

Ark[®] NEWSLETTER



Welcome to our first newsletter of 2023. We looked at the newsletter and made some changes. This edition is full of updates on our services, groups and staff achievements.



This is what Ark will be doing in 2023-2026. We want to:



- ▶ Build over 100 new homes in the next 5 years and improve the energy efficiency of our existing homes.



- ▶ Support you so you can live your best life.
- ▶ Reward staff for doing a good job and make them feel valued.



I hope you enjoy reading this edition of the Ark Newsletter. Please let us know what you think of it.

Bobby



Organisational Update

Ark Care & Support Talent & Engagement Pilot Project



Lindsay Fallon started in the new role of Talent & Engagement coordinator in December.

This is a 1 year pilot project to support the Ark Care and Support Services with recruiting and keeping more staff in Edinburgh and the Lothian.



This project has already been successful in 2 Ark's services in Hoseasons Gardens in Edinburgh and in Livingston.



You can see Ark's current job vacancies on our website: www.arkha.org.uk/work-with-us/vacancies/

Professional Development



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

Well done to the following staff for gaining their qualifications.

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 4 Management +2 LMC Units

Shaun S, Rhona G

SVQ 3 Learning and Development

George J

SCQF Level 9 (SVQ 4)

Gayna C, Kirstie M, Christine S

SCQF Level 9 Management (SVQ 4)

Theresa C

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 Group



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 in Ark 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 the **Staff Recruitment Training**.

Tracy, William, Margaret, Alex and Kieran learned about how to help Ark to choose the right person for the job!



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!

The Rainbow Group



The Tenants Scrutiny Group has 6 members coming from across Scotland.

The group started in May 2022 and they met 9 times. They have completed their first scrutiny activity, where they looked at the way the landscaping contract.



They have written their first report and an action plan. Once ready, the Report will be available on Ark's website.



They have started their second activity which is to look Ark's repairs service. This is a large project so it will be broken down into smaller areas.



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

Governance

Would you like to become a member of Ark?



If you are an Ark member you can attend and vote at Ark Annual General Meetings.

We would love to have more tenants and supported people as our members!

Contact Mary Bell for more information:
mary.bell@arkha.org.uk 0131 478 8150

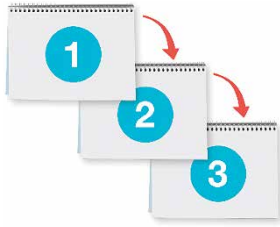
Complaints Update for October to December 2022



Between October and December 2022 Ark received a total of 13 complaints.

- ▶ 5 were about Care and Support.
- ▶ 2 were about Ark Services.
- ▶ 2 were about the Housing Team.
- ▶ 3 were about the Asset Team.
- ▶ 1 was about both the Housing and Asset Team.

Using complaints to improve service delivery



One of the complaints we received was from a group of tenants, unhappy with their home and our repairs service.

We took time to look at all the issues and we made a plan.



We will improve communications with all Ark customers, by creating rules to make sure everyone is told about works.

Housing Complaints Lesson Learned



Since October 2022, Housing Services received 4 complaints. We agreed with 3 of the complaints and we made changes to fix the issues.

Thanks to your complaints we made these changes:



We gave training to members of the housing team to be able to answer any questions relating to the increase in charges.



We created a clear process for housing team to remove charges when tenants do not receive housing benefit anymore.

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.



Brendan Thomson

Property Services Officer

Brendan joined Ark at the start of June 2023. He will deal with all property management issues in Peebles, Alloa, Dalkeith, Grangemouth, Hawick, Loanhead, Musselburgh, Uphall, Dunfermline, Cardenden, Broomhouse, Oxbgangs, Restalrig, Niddrie Farm Grove and West Adam/Richmond Street.



Alex Edwards

Senior Housing Services Officer

Alex joined Ark in May 2023. He will manage the Housing team and day to day operational matters.



Claire Young

Housing Services Officer

Claire joined Ark in May 2023. She will deal with all housing management issues in Moray, Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

Reporting Repairs



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



Please provide as much information
as possible about the repair.

You should also provide your name,
address and contact number.



A member of our Asset Team will be in
touch with you to let you know whether
the repair is an Ark responsibility or your
responsibility, which contractor will attend
and when the repair will be completed.



Please remember to tell us how we did!
Are you happy with the repair and your
contractor? Tell us in the form we sent via
post or you can email your feedback to
repairs@arkha.org.uk

Emergency Repair Numbers Out of Hours 5pm – 9am

Is there a risk to your Health and Safety?

Is there a risk of serious structural damage to the property?

Then call Emergency Repairs!

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 0800 783 9480

Right to Repair



Tenants have the right to have small urgent repairs carried out by their Landlord. This scheme covers certain repairs up to the value of £350.

www.gov.scot/publications/right-repair

Annual Safety Checks

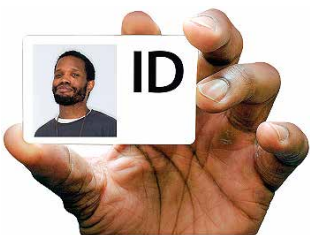


Ark must check your property to make sure it is safe. For example every year we must service the gas boilers and every 5 year we must carry out the electrical EICR test.



We have a new contractor to carry out the Gas Servicing. The contractor is called Richard Irvin.

If you have a gas boiler, the Richard Irvin gas engineer will be in touch to arrange to come to your home to service your boiler.



Our electrical contractor will also need to come into your home to complete the electrical checks every 5 years.

Remember to ask for ID when opening the door and our contractor will show you they are sent by Ark.



Thank you for your help for these important checks so that we can continue to keep you and our properties safe.

Ground Maintenance



The company that maintains the grounds and garden spaces on our estates is called Glendale.



They should visit our estates once a month. In Summer they will also cut the grass every 2 weeks between the end of April to the end of October.



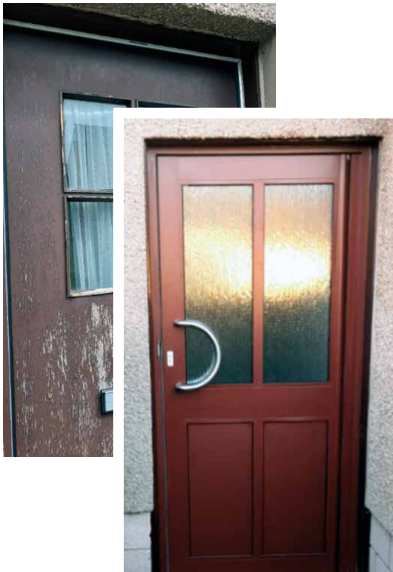
Our Maintenance and Housing Officers continue to visit our estates every 3 months. They will be in touch to let you know when they will visit your estate.



Please go and meet with our staff 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



We are completing the planned replacement of windows and doors at our Oxgangs Bank properties.

Our tenants are happy with the installations carried out by contractor Sidey. They said the outside of the properties looks much nicer now.

They will get more feedback from tenants on the improvements.

Ark Services Ltd. - Provost Mitchell Circle Bathrooms



Our tenants in Aberdeen were happy to have their bathroom replaced with contractor Everwarm.

22 Ark Services properties at were due a planned bathroom replacement and the work was completed on schedule in time for Christmas.

Staff said 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”.

Kitchen Appliance Fire Safety Advise



Fire could start in kitchens when large appliances are left on when not home.



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 damage your home, belongings and could also affect your neighbours.



- ▶ Do not leave your appliances on when not home.
- ▶ Do not overload electricity sockets in your home.

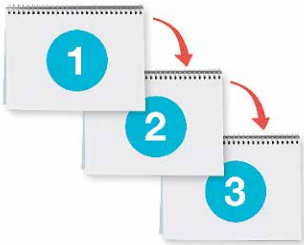


- ▶ Make sure your linked AICO smoke detectors are checked regularly to see if they are working. They can all be tested together by pressing the Alarm Controller button.

Mould and Dampness



If mould and damp are not treated on time, it may cause health problems and it can be serious.



Ark have created a Mould and Damp Framework. It will help us to record and track all reports of mould and damp and create an action plan.

As part of the action plan, an external consultant will check all our properties.



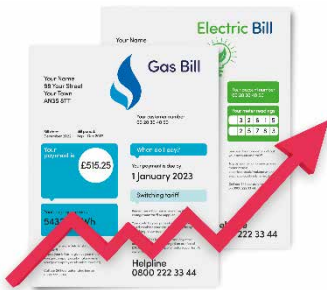
The consultant will contact you to arrange a time to check your home for mould and damp.

New Properties Crusader Rise



The new build at Crusader Rise in Livingston is progressing well. The properties are expected to be ready in the New Year. If you are interested in applying for this housing download an application form from the Ark website.

Energy Bills Support Scheme



The Energy Bills Support Scheme is a £400 discount on your energy payments to help with heating and energy costs. You should have received this during this winter. You do not need to pay this money back.



You will 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 are in arrears on your electricity bill payments



The way you get the payments depends on how you pay your bills

There will be more help available for households. For more information visit:

www.gov.uk/cost-of-living

Rent Increase 2023-24

Ark Housing Association Tenants



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

Ark Services Limited Tenants



We wrote to all tenants in April to tell them about a 3% increase from 1st August 2023. The rent levels are higher than Ark Housing Association rents and the increase was limited by the Scottish Government.

How 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 Community Benefit Fund Projects



Ark has a new budget to work with tenants on projects that improve neighbourhoods. Here are some of the projects we did in 2022-23.

West Adam Street – Car park bollards



The residents at West Adam Street and Richmond Place, Edinburgh told us that other people would park in their parking area. In February 2023 we replaced the bulky chain with parking bollards.

The tenants are now the only ones able to access this parking area taking away the stress of having to find a spaces.

Longstone Grove, Edinburgh – Garden update



During the lockdown, Longstone residents tried to use the garden but the space was not accessible for wheelchair users.

We refurbished the raised planters and created a path to allow access to all. We joined the existing paths with new paths. We removed the old shed and installed a new patio area to have an open outdoor garden space. Much better!