



Ark Housing Association Limited (Ark)

Corporate Strategy 2023-2026

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Tel: 0131 447 9027

E-mail: admin@arkha.org.uk



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1. Introduction

As a not-for-profit charity and registered social landlord, Ark is driven by its social purpose which is to “provide for the relief of those in need by reason of age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage through the provision, construction, improvement and management of land and accommodation and the provision of care”.

Ark has a duty to provide social housing that is affordable, of good quality and contributes to tenants wellbeing and to provide care and support to supported people to help them achieve their personal outcomes and to live a good life. Every activity that takes place in Ark is designed to meet this duty.

Ark launched its Business Plan for 2020-2025 in October 2020; delayed six months because of Covid-19 and only eight months after the UK left the EU. At the time of the launch, Ark remained committed to the aspirations set out within the business plan; which was developed to lay the foundations of a long-term strategy that would see the transformation of Ark over a five to ten year period.

The leadership of Ark believed launching the Business Plan at this time would provide direction and an overarching framework for Ark to operate within, as we sought to guide the organisation through a global pandemic. We have delivered on many of the commitments set out and made a positive difference across many aspects of the plan; regularly reported to the Board of Management.

The time is now right to create a strategic plan that reflects the significant change we have been through in the past few years and to respond to the emerging opportunities and challenges.

The lasting impacts of Covid-19 and of the UK leaving the EU were not known when we launched the business plan and over subsequent years, these significant global events have compounded the challenges present already, within fragile social care and social housing systems.

Since the launch of the Business Plan there have also been a number of key national policy initiatives and events that directly impact Ark’s community; our customers and our people; it therefore makes sense to refocus our strategic priorities for the next three years to bring clarity and purpose to all of our activities aimed at continuing to develop and drive Ark forward.

This strategy for 2023-2026 will provide an overarching framework for the creation and delivery of a number of underpinning strategies and programmes that will support our key ambition set out in 2020; *becoming an excellent organisation across all aspects of our business*. We will build upon the work already begun and we will retain our focus on the high-level strategic aims we set for ourselves in 2020, as they are as relevant now as they were at that time.

This strategy will drive Ark forward in our pursuit of becoming an organisation that will:

- ▲ Have a reputation for excellence and be recognised as a high quality provider of housing and care;
- ▲ Be known as an excellent employer where employees will enjoy rewarding careers;
- ▲ Build our technological and digital capability to support a successful business;
- ▲ Have in place Leadership to create a culture of excellence throughout the business

We have spent some considerable time with our Board of Management over the past twelve months, discussing the future and together agreeing what our strategic focus should be. The Board have played a key role in creating this plan and therefore shaping the future focus of the leadership team and are fully supportive of the ambitions set out within the strategic plan, which are designed to enable Ark to achieve our vision and mission.

2. Vision, Mission and Values

Vision	Mission	Values
Inclusive communities where quality of housing and care enable people to live a good life.	Create the best possible customer outcomes through our highly skilled people, the provision of high quality affordable homes and excellent care.	Ark's Values are true to the core purpose of the organisation and the services we deliver. They determine our behaviours towards one another and what we should expect in our relationships with one another.



Trust

We have confidence in our people to deliver excellent services and trust in them to do so. We will develop trusting and honest relationships and our customers will feel assured that they can rely on us to deliver.



Respect

We treat everyone fairly and we listen. We are respectful of each person with whom we come into contact and expect our people to respond professionally and treat others, as they would wish to be treated.



Understanding

We will operate with empathy and compassion and approach each situation with an open mind. We will question and challenge to ensure we achieve the right outcomes for customers and our people.



Equality

We believe everyone is equal and expect our people to create positive experiences where everyone feels valued and included.



Integrity

We will do the right thing and take responsibility for our actions. We will work together to uphold the highest standards of behaviour and practice.

3. Current Strategic Context

The national policy landscape has changed across both housing and care in the last three years and we must ensure that Ark is prepared for what may come. There are a range of national strategies that impact the work of Ark and this section details several key strategies and external influencers that Ark is focusing upon as we develop our plan for the next three years; we describe the impact of those strategies and how we will respond.

External Influencer	Impact	Arks Response
<p>Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Human Rights</p>	<p>Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Human Rights (EDIHR) is fundamental to Ark’s foundations, with the practical expression of the founding members’ passion for justice, equality and humanity, which remains at the core of who Ark is. EDIHR threads through all national strategies, is at the heart of everything we do, and is embedded within our core values.</p>	<p>We have developed Ark’s new Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Human Rights (EDIHR) Strategy for 2023-2026, which will be launched in April 2023.</p> <p>We have established a set of commitments to our employees, customers and communities and developed core objectives with an underpinning action plan. We will report upon the progress of this strategy to ensure we are delivering on our commitments that will promote a culture and environment where everyone can succeed on their own merits.</p>
<p>Economic Climate</p>	<p>The long-term economic repercussions of Brexit and the coronavirus pandemic are starting to be better understood. Greater financial uncertainty, high inflation, and tightening public sector finances are resulting in businesses and household incomes coming under increasing pressure.</p>	<p>Our Procurement Strategy will continue to demonstrate how we deliver value for money for our customers.</p> <p>We will also continue to invest in growing the organisation and improving the quality of our services to our customers. We will continue to build our technological and digital capability to implement more efficient and cost effective business processes.</p>
<p>Housing</p>	<p>Scottish Governments Housing to 2040 is Scotland’s first national long-term housing strategy developed around 4 key themes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More Homes at the Heart of Great Places 2. Affordability and Choice 3. Affordable Warmth and Zero Emissions Homes 4. Improving the quality of all homes across all tenures <p>The strategy encompasses the whole housing system and aims to deliver a lasting legacy that is not just about new homes, but that takes into account the people, place, environment and communities in which our homes, both new and old, are located. It sets standards for energy efficiency performance of all of our homes through the Heat in Buildings</p>	<p>In response to Housing to 2040, Ark must develop plans and strategies to ensure we meet the expectations of our tenants; that is to provide good quality, energy efficient, affordable homes. We must improve our existing stock through informed and targeted investment and create new homes built to the highest affordable standards as part of a planned programme of development.</p> <p>Arks Asset Management Strategy 2023-2026 and Development Strategy 2023-2026 have been developed to align with Housing to 2040 and other guiding sector strategies, practices and legislation with particular focus on Human Rights and changes in Building Standards. Both will be launched in April 2023.</p>

	<p>Strategy and it will set standards for the quality of homes we provide for affordable homes through the introduction of a new Housing Quality Standard.</p> <p>The strategy sets a clear vision and route map with a funding commitment from Scottish Government to deliver 110,000 affordable homes by 2032 and a suggestion of grant funding to improve the energy efficiency of our existing homes.</p>	
<p>National Care Service</p>	<p>Having accepted all 53 recommendations set out in the Independent Review of Adult Social Care, the Scottish Government (SG) maintains it is committed to delivering the National Care Service.</p> <p>The SG has stated that everyone should be supported to live as independently as possible and drive the decisions about their health and wellbeing and the support they need; that the NCS will be governed by a set of principles that will clarify that social care and community health services are essential for the realisation of fundamental human rights</p> <p>The SG has committed to further develop the approaches to safe, effective, integrated and person-centred health and social care support and to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ continue integrating community health and social care and strengthen partnerships working with other services and agencies. ▶ ensure that individuals can participate in their care design. ▶ ensure people's needs are met holistically and driven by the outcomes that are important to them and their communities. 	<p>We will create a Development Strategy for Care & Support built on a rights based approach.</p> <p>We will continue developing our outcome focused approach and evidence that people are driving the decisions about their lives and the support they receive.</p> <p>We will work in partnership with our Local Authority colleagues to support them in meeting their own priorities and national objectives.</p>
<p>Fair Work for the Social Care Workforce</p>	<p>Fair Work in Social Care was set as a key priority in the joint Scottish Government and COSLA Reform of Adult Social Care Programme launched in 2019. The Fair Work in Social Care Group was established to take forward the recommendations and has 4 key principles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensuring secure contracts of employment for the workforce 2. Fair pay aligned to similar roles in the NHS; 	<p>We will create a People Strategy designed to drive Ark towards being an excellent employer. We will do all we can to provide the best pay and conditions, continue to invest in Learning & Development and co-create a wellbeing strategy with our people.</p> <p>We will also deliver on our Engagement Action Plan and embed our communications and engagement</p>

	<p>3. Access to learning and development opportunities for the workforce to ensure they are properly equipped for their roles</p> <p>4. Effective voice for social care workers to ensure their experience and views are taken in to consideration on key decisions effecting them</p> <p>Fair work for the social care workforce was also a key recommendation in the Feeley Report and the Scottish Government have committed to Fair Work as part of the new National Care Service.</p>	<p>approaches through Ark's Employee Voices group, ensuring we hear from our people about what is important to them.</p>
<p>Towards Transformation (Plan)</p>	<p>Scottish Government's plan will consider the impact of the Scottish Strategy for Autism 2011 – 2021 and the Keys to Life (Learning Disabilities) 2013 – 2023 and what comes next. It highlights the impact of Covid-19 on both groups, how services to support people have adapted in light of restrictions to movement and opportunity and highlights actions which local government and Scottish Government will take individually and jointly with partners to mitigate these restrictions.</p> <p>The plan, which is a partnership document with COSLA and a range of stakeholders, articulates 32 actions to make improvements for people with lived experience and seeks to fully involve them in the leadership and scrutiny of the plan.</p> <p>Actions fall under the following areas;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Human Rights ▲ Mental Health, Health and Social Care & Support ▲ Employment ▲ Education ▲ Digital Exclusion ▲ Communication <p>The plan reaffirms that fulfilling human rights is a legal duty and that, in practice, for autistic people and people with learning/intellectual disability it is about being able to make decisions, have choices and live the way that they want to and access services without a struggle.</p>	<p>We will develop an underpinning approach to the delivery of our Care & Support services which is rights based and aligned to Scottish Government strategy.</p> <p>We will implement Ark's Autism Strategy 2023-2026 which is designed to create a focused approach to our Autism services which will enhance the lives and outcomes for people we currently support and be attractive to Local Authority commissioners and people seeking support.</p> <p>We will evidence that our outcome focused approach empowers people; improving their quality of life and helps them to lead the life they want.</p> <p>We will actively seek to improve digital inclusion opportunities for the people we support.</p> <p>We will work closely with SCLD and Local Authorities to understand how the plan and subsequent plans are to be implemented and align our own strategies to support the plans.</p>
<p>Coming Home Report</p>	<p>Commissioned by the Scottish Government, the Coming Home Report focused on people with learning disabilities and complex needs living out of area or within NHS hospitals and identified an urgent need to address this</p>	<p>Driven forward by our new Autism Strategy, we will further develop our Autism offering to ensure we are providing the best possible service to the people we currently support and demonstrate our capability to the wider</p>

	<p>issue. The report identified two significant barriers; a lack of suitable accommodation and a lack of skilled service providers particularly around Positive Behaviour Support and Autism. The report made several recommendations with specific focus on Workforce Development.</p>	<p>sector, transforming Ark into a positive destination for the people identified within the Coming Home Report.</p> <p>We will build on already well developed practice approaches and implement Ark’s Positive Behaviour Support Strategy 2023-2026, placing it at the heart of our Care & Support Development Strategy 2023-2026. This will establish Ark as a high quality provider of care and support to people with the most complex needs and create a bespoke delivery model aimed at enhancing the lives of the people we support.</p>
<p>Climate Change</p>	<p>Scotland’s ambitions climate change legislation sets a target date for net zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045, a route map and actions are set out in The Climate Change Plan 2020.</p> <p>The Climate Change Plan sets out the following national actions to drive Scotland towards net zero by 2045:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. reducing greenhouse gas emissions through a Just Transition to a net zero economy and society, ensuring the journey is fair and creates a better future for everyone – regardless of where they live, what they do, and who they are; 2. driving Scotland’s adaptation to climate change; 3. supporting decarbonisation in the public sector; 4. engaging with business and industry on decarbonisation; 5. engaging the public and encouraging people to move towards low carbon living; 6. supporting communities to tackle climate change ; 7. leading international action on climate change; 8. supporting developing countries to tackle climate change through the Climate Justice Fund; 9. delivering a just transition, by working with communities, business, industry and the people of Scotland to plan for our net zero future 	<p>Ark has been working to improve the energy efficiency of our homes for many years to meet the targets set out in EESSH (Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing) with a targeted compliance by December 2020.</p> <p>Scottish Government introduced EESSH2 in 2021, however following a sector wide review EESSH2 milestones are temporarily on hold. The aim of the review is to ensure that investment is targeted towards effective long-term solutions that deliver net zero and support the eradication of fuel poverty. The target for updated guidance to be issued is mid-2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Our Asset Management Strategy will be informed and guided by Scottish Governments Housing to 2040, Heat in Buildings Strategy; Tackling Fuel Poverty and the updated EESSH2 guidance ▲ All our new build design and specification will achieve net zero in heat omissions at the point of construction ▲ We will set a net zero route map for all our assets and our business transition ▲ We will develop an Environmental and Sustainability Strategy which will thread through all business and operational activities.

4. Corporate Strategy 2023-2026

This Corporate Strategy sets out three core strategies; three enabling strategies and five underpinning corporate strategies that we will work towards achieving over the next three years. We have retained the four strategic aims we identified as part of the last business plan as we strongly believe they will inspire our work over the next three years; they are clear aspirations for everyone in Ark to aim for and they describe explicitly, the organisation we are striving to become.

4.1 Delivering High Quality Housing and Care

Ark aims to build a reputation for excellence and be recognised as a high quality provider of housing and care; we have already made good progress in improving both our care and housing offering and we have now identified several key strategic priorities to continue the improvements we have made to ensure we realise this strategic aim. We will create a new vision for Care and Support that will see the development of a bespoke care and support delivery model; we will launch our Housing Development Strategy in April 2023 which aims to provide the framework for Ark's new build programme and we will launch a new Asset Management Strategy in June 2023 which will set out the long term plans for the improvement in the quality of our existing stock.

4.2 Ark as an Excellent Employer

Our people are essential to any ambitions and success we have as an organisation and it is incumbent upon us to create an organisation where people can flourish and enjoy a rewarding career; where people feel valued and recognised for the difference they make every day; where we have in place a set of people policies that supports our teams and where we ensure the health and well-being of our people by offering appropriate and effective support. We will create a People Strategy to drive forward this work, within which a key focus will be the launch of the Employee Well-Being and Retention Strategy in 2023.

4.3 Build our Technological and Digital Capability

At Ark we aim to build our technological and digital capability to a level where it will support the business to be successful. We will improve our technological and digital capability by providing our people with well-designed software and technology that in turn results in an excellent customer experience. Our ability to get more from our systems, data and technology will provide our people with better insight and intelligence to allow them to identify and proactively address operational issues and deliver excellent customer service. We will launch our Digital Strategy in April 2023.

4.4 Creating a culture of Excellence

Ark aspire to achieve excellence, however this outcome is only possible if achieving excellence is embedded within the culture of the organisation. We wish to create plans for improved communication and engagement across the organisation and in the external environment. This requires the Leadership of Ark to be proactive with all our people across the organisation and deliver a consistent message that excellence is what we should all be aspiring to.

Creation of this focus and culture is ultimately to the benefit of Ark's customers who would be in receipt of services that our people will be proud to be part of, as they will deliver the positive outcomes that are important to our customers.

This approach is underpinned by robust and compliant Governance systems and processes and we will create a framework where Governance becomes tangible within Ark and all of our people, including the Board understand the role they play in delivering good governance for Ark.

We have set out below our strategic aims and identified key strategic priorities we will focus upon to deliver our aims. We have also presented the key outcomes we would expect to achieve through the annual corporate objectives and delivery plans.

4.5 Strategic Aims, Strategic Priorities and Key Outcomes



Ark will be known as an excellent employer where employees will enjoy rewarding careers

Implement Arks People Strategy

- ▲ Implement the Employee Well-Being & Retention Strategy
- ▲ Implement the Employee Communication & Engagement Strategy
- ▲ Implement the Health & Safety Strategy
- ▲ Implement the Recruitment Strategy
- ▲ Implement the Agile Working Strategy
- ▲ Implement the Learning & Development Strategy

- ▲ Creation of an environment and culture that ensures our people feel valued, where they can develop, grow and thrive, leading to improved retention
- ▲ Embedded communications & engagement approaches across Ark
- ▲ Robust and compliant Health & Safety Framework in place.
- ▲ Evidence based recruitment methods and approaches in place
- ▲ Fully implemented agile working framework and employee satisfaction
- ▲ Evidenced based learning and development approaches in place, fully equipping Arks people for their role

Ark will build technological and digital capability to support a successful business

Implement Ark Digital Strategy

- ▲ Implement the Systems Replacement Project
- ▲ Implement the Care and Support Information Management System (AIMS)
- ▲ Implement ICT Cloud Strategy
- ▲ Implement Phase 2 of Ark Website Development

- ▲ Central services and housing IT systems replaced
- ▲ Transformed Care and Support business processes through increased use of digital technology
- ▲ Our approach to Cloud based software implemented and Cyber Essentials accreditation achieved
- ▲ Increased interaction with customers, Board of Management and stakeholders through our website

Ark's Leadership will create a culture of excellence throughout the business

Implement Arks Corporate Strategy 2023-2026

- ▲ Implementation of Corporate Strategy 2023-2026
- ▲ Delivery of the Communication and Engagement Strategy for our people
- ▲ Delivery of Governance Systems and Processes
- ▲ Implement a Net Zero Carbon Strategy
- ▲ Create a culture of continuous improvement across Ark
- ▲ Implement a strategic plan for all office space across ARK
- ▲ Implement Value for Money Strategy

- ▲ Ark will be working within a detailed strategic framework with tangible plans to improve the business
- ▲ Effective leadership and communication across Ark
- ▲ Robust Governance Framework in place demonstrating full compliance in all key areas of governance
- ▲ Reduced our carbon footprint and on track to becoming net zero by 2030
- ▲ External validation and accreditation of continuous improvement approaches
- ▲ Creation of new central office and wider community based office spaces that provides accessible, modern and flexible work spaces and supports agile working practices
- ▲ Clear definition of how we measure value for money and adoption of the ESG reporting standard

5.0 Delivering and Resourcing our Strategy

5.1 Financial Planning

5.1.1 Framework

We have agreed a detailed five-year financial plan with the Board of Management plan incorporating the 2023/24 agreed budget and a further four year's forecast. This is reviewed and updated annually as part of the budget setting process. The five-year financial plan forms the basis of our long-term financial forecasts (30 years) and the annual five-year financial return made to the Scottish Housing Regulator. These show that we have the financial strength to support the delivery of our objectives; sufficient liquidity to meet our commitments; that we are able to comply with our lenders covenants, and evidences how we continue to meet the Scottish Housing Regulators Standards of Governance and Financial Management.

5.1.2 Finance Strategy

Our financial plans are guided by our Finance Strategy, which sets out the key financial considerations to ensure the delivery of the strategic objectives within Ark's corporate strategy, taking into account plans for growth and investment, while at the same time ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of the Group.

5.1.3 Golden Rules

We have established key principles and parameters (Golden Rules) that guide the Group's financial planning and build resilience into our forecasts. These include key measures to manage our cash flow, surplus, interest cover, and loan covenant compliance. By operating within these parameters, we maintain a level of headroom on our funding covenants, healthy interest cover, and positive cash flows from our core operations. These parameters safeguard our services to our customers by maintaining our current financial strength and giving us the capability to absorb adverse changes to our business.

The Golden Rules are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that they continue to provide the level of headroom commensurate with the financial and operating environment, the risks we face and maintaining financial resilience. They will also be reviewed if there are any significant changes in the external operating environment that increase financial risk and uncertainty.

6.0 Risk Management

Risk management is integral to all aspects of our activities. Ark regularly assesses a range of risk areas relative to our business operation and we monitor delivery of our mitigating controls to ensure we are managing corporate risks effectively, through the corporate risk register.

We have identified 10 key risks, for which we have a number of mitigating controls in place to ensure the risks do not increase and negatively impact the business.

We take a continuous improvement approach to risk management and identify a number of mitigating controls to develop, ensuring our overall approach to risk is robust.

We must ensure:

- ▲ We continue to meet the regulatory standards
- ▲ The financial sustainability of the Group
- ▲ We deliver good quality care and support
- ▲ We provide high quality housing and asset management services to our customers
- ▲ We maintain good quality people to deliver the business objectives
- ▲ We deliver the development programme within the financial and quality parameters of the Development Strategy
- ▲ We comply with our duty of care to our customers
- ▲ We respond effectively to a significant event that causes major business disruption
- ▲ Our subsidiary companies are financially viable and can grow and develop in the future
- ▲ We prevent a significant cyber security event creating major disruption to all Ark systems.

The Group’s risk management practices are founded on the ‘Three Lines of Defence’ model, and form an integral part of day to day activities.

7.0 Corporate Planning Framework

7.1 Arks Corporate Strategy 2023-26

This sets out the type of organisation that Ark is and what we are trying to achieve. Here we set out our ambitions for Ark and detail the strategies we will employ to achieve our ambitions. We detail the strategic priorities we will be focusing upon and the outcomes we expect to achieve. Our Corporate Strategy directs the allocation of our resources to match the priorities we have identified and provides the overall strategic framework that will guide us over the next few years.

7.2 Ark’s Annual Corporate Objectives & Financial Plans

This is our annual plan to implement our Corporate Strategy. Here we set annual corporate objectives, financial plans, targets and performance measures, the achievement of which demonstrates our overall direction of travel towards meeting the goals of our Corporate Strategy and the supporting strategies. Our action plans and targets are subject to a quarterly progress report to Board of Management.

7.3 Strategic Framework

The Corporate Strategy is underpinned by a range of core, enabling and corporate strategies which have been developed from the foundations of our 2020-25 Business Plan and our continuing ambitions over the next three years.



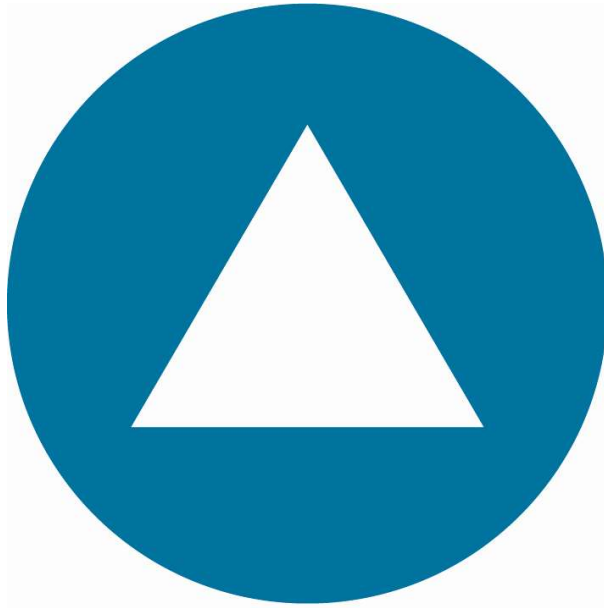
The core and enabling strategies provide a clear direction of travel for each area of our business and these are underpinned by the corporate strategies and frameworks creating a whole business approach to achieving best value, corporate social responsibility, equality and human rights and improved communications across Ark.

Responsibility for the implementation of each the core; enabling and corporate strategy is assigned to a specific Director who reports progress to the Executive Team. Overall progress is reported to Board of Management through the quarterly reporting process.

7.4 Annual Operational Plans

Each Director develops an annual operational plan that sets out how individual services and people across Ark can contribute to the delivery of the annual corporate objectives, designed to deliver the ambitions of the Corporate Strategy. Progress is reviewed by our Senior Leadership Team on a quarterly basis.

The core and enabling strategies provide a clear direction of travel for each area of our business with the corporate strategies and frameworks setting the whole business approach to Best Value, Corporate Social Responsibility, Human Rights and Communications. Responsibility for the implementation of each corporate, core and enabling strategies is assigned to a specific Director who reports progress to the Executive Team. Overall progress is reported to Board of Management through the quarterly reporting process.



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People
Housing
Care