

Ark[®] NEWSLETTER

Update from Chief Executive



Welcome to the Summer 2025 Newsletter.

It has been some months since we last issued a newsletter, as we worked behind the scenes to make improvements to the previous format and content. This work is designed to ensure the content meets the needs and represents the issues that are relevant to the range of customers Ark serves, as always, we are keen to hear from you on what you think of the newsletter.

In this edition we focus on issues that are important to our customers and their range of interests, and I have pulled out some highlights that sums up the range of work Ark does.

Within Care and Support, we have introduced a new approach to how we develop our staff teams that will enable them to support our people to achieve good outcomes in their life. Introducing the Practice Development Team, led by

Calum, this person-centred approach aims to enhance the quality of life for our supported people and build the skills and competencies of our support staff so that they too, can enjoy good employment outcomes at Ark.

Communication and engagement with our customers is very important to Ark, we are always keen to get your feedback on what is going well and what is going not so well. To make this easier for you, we have just introduced a new communication tool called CX Feedback, through which we will share a range of updates and communications that will be relevant to you as customers of Ark. When you receive communications via this platform it will be Ark branded (is this correct) so you will know it is from us, so please make use of this platform to let us know if you are satisfied with the services we provide.



I am delighted that we are now able to inform you of our planned investment programme for 25/26, that will continue to improve the quality of housing we provide to our tenants. We communicated previously that we have committed circa £10 million over the next 10 years to improve the quality of our housing stock. In addition we are also embarking on a programme of delivering Whole House Energy Efficiency upgrades, which aims to ensure you live in a warm and comfortable home, whilst keeping your energy bills as low as possible, please see more details inside the newsletter.

As an RSL, Ark is keen to play our part in helping Scotland meet its target on providing social housing. We are experiencing a housing crisis at the moment in Scotland and our small developments are making some contribution to the available social housing stock. Following the completion of our 20-unit scheme in Livingston, over the summer we will complete a development

of 12 units in Penicuik. Whilst small, these developments contribute to Ark growing its housing stock, supporting our future housing development strategy. We remain committed to providing new houses for social rent and will work hard to meet our targets.

I hope you enjoy reading the newsletter, there is really interesting content that gives you a flavour of the range of activity taking place in Ark, all designed to improve outcomes for our customers. Ark is a large social care provider and a relatively small housing provider; however together they make up a pretty unique organisation that works across many social issues in pursuit of our customers and employees living a good life.

As always, we are keen to hear what you think of the content and of course your experience of the services Ark provides to you.

Enjoy your summer and we will back in Autumn/Winter with the next newsletter.

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

Become a Member of Ark

Ark Housing Association Ltd. is a membership-based organisation.

We want to have a broad-based membership which reflects our purpose and objects, and the communities we serve.

We would like people and organisations that have an interest in our work, and who want to make effective use of their skills, views and experience, to become a member. We will welcome applications for membership from tenants, supported people, community groups and other residents of the towns and villages in which we are active.

In becoming a member you will:

- ▶ Be invited to attend and vote at Annual or Special General Meetings of the Association;
- Be eligible to become a member of the Ark Board.
- Be entitled to vote at membership meetings.

To apply, or for more information, please e-mail admin@arkha.org.uk



What happens next:

- ▶ You will be sent an application form, a data protection consent form and a covering letter. This will give details of how the application should be submitted and how it will be processed.
- ▶ The Board will normally consider 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 a member of the Executive Team will:
 - Enter your name in the Register of Members.
 - Write to you to advise you of the decision.
 - Arrange for two Board Members and the Secretary to sign a Share Certificate which will then be sent to you.



Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, and Human Rights at Ark Housing

At Ark, we are committed to creating an inclusive and supportive environment for everyone. Our Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, and Human Rights (EDI-HR) group is integral to this mission. The group meets monthly to focus on achieving our EDI-HR priorities. As a social landlord and provider of care & support services, we aim to create “inclusive communities where quality of housing and care enable people to thrive and live a good life.”

Our EDI-HR group works to ensure that Ark remains a place where fairness and respect are integral to everything we do. EDI-HR is a core value that underpins our foundation, stemming from the passion for justice, equality, and humanity that has guided Ark from its very beginning. Together, we continue to improve the lives of our customers and the communities in which they live, safeguarding the rights and aspirations of all people who require care and support.

Practice Development Team Overview

Ark is committed to enhancing the quality of life for the people we support. PBS is a person-centred approach that helps us understand behaviour as a form of communication, using proactive strategies to enhance well-being through the promotion of choice, inclusion, and engagement in meaningful activities.

Ark has adopted an organisational approach to implementing PBS, recognising that Practice Leadership is an effective way to embed PBS practices. This model fosters a culture of mentoring, support, and continuous professional development.

The Practice Development Team plays a key role in embedding PBS and Practice Leadership throughout our services. Led by Calum Robson, Practice Development

Manager, the team consists of three Practice Leaders:

Zoe Keir, Ellis Bruce, and Jonny Smith. The Practice Leaders

work closely with Care & Support Managers and Support Staff in individual services, dedicating time to providing face-to-face practical training on PBS and Practice Leadership as well as integrating coaching and mentoring into daily practice. Through this approach, Ark ensures that our staff are equipped with the knowledge and skills to deliver high-quality, person-centred support that enhances outcomes and improves the quality of life for those we serve.



Participation

Speak Out

Forfar

Forfar's Speak Out Group started 2025 by setting some goals for the new year. They decided that this year, their group will learn about some new topics including saving money and having a healthy lifestyle. They also have a goal to invite a police officer to one of their meetings, so they can learn about staying safe in the community. Forfar's Speak Out Group have also set a goal to have some fun this year – by having a summer party, a games night and doing a step challenge. Good luck Forfar!



Forres

Forres Speak Out Group had their first meeting with their new Speak Out Worker Ellie in September – and it was a huge success! The group decided to talk about keeping safe online and shared some tips for avoiding scams.

The used their last meeting of 2024 to celebrate Christmas and set some New Year Resolutions. They made Christmas cards for family and friends. The group have made resolutions to "Start walking more" "Do more for myself" "Go more places on my own" and "Home cook more".

Dunfermline

The Speak Out members in Dunfermline had a healthy kickstart to the new year with some chair yoga and a discussion about healthy eating. They are working on creating their own healthy cookbook filled with their favourite meals.

The group celebrated Valentine's Day with arts and crafts. They made cards, keyrings and Love Bugs – and enjoyed some chocolate strawberries and love hearts.



Grangemouth and Alloa

The Speak Out Groups in our Alloa and Grangemouth services met to celebrate Christmas.

Grangemouth Speak Out Group met up to talk about starting a Neighbourhood Watch. In February, they visited the local sports centre to check out the space for their future meetings.

Hawick

Hawick's Speak Out Group is back up and running with their new Speak Out Worker, Bethany! The group held their first meeting in March. They invited Ark's Participation Officer, Jamila, to talk to them about the different ways they can get involved in Ark. The first thing the group want to do is organise having a meal together once a month.



Voices

Since the last edition of the newsletter the Ark Voices Group have met twice.

Their September meeting was held in Ark's Head Office. The group talked about different ways they can give feedback to Ark and other services they use. The group heard from Neil, Ark's Assistant Director of Care and Support, about some plans for Ark's support services.

The group met again in December, this time they met on zoom, and were joined by Calum Robson, Ark's Practice Development Manager. Calum joined Ark last September and he came to speak to the group about his role and his new team of Practice Leaders. Calum and his team will start working with care and support teams in April.



Fee tells us about being a member of the Voices Group

"I have been a member of the Ark Voices Group for quite a few years. When I started going we had the meetings in the old office at the Priory.

I like going to the Voices Group meetings because you meet different service users from different parts of Scotland. I like to see some old faces as well. It's good because you can find out all about what's going on with Ark. I really enjoy meeting the people who come to speak to us from other organisations, like the National Involvement Network. And I enjoy playing Bingo as well.

If someone is thinking about joining the Voices Group, they can come along and try it. They don't have to speak in front of everyone, they can just listen and have a chat with the other members."



Squirrel Spotting in Forfar

Supported people in Forfar recently enjoyed a wildlife-watching afternoon, putting out peanuts to attract red squirrels. Supported person Mel Niven patiently waited to capture the perfect shot – and it paid off! Mel is proud of her photos and was thrilled to share them for the newsletter.

Housing & Assets

CX Feedback

Ark Housing Association Introduces CX-Feedback

Ark is excited to launch CX-Feedback, a new communication tool for tenants and stakeholders. Already used by many Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in Scotland, this platform will help us share important updates, warnings, and alerts while gathering feedback to improve our services.

CX-Feedback allows us to communicate efficiently with tenants about local

updates and performance, particularly in areas like repairs. Your feedback is valuable in ensuring we meet your needs and continue to improve our services.

You may receive news and surveys via email and text messages, depending on your communication preferences.. We encourage you to engage with this system and share your opinions to help us make informed decisions.

For any questions, please contact our customer service team at **0131 478 8143** or customer.services@arkha.org.uk

Whole House Energy Efficiency Upgrades

Ark have established a partnership with Saltire Facilities Management and Clyde NetZero to secure external grant funding to part fund energy efficiency property upgrades to improve the overall energy efficiency performance of our homes. The planned upgrades will assist to lift the properties out of energy poverty, significantly improve the whole house energy performance and lower our tenant's energy bills.

- ▶ Cavity wall insulation
- ▶ Loft insulation
- ▶ Room in roof insulation

- ▶ Underfloor insulation
- ▶ Energy Efficient Heating
- ▶ Solar PV and Battery Storage
- ▶ Air source heat pumps
- ▶ Smart Heating controls

The first scheme to benefit from a whole house energy efficiency upgrade is Bracken Road in Portlethen (Aberdeenshire) and we are currently in the planning stage to enable the first phase of works to commence in May 2025.



2025/2026 Planned Investment Programme

Ark is looking forward to planning and organising the following component replacements with our tenants:

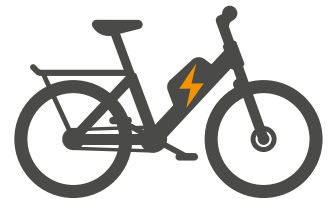
Bathrooms – Oxfangs Bank, Edinburgh

Front and Back Doors – Bracken Road, Portlethen, Aberdeenshire.

Windows – Bracken Road, Portlethen, Aberdeenshire.

Kitchens – Southhouse Broadway, Edinburgh.

Keeping Your Home Safe When You Charge Your e-bike or e-scooter



Most fires related to e-bikes and e-scooter have happened in homes. These fires are often caused when charging batteries.

How can you reduce the risk of fire when you charge an e-bike or e-scooter?

There a number of ways you can reduce the risks when charging lithium batteries:

- ▶ Reduce the risk of overheating.
- ▶ Batteries can get warm during their use. Allow them to cool down before attempting to re-charge.
- ▶ Batteries should always be charged on hard flat surfaces where heat can dissipate.
- ▶ Batteries can also pose a risk if they have been damaged, so try to ensure they are not getting knocked around while in use or while being carried. Do not continue to use a damaged battery.
- ▶ Batteries should also never be exposed to extremes of temperature.
- ▶ Keep an eye out for warning signs that your battery might be failing and becoming a fire risk.

Follow the instructions

- ▶ Always follow manufacturers' instructions when charging.
- ▶ You should always make sure you unplug your charger once it's finished charging.
- ▶ Always use the correct charger for your batteries and buy any replacements from a reputable seller.
- ▶ Make sure your battery and charger meet UK safety standards.

Where to charge your batteries

- ▶ Never block your escape route with e-bikes or e-scooters.
- ▶ Should not be parked / kept in common areas, should be in tenants homes or suitable outbuildings.
- ▶ Never leave it charging unattended or charge it while you are asleep.
- ▶ Make sure you and your family have an escape plan in place in the event of a fire.
- ▶ Fit smoke alarms in the area where you charge your batteries.

Universal Credit Information

Universal Credit Migration

The DWP are stopping the 6 'legacy benefits' and these will be replaced by Universal Credit for those of working age. The legacy benefits are:

- ▶ Working tax credit
- ▶ Child tax credit
- ▶ Housing benefit
- ▶ Income support
- ▶ Income-based job seekers allowance
- ▶ Employment and support allowance (ESA)

If you are in receipt of any of these benefits you will receive a migration notice which will tell you the date your benefit is going to stop. When you receive this, you need to make a claim for universal credit – this change over is not automatic. If you need to extend your deadline you need to contact the DWP on **0800 169 0328** **before** the deadline date.

You can make your universal credit claim by visiting: [**www.universal-credit.service.gov.uk**](http://www.universal-credit.service.gov.uk)

If you have trouble claiming or are unable to do this online then you can contact the DWP directly on **0800 328 5644** you can also contact Citizens advice Scotland who have a 'help to claim' service on **0800 023 2581**.

Universal credit will ask for information on your housing costs. If you do not know this information then please contact us directly for this.

You can request that your housing costs are paid directly to your rent account or this payment can be made to yourself. Please be aware that the first payment is usually always paid directly to the tenant and you will have to contact us to make your rent payment.

If you are not currently in receipt of benefits or want to check what you are entitled to you can use the online calculator at [**www.entitledto.co.uk**](http://www.entitledto.co.uk)

Annual House Visits & Estate Walkabouts

Supporting Tenants and Communities: Annual House Visits and Estate Management by Ark's Housing & Neighbourhood Support Officers

We take pride in more than just providing quality homes, and well-maintained communities for our tenants. Central to this is the ongoing work of our Housing & Neighbourhood Service Officers (HNSOs), who carry out Annual House Visits and estate management walkabouts across

our properties. Their presence helps identify issues early, provide support, and ensure that both homes and shared spaces are in the best possible condition.

Annual House Visits: A Personal and Proactive Approach

Each year, tenants receive a visit from their HNSO, providing a dedicated opportunity to raise any concerns, discuss repairs or other tenancy matters, and review the overall condition of your home.

Estate Management Walkabouts: Taking Action for Safer Neighbourhoods

In addition to in-home visits, HNSOs carry out regular estate walkabouts, inspecting communal areas, outdoor spaces, and the wider neighbourhoods. These visits help us proactively spot issues before they become problems – ensuring that tenants enjoy a clean, safe, and well-managed environment.

Real examples from our estates show how valuable these walkabouts are:

- ▶ Slabs in a tenant's garden were previously brush cemented to help prevent bees and wasps from nesting – an issue that had disturbed tenants during the summer months. This practical solution improved comfort and safety for those enjoying outdoor space. However, during a recent walkabout, it was noted that telecoms contractors had begun lifting the slabs to lay cables. Thanks to prompt attention from HNSO, arrangements were made to inspect the area post-works to ensure it is returned to its original state and that the cementing remains effective.
- ▶ During another walkabout, a damaged fence was identified – an issue that hadn't been reported previously. The HNSO acted quickly, contacting our contractor, who was able to attend and carry out the necessary repairs, ensuring the area was made safe and secure again for residents.

These are just two examples of how issues identified by Ark's HNSOs during visits are acted upon, identifying issues tenants may not be aware of, and resolving them quickly and efficiently.

If you'd like more information about upcoming visits in your area or wish to speak to your HNSO, please don't hesitate to get in touch. We're here to help – and to make sure Ark communities remain safe, supportive places to live.

Below is a list of some of our planned visits over the coming months, specific dates will be communicated as appropriate to individual tenants.

Estate Inspections

June 2025

- ▶ Livingston
- ▶ Dunfermline
- ▶ Lochgelly
- ▶ Glenrothes
- ▶ Uphall
- ▶ Linlithgow
- ▶ Grangemouth
- ▶ Alloa
- ▶ Perth
- ▶ Blairgowrie
- ▶ Arbroath
- ▶ Edinburgh
Developments

Annual House Visits

June 2025

- ▶ Livingston
- ▶ St Andrews
- ▶ Grangemouth
- ▶ Glenrothes

July 2025

- ▶ St Andrew's
- ▶ Glenrothes



Rent Increase Consultation

In December 2024, we sent questionnaires to Ark Housing Association tenants or their guardians consulting on options for the 2025/26 rent increase.

We consulted on 2 options – 4% or 5%. 45 tenants gave their feedback:

- ▶ 31 tenants noted their preference for a 4% increase, and;
- ▶ 14 tenants noted their preference for the 5% increase.

The Board of Management approved a 4% increase.

Apart from the Intensive Housing Management Service Charge, all other service charges will remain the same. This will take effect from 1st April 2025.

The 4 tenants selected for the prize draw and sent the £50 Tesco voucher live in Edinburgh, Forres, Fraserburgh and Macduff, congratulations to them!

Ark Services Limited and Ark Commercial Investment Limited properties will have their rent reviewed ahead of the annual uprating date of 1st August 2025. Communications will be sent in advance of any uprating being applied.

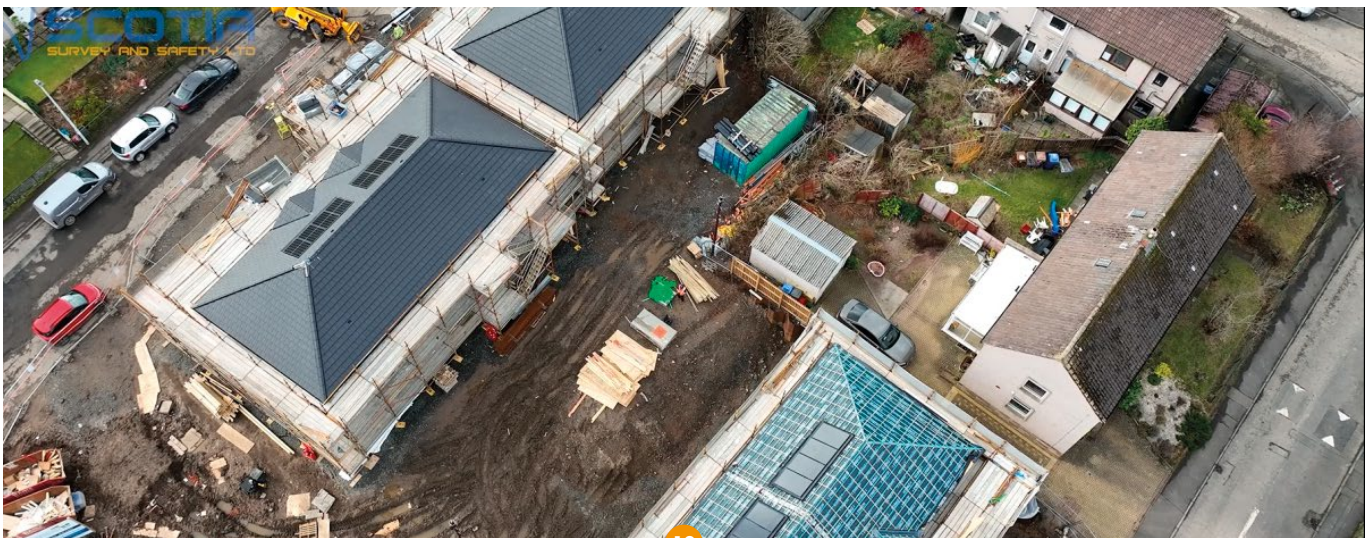
New Build Programme Update

Windsor Square

In the last edition, we shared that we had started to build 12 new homes in Penicuik and between June and December '24 works were progressing well, but unfortunately in early January '25, the appointed contractor went into administration. Following a short pause of works on site, Ark appointed Clerk

Contracts to carry out essential works to make the site and properties safe and wind and watertight; these works were completed in March '25. Ark are currently finalising a contract with Clark Contractors to complete all works. The target date to complete works is August 2025.

Below is an aerial shot of the new properties under construction!

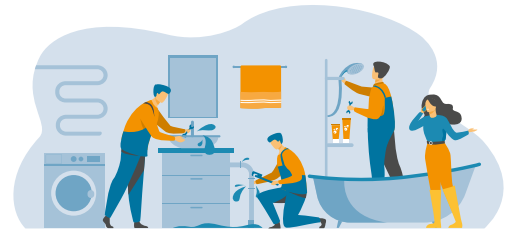


Right to Repair

Right to Repair

Under the Right to Repair Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 Ark tenants with a Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST) have the right to have certain repairs carried out within specified timescales. Tenants may be entitled to compensation if the repair is not carried out within those specific timescales.

Timescales are dependent on the type of repair as list below.



Defect or Repair	Maximum Time (Working Days)
Blocked flue to open fire or boiler	1
Blocked or leaking foul drains, soil stacks, or toilet pans (no other toilet)	1
Blocked sink, bath or basin	1
Loss of electric power	1
Partial loss of electric power	3
Insecure external window, door or lock	1
Unsafe access path or step	1
Significant leaks or flooding from water or heating pipes, tanks, cisterns	1
Loss or partial loss of gas supply	1
Loss or partial loss of space or water heating (no alternative heating)	1
Toilet not flushing (no other toilet in the house)	1
Unsafe power or lighting socket, or electrical fitting	1
Loss of water supply	1
Partial loss of water supply	3
Loose or detached banister or handrail	3
Unsafe timber flooring or stair treads	3
Mechanical extractor fan in internal kitchen or bathroom not working	7

RTS Meter Upgrade

Time to Upgrade: RTS Meters Ending June 2025

Do you have an older electricity meter with cheaper rates overnight? You might be using the Radio Teleswitch Service (RTS) – a system introduced in the 1980s to help homes with electric heating or hot water switch between peak and off-peak rates.

But now, the RTS is being switched off.

Ofgem, the energy regulator for Great Britain, has announced that the RTS service will end on 30 June 2025. All electricity suppliers are contacting affected customers to upgrade them to smart meters – the only technical replacement for RTS.

Please note: The person or the guardian who pays the electricity bill, must contact the supplier directly to arrange a meter upgrade – Ark Housing Association cannot do this on your behalf.

What does this mean for you?

If you have an RTS or DTS meter, you'll need to upgrade to a smart meter to keep receiving similar service. Smart meters allow your energy provider to maintain off-peak tariffs and ensure your heating and hot water systems work properly.

Without the upgrade, you could experience issues like:

- ▶ Heating or hot water switching on or off at the wrong time
- ▶ Higher energy bills due to inaccurate charging
- ▶ Loss of access to off-peak tariffs

Do you have an RTS meter?

You might if:

- ▶ Your property is all-electric or uses storage heaters
- ▶ There's no gas supply to your home
- ▶ You're on tariffs like Economy 7, Economy 10 or Total Heat Total Control
- ▶ You see a box near your meter labelled "radio teleswitch"

Not sure? Contact your electricity supplier – they'll confirm if you have an RTS meter and help arrange a smart meter upgrade.

Some areas may not be ready for the upgrade just yet, but your supplier will let you know when they are.

To learn more:

- ▶ Ofgem: [ofgem.gov.uk](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk)
- ▶ Citizens Advice: citizensadvice.org.uk
- ▶ ENA: energynetworks.org

Act now to stay warm and keep your bills accurate – contact your energy supplier about upgrading to a smart meter.



Complaints

Complaints Q2

During Q2 July to September 2024, Ark received a total of sixteen complaints which has increased from twelve in the previous quarter.

Six complaints were responded to with a frontline response at Stage 1 with eight points identified. 'Frontline complaints' are relatively straightforward complaints which can usually be responded to within five working days.

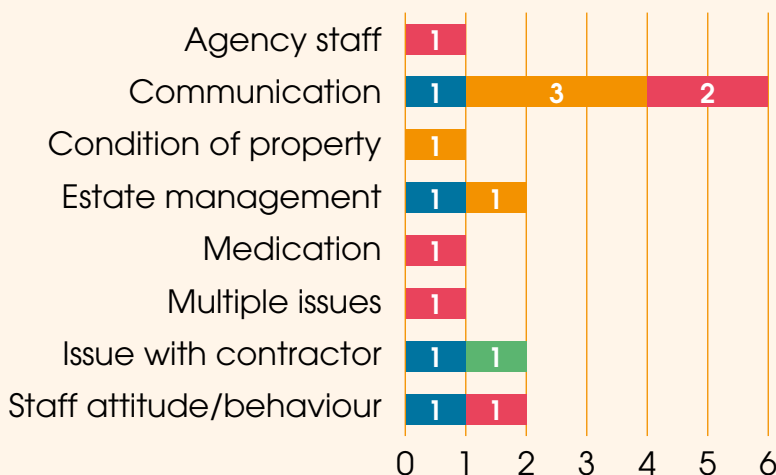
83% of Stage 1 complaints were closed within 5 working days. One complaint was closed out with target due to the complainant being unreachable for a period of time.

Stage 2 is where a customer is dissatisfied with the frontline response or refuses to engage at the frontline stage, insisting they wish their complaint to be investigated.

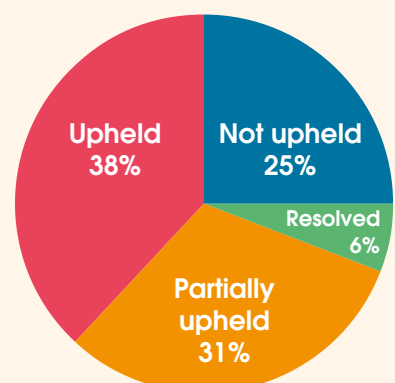
Three complaints were investigated directly at Stage 2 with six points identified. 100% of these complaints were closed within our target of 20 working days.

Seven complaints were escalated to Stage 2 due to the customer being dissatisfied with the frontline response. 100% of these complaints were closed within our target of 20 working days.

Complaint outcomes



Complaint outcomes



Not upheld Resolved Partially upheld Upheld

Complaints Q3

During Q3 October to December 2024, Ark received a total of twenty four complaints which has increased from sixteen in the previous quarter.

Sixteen complaints were responded to with a frontline response at Stage 1 with twenty one points identified. ‘Frontline complaints’ are relatively straightforward complaints which can usually be responded to within five working days.

100% of Stage 1 complaints were closed within 5 working days.

Stage 2 is where a customer is dissatisfied with the frontline response or refuses to engage at the frontline stage, insisting they wish their complaint to be investigated.

Seven complaints were investigated directly at Stage 2 with eighteen points identified. 100% of these complaints were closed within our target of 20 working days.

One complaint was escalated to Stage 2 due to the customer being dissatisfied with the frontline response. This complaint was closed within our target of 20 working days.

