in the garden. The care staff and supported people made suggestions on how to improve this at an estate visit with the Housing Officer and Maintenance Officer.

They proposed an extension to the paving to give access to the planters and suggested removing an unused shed to use this area for a BBQ and seating area. A winding path through the planters now makes the planters accessible to everyone. The old shed was removed and a new patio area gives the supported people an open outdoor space to socialise and have BBQ's. The planters were also refurbished and vouchers were organised for a garden centre so the supported people can pick seeds and bulbs to tend flowers, herbs and vegetables. The planters can now be used to plant flowers and grow food, promoting sustainability. The project has made a positive impact and supported people enjoy using the space and look forward to planting in the spring/summer months.



Car park bollards at West Adam Street and Richmond Place, Edinburgh

Our customers shared their views on the car park spaces. They raised concerns that members of the public were using their spaces and that a chain used to secure the spaces was bulky and difficult to use. There was a positive response to installing car park bollards and the community benefit fund application was successful. The bollards were installed in February 2023 and the tenants can now easily secure and access their spaces.



If you would like to tell us about any ideas you might have please e-mail us at communitybenefitfund@arkha.org.uk and a member of staff will be in touch with you.