



Tenants News



Title	Pg
Welcome from CEO	2
Rent Freeze	4
Energy Bill support	6
Warm Home Discount	8
Scottish Welfare fund	10
Tenant Alterations	12
Annual House Visits	14
Estate Inspections	16
Paying your rent	18
Repairs and Maintenance	20
Right to Repair	22
Preparing for Winter	22
New build	24
Health & Safety	25
Complaints Update	26



Click the menu icon to
return to this page



Welcome



Bobby Duffy
Ark Chief Executive

Welcome to the autumn edition of the tenants newsletter!

The cost of living is at the tip of everyone's tongue at the moment, whether it's the cost of the weekly shop, petrol for your car or the cost of using energy in your homes.

This is indeed a very worrying time for everyone.

Rightly both the UK and the Scottish Government have stepped in to offer essential and very welcome support for everyone.

Please read this edition of the newsletter carefully, as Ark colleagues have set out in detail the steps governments have taken to provide support with the rising cost of living and the additional help that is available for those on benefits and lower incomes.

Colleagues have also provided useful information in this edition that informs you of how they plan to engage with you in the coming year and the purpose of that engagement. Again please take the time and the opportunity to meet with our teams so they know that the house we provide you is meeting your needs or if there is anything that needs improved.



The senior team at Ark have been working on creating strategic plans that are designed to lay how we will make the necessary improvements to your home that meets your satisfaction and meets the requirement on Ark to provide energy efficient quality homes.

You may remember earlier this year our teams visited you to assess the condition of your home and where relevant, to identify the improvements required to bring it up to the required standard.

We have now gathered all of this information and we will use this to agree our housing investment plan which will deliver the high quality homes we want to provide to you.

We will set out a plan and communicate this to you by the end of this financial year, so you have confidence that we are working on making the improvements that are important to you.

Our teams have been busy this year ensuring that any repairs you required were carried out efficiently and that the repair was of a good standard, with 97.16% of you who had a repair, telling us that your repair was completed right first time.

I hope you find the detailed information contained in the newsletter useful and please, do not struggle on your own with the rising cost of living in the coming months, particularly if you are worried about paying your rent.

Please contact your housing officer who will listen to your concerns and sign post you to the correct place where you should get the help you need to see you through the winter period.

Bobby

Rent freeze



Cost of Living (Tenant Protection) (Scotland) Bill



On the 6th of September 2022, the First Minister for Scotland announced an immediate ban on rent increases and evictions in the Scottish housing market, both for Private Rented tenants and Social Rented tenants.

There has been a lot of media coverage about this with it being referred to as a rent freeze.

The Cost of Living (Tenant Protection) (Scotland) Bill is the emergency legislation that has been introduced to allow the rent freeze to be introduced.

The legislation creates new rules which state that:

- any rent increase due to be applied between the 6 September 2022 and 31st March 2023 cannot be applied.
- these laws will remain in force until 31 March 2023
- for the Social Rented Sector the Scottish Government will confirm by 14 January 2023 whether it proposes to retain the rent freeze at 0%, increase it or remove it entirely beyond 31st March 2023.

We want to make Ark tenants aware of the impact that this may or may not have on them living in one of our properties.

For Ark Housing Association tenants

We have been told that we can still undertake our annual tenant consultations on proposed increases. From the 14th January 2023 we will know whether we can apply an increase from the 1st April 2023.

If we are allowed to apply an increase you will receive your Rent Increase notification towards the end of February 2023.

For Ark Services tenants

We normally write to you in December each year, giving you 3 months' notice of an increase.

As we cannot write to you until after 31st March 2023 any rent increase cannot be applied until 1st July 2023 at the earliest.

Ark are working closely with other landlords, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and our solicitors regarding the introduction of this emergency legislation.

As an organisation, we appreciate that this announcement and the measures introduced may be welcome and valuable for many tenants who find themselves in a difficult financial position.

Energy Bill support scheme



The energy bill support scheme was announced by government in a bid to assist households with the energy crisis.

It is a £400 discount per household to help with energy bills over winter 2022 to 2023.

This is a non-repayable discount.



The only eligibility criteria for this discount is that the household has a domestic electricity connection.

This discount is being automatically applied to eligible energy accounts and you do not need to contact your energy supplier to set this up.

The discount is being applied to your monthly electrical bill in the following instalments:

- £66.00 in October and November 2022
- £67.00 in December 2022
- £67.00 in January, February and March 2023

You will receive the discount monthly even if you pay your bill quarterly and do not need to amend the way you pay.

Prepayment meter/ card top up

If you have a prepayment meter in your property and pay for your electricity using a top up card you will receive this discount in one of two ways:

- Vouchers sent via text, email or post
- An automatic credit applied when you top up at your usual paypoint

Your electricity supplier will let you know in advance which method your discount will be available to you. Please ensure your contact details are up to date with your supplier.

If you are concerned about debt on your energy account your energy provider may be able to help.

The following energy suppliers have grants available to their customers:

- Scottish power, hardship fund
- Ovo, energy fund
- E.ON, next energy fund
- EDF, Energy customer support fund
- Bulb, Energy fund
- British gas, Energy trust

You can also contact Home Energy Scotland for more advice on energy saving and rising costs on 0808 808 2282 or on their website homeenergyscotland.org

Warm Home Discount Scheme



The Warm Home Discount is a government programme that provides a one-off discount to the electricity bills of UK homes that are at risk of fuel poverty.

The Warm Home Discount for the 2022-2023 winter season is set at £150.

The scheme opens in November 2022.

The discount is not given directly to you, but applied automatically to your energy bill between October and March. The government uses data to tell suppliers which customers to apply the discount to.

You can ask for your supplier to apply the discount to your gas bill instead, if you pay for both fuels with them.

You can also get the Warm Home Discount if you're on a prepayment or pay as you go meter. Your supplier will decide how the discount is applied, but it's often in the form of a voucher you can use to top up your meter.

Which energy suppliers offer the Warm Home Discount?

Any supplier with more than 150,000 customers has to offer the Warm Home Discount to the core eligible group. Some smaller suppliers offer the Warm Home Discount to their customers voluntarily.

You can find a list of suppliers who offered the Warm Home Discount for 2021-2022 by visiting www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme/energy-suppliers.

Who gets the Warm Home Discount?

Core Group 1

You are automatically eligible for the Warm Home Discount if on 21 August 2022 you were in receipt of the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit (even if you get Savings Credit as well). Aside from being eligible, you also have to check that your supplier participates in the scheme and that your name (or your partner's) appear on the electricity bill.

Core Group 2

This group is for those who don't fall into Core Group 1 but may still be able to get the Warm Home Discount. Some suppliers also offer the discount to a 'broader group' of customers, such as low income households, especially those with young children.

In these cases, each supplier has its own eligibility criteria and a limit on how many discounts it will pay out. The standard requirements are:

- You're on a low income
- You receive at least one of the following means-tested benefits: Income Support; Income-based Jobseekers Allowance; Income-related Employment & Support Allowance; Housing Benefit; Universal Credit; Child Tax Credit; Working Tax Credits; Pension Credit Savings Credit (PCSC).

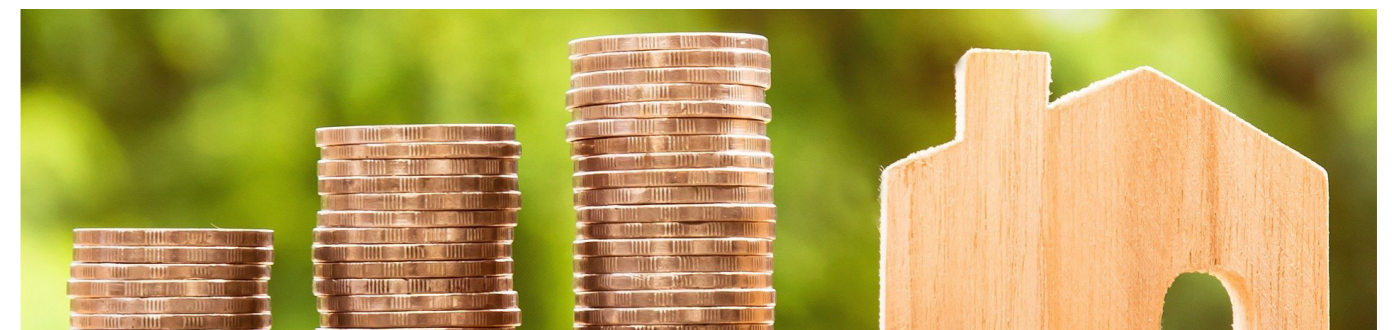
Also your home must meet new 'high energy cost' rules. This is where data around floor area, property age and property type is used by the government to identify households that are likely to have high energy costs.

How can I claim the Warm Home Discount?

Core Group 1 and 2

There is no need to apply for the Warm Home Discount anymore - your supplier will automatically apply the discount to your bill if you are eligible.

To find out whether you qualify, you can call the government Warm Home Discount phone line on 0800 731 0214 between 14 November 2022 and 31 March 2023.



Scottish welfare fund



The Scottish welfare fund was launched in 2013 by the Scottish government to provide a safety net for people on low incomes or in need of emergency help. There are 2 types of grants available from the Scottish welfare fund.

Crisis grant

Crisis grants are intended to help individuals or households who are in crisis due to an unexpected emergency. Examples of this could be:

- You need emergency help to get food or help to heat your home
- There has been a gap in your income due to
- Losing your job or a change to your pay schedule
- You are the victim of domestic abuse and need financial help
- Your money has been stolen
- There has been a fire/flood in your home

Each council in Scotland has a Scottish welfare fund team and it is at their discretion as to whether you will qualify for assistance and how that assistance is given. You may receive funds, vouchers, a food bank referral, energy vouchers or a combination of these.

As this fund is only to assist with your needs during this time, they will not make payments towards bills such as your rent and council tax. Please speak to your housing officer and local revenues department about your situation separately.

To apply for this grant, you will need to contact your local council. Applications can usually be made online or over the phone. Your local council will let you know when they receive your application when you should receive a decision, this is normally around two working days depending on workload. You may be asked to submit evidence to support your claim. This is a grant so you will not be asked to repay any funds you receive. Crisis grants are normally limited to three in a 12 month period.

Community care grant

Community care grants are intended to provide support to those who need help in order to establish or maintain a settled home. Examples of this include:

- A person leaving care or moving in to a care setting
- A person moving in to a property after being homeless
- Someone leaving prison
- A person who is at risk from losing their home
- A family who are under exceptional pressure
- A child's health is at risk

To be able to apply for a community care grant, you need to be on a low income but do not need to be in receipt of welfare benefits. You make the application to your local council and should receive a decision within 15 working days. A community care grant award depends on what you have requested help with but normally you will receive items such as:

- Furniture
- White goods
- Bedding and clothing
- Cooking utensils



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

Tenant Alterations and Improvements



If you wish to carry out any work in your home that would be described as an alteration or improvement, please let your maintenance officer know BEFORE you start any work.

An alteration is, for example, where you wish to:

- alter, remove or replace any of the existing fabric of the building, its grounds or boundaries;
- replace an Ark fixture or fitting with one of your own, which is of similar quality or standard as the original, e.g. kitchen units or internal doors;
- permanently remove an Ark fixture or fitting.

An improvement is, for example, where you wish to:

- replace an Ark fixture or fitting with one of your own which is clearly of a higher standard or quality;
- install a fixture or fitting where there is none at present, e.g. a new shower;
- extend the floor area of the property in any way, e.g. by adding a conservatory or a porch.

Section 5 of your Tenancy Agreement states that you must tell us what you are planning to do:

- erect or fit a satellite dish or receiving aerial to the house;
- put up a garage, shed or other structure;
- decorate the outside of the house;
- fix anything to, or drill holes in or otherwise alter the outside of the house;
- install laminate flooring, ceramic flooring tiles or any other fixed flooring;
- alter, improve or enlarge the house, fittings or fixtures;
- add new fittings or fixtures (for example kitchen or bathroom installations)

For some simple jobs, such as putting up a small shelf, trimming internal doors so that they fit over a carpet, replacing door or drawer handles etc., you will not have to go through the full application process but you will still need to let us know what you plan to do.

You must first get our written permission.

We will not refuse permission unreasonably.

We may grant permission with conditions including conditions regarding the standard of the work.

If you are not sure if the work you wish to do needs our permission, or whether you need to go through the full application process, please contact a member of the Asset team on 0131 478 8143.

Things to Remember

- If you have made alterations or improvements with our permission, you may be entitled to compensation at the end of your tenancy under regulations governing such arrangements. We also have the power, even if you do not qualify under these regulations to make a discretionary payment.
- If you carry out any alterations or improvements without our permission, we are entitled to restore the house to its previous condition during or at the end of your tenancy. If we do so, we are entitled to charge you for this work.

Annual House Visits

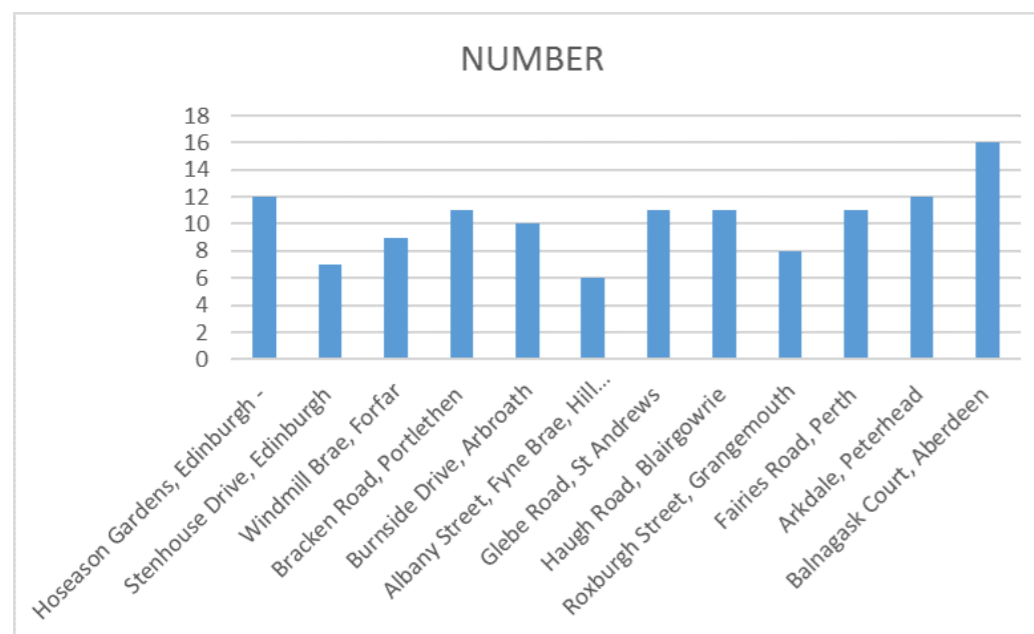


Ark plans to visit each of our tenants in their home each year as part of our efforts to improve the service we provide as a landlord. Annual House Visits are an opportunity for you to keep in touch with us and discuss any concerns you may have. It also gives us the chance to check that our homes are not being used for anything that breaches tenancy conditions and are kept in a good condition.

Annual House Visits Up to 30th September 2022

124 Annual House Visits were carried out in September 2022.

Breakdown of Annual Housing Visits carried out below:



Issues discussed at Annual House Visits:

- Maintenance & Repairs
- Furniture Packages
- Rent Accounts
- Tenancy / Household Details
- Guardian Details
- Neighbours Disputes
- Properties in Poor Condition
- Hoarding
- Tenant Participation



What work has been done to address issues raised?

- Feedback has been given to the asset team to support them with the new gardening contract to prevent future issues with the landscaping contract
- Any repairs were reported to the asset team to raise works orders
- Furniture packages were removed when not utilised or new items of furniture were ordered where required.
- Advice and support offered to tenants who advised they were having financial difficulty.
- Tenancy records/contact details updated
- Housing officers working with tenants to improve the condition of their tenancy and improve their living conditions with support from 3rd party agencies.

If you were not able to be home for the arranged annual house visit and would like to rearrange or you would like your visit prioritised please call the housing team 0131 478 8146 or email housing@arkha.org.uk and we can work to get your visit arranged.

Estate Inspections



Estate Inspections are carried out by the Housing & / or Maintenance Officer every quarter to check for the following:

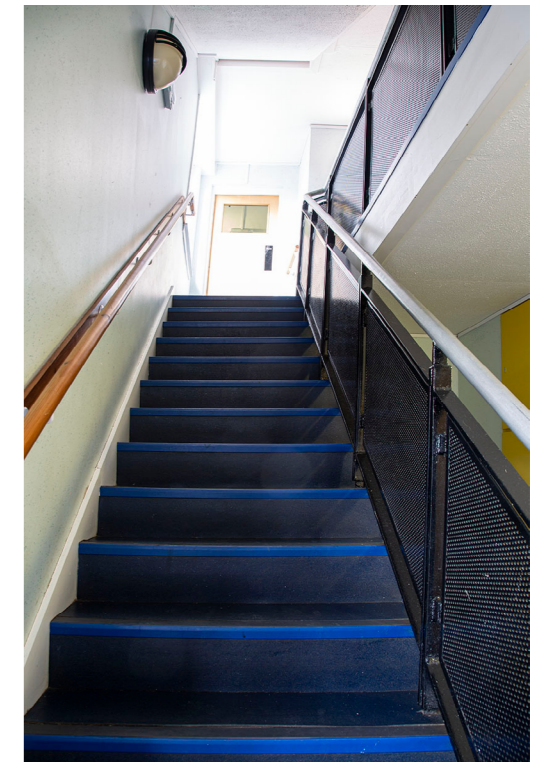
- Check for Graffiti
- Condition of Garden & Landscaped areas
- Standard of Litter pick up
- Dog Foul Issues
- Any Rubbish / Bulky Refuse Items needing to be removed
- Check Bin Storage Areas
- Check Condition of Paths
- Any Unauthorised External Works Evident
- Check for any unauthorised vehicles or parking issues evident
- Any security or safety hazards evident
- Standard of Stair Cleaning
- Suggested improvements for the area



Estate Inspections up to 30th September 2022

14 Estate Inspections were carried out in September 2022:

- Hoseason Gardens, Edinburgh
- Niddrie Farm Grove, Edinburgh
- Oxgangs, Edinburgh
- Restalrig, Edinburgh
- Stenhouse Drive, Edinburgh
- Tait Street, Dalkeith
- Bracken Road, Portlethen
- Burnside Drive, Arbroath
- Fairies Road, Perth
- Glebe Road, St Andrews
- Roxburgh Street, Grangemouth
- Arkdale, Peterhead
- Balnagask Court, Aberdeen
- Back Hilton Road, Kittybrewster, Aberdeen
- Wellside Court, Forres
- Woodside Close/Land Street, Buckie



Paying rent



If you are having money problems and think you may miss a rent payment, tell your Housing Officer as soon as possible.

Any information that you give us will be treated confidentially.

If you speak with us we can work out a payment plan that you can afford, recommend benefits you could apply for and stop you getting into more debt.

The Housing Officer's work in accordance with Ark's rent collection policy to support tenants if they are experiencing financial difficulties and their rent account falls into arrear to. They will:

- Offer a range of payment options for the use of tenants.
- Provide accurate information about rent and service charges, methods of payment, types of advice and assistance available, and the consequences of falling into arrears.
- Work to prevent arrears increasing through responding promptly to missed payments.
- Ensure that all tenants have been advised of ways to access welfare benefits advice

and debt counselling services. They can point you towards independent support/advice services such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau/Money Advice Service and Shelter, who can make sure you are receiving all the support and benefits that you should be.

- In the event of non-payment and when tenants fail to engage they will take legal action to recover the debt where necessary but to sanction the use of eviction only as a last resort.
- Recover former tenants arrears, taking legal action if necessary.

If you have rent arrears, please do not ignore them!

If you do not pay your rent, work to clear any outstanding balance, fail to engage with your housing officer or stick to your repayment plan, we will have to take legal action against you. This could cause you to lose your home.

To make an appointment to discuss your rent account with your housing officer you can email housing@arkha.org.uk or call 0131 478 8146.

More information about the help and support that the housing team can provide is on Ark's website www.arkha.org.uk/housing-asset-management/your-rent-account/about-your-rent/



Repairs & Maintenance



Repairs Completed

Emergency repairs	333	Average 8.38 hours
Non emergency repairs	1336	Average 9.17 days

97.16% repairs were completed right first time

80.11% tenants satisfied with repairs service carried out in last 12 months

Medical Adaptations	2021-2022
Number of approved applications for medical adaptations completed (annually)	22
Total cost of adaptations undertaken in the reporting year (£)	£39,764
Average time to complete adaptations (calendar days) (YTD)	71.91

Smoke Detector Upgrade Programme

The new Scottish legislation for smoke alarms came in to force in February 2022 and every home in Scotland now needs to have interlinked smoke alarms which means if one alarm sounds, they all sound.

Ark have completed these upgrades to meet the legislation and have upgraded the standard alarms with AICO interlinked smoke alarms and connected gateways.

Remember to test your alarm weekly by pressing the Test Button, the alarms will all sound together.

Gas Servicing Contract

Ark have signed a new contract appointing Richard Irvin FM Ltd to undertake all gas servicing and repairs to your heating and hot water system. The contract commenced from the 3rd October 2022 and will run for a 3 year period. It is our legal responsibility to provide an annual gas safety certificate to our tenants, and we would therefore ask that you help us by allowing Richard Irvin FM Ltd access to your property in order to carry out the annual service.

For all gas emergency works that you require out with our normal working hours you can contact Richard Irvin FM Ltd on 0845 890 2020 and they will arrange to attend and undertake the emergency works within the agreed timescales.

For Emergency Repairs to your Gas Heating and Hot Water System for All Areas contact: Richard Irvin on 0845 890 2020.

For Emergency Repairs in Buckie, MacDuff, Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Inverurie, Aberdeen, Portlethen and Forres contact: Heatcare Oil & Gas Ltd on 01343 842 042.

For Emergency Repairs in Arbroath, Blairgowrie, Forfar and Perth contact: Logie Glazing & Building Services Ltd. on 0131 608 2006.

For Emergency Repairs in Clackmannanshire, Falkirk, Fife, Lothians and Borders contact: HF Group Ltd on 0131 337 4011 or Freephone 0800 783 9480.

Right to Repair



The Right to Repair scheme gives Scottish secure tenants and short Scottish secure tenants the right to have small urgent repairs carried out by their landlord within a given timescale. If the repair is not carried out within the agreed response time Ark will pay compensation to tenants. Qualifying repairs are specified in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. For example:

Repair type	Number of days
unsafe power or lighting sockets or electrical fittings	1
loss or part loss of electric power	1/3
external windows, doors or locks which are not secure	1
loss or part loss of space or water heating if no alternative heating is available	3
toilets which do not flush (if there is no other toilet in the house)	1

If the repair is not carried out within the timescales then you will be entitled to £15 compensation and £3 compensation for each working day until the repair has been completed. This amount can add up to a maximum compensation payment of £100 for any one repair.

Preparing for winter



With winter approaching and the cost of living rising you may be considering cost effective ways to keep your home warm. Home Energy Scotland advise to understand and control your heating system, keep the heat in and tackle damp and condensation.

Control your heating system

Energy Saving Trust have helpful advice on all types of heating and controls, energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/thermostats-and-heating-controls/

Keep the heat in

Draught proof your property where possible and report any noticeable loss of insulation to Ark repairs, for example if there is no insulation in the attic space.

Tackle damp and condensation

Report any water entering your property to Ark repairs and ensure your extractor fans are on and working correctly in your kitchen and bathroom. Reduce the amount of moisture in your property by keeping lids on pans when cooking, dry clothes outside and if you use a tumble dryer make sure it's vented to the outside. Keep window vents open and ventilate as much as possible so the moist air leaves the house.

Ark will be working with Warmworks who will assess Ark properties and advise on property energy efficiency measures.

Cold Weather Precautions

If you intend going away for any period of time, please leave your heating on the minimum setting to prevent pipes from freezing.

New Build Development



Crusader Rise site works have now begun!

The car park has been built and new drainage work is ongoing.

Ark are keen to begin work inside the homes which should start shortly once all the permissions are in place.

We are building 20 units on the development which we are hoping to have completed by Autumn next year.



Crusader Rise



New build development of
20 homes for rent

18 flats (1 & 2 bedroom) and
2 houses (3 bedroom)

6 of the flats are wheelchair standard

For further information please contact Ark on **0131 447 9027** or at **www.arkha@org.uk**. Homes to be completed in the second half of 2023

Ark Housing Association Ltd is a Scottish Charity and Registered Social Landlord

Health & Safety

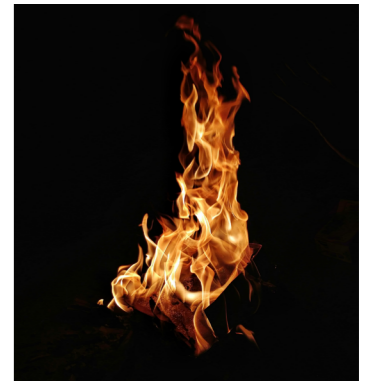


Smoke alarms save lives but only if they are working, test them regularly.

Fires in your home can start when 3 things are present:

- Oxygen - The air around us.
- Fuel – Wood, Paper, Cardboard, Foam, Paints.
- Heat – Cigarettes, Matches, Heaters, Cookers, Lighting.

When oxygen surrounds a fuel source and a heat source is added such as a spark or a cigarette a fire will start.



What can I do to prevent fire?

- **Stub out cigarettes properly and dispose of them carefully.**
- **Take extra care in the kitchen, never leave cookers / washing machines / dryers switched on and leave your home.**
- **Do not overload electrical sockets with too many plugs.**
- **Look for scorch marks near plugs and cables and remove them if they show signs of scorching.**

What do I do if a fire alarm is activated?

- **Quickly check your home for signs of fire.**
- **Try to extinguish a very small fire if it safe to do so on paper / cardboard / ashtrays by using water or covering with a damp towel. (Call 999 and inform them of the incident).**
- **Do not use water on electrical equipment fires. If safe to do so you can switch off appliance at plug socket (Call 999 and inform them of the incident).**
- **If fire is out of control, get out and stay out and call 999.**
- **Know your closest escape routes if a fire is out control.**
- **If you can't get out, stay in a safe place and call 999 and wait for help.**
- **Close door and open windows if you are trapped in a room.**

Complaints Update



Here is our update for complaints received between April and June 2022. In this quarter ARK received a total of 12 complaints.

Department	Total Number of Complaints	Resolved	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld
Care and Support	6	4	1	1	
Asset Team	1		1		
Housing	2	1	1		
Asset/Housing	1	1			
Ark Services	1		1		
Finance	1		1		
Total	12	6	5	1	

All 12 complaints were dealt with at the frontline stage. 10 complaints received a response within 5 working days. 2 required an additional day for a response from a contractor and to allow the manager to speak with the complainant and relevant members of their team.

Department		Number of points of complaints	Points Resolved	Points Upheld	Points partially upheld	Points Not Upheld
Care and Support	1	1	1			
	2	1	1			
	3	1	1			
	4	1	1			
	5	1		1		
	6	1				1
Asset	1	2		2		
Housing	1	3		3		
	2	3	3			
Asset/Housing	1	6	6			
Ark Services	1	1		1		
Finance	1	1		1		
Total	12	22	13	8	1	

Learning from complaints

A common theme which has been identified in the majority of the complaints received in this quarter, was the need for better information and communication. Our teams are actively putting measures in place, to ensure we communicate effectively with all of Ark's customer and provide high quality accessible information. If you would like to know more about the complaints process in Ark, please contact a member of the Compliance and Improvement Team who will be happy to help.



Housing Team Contacts

housing@arkha.org.uk

0131 478 8146



Maintenance Team Contacts

repairs@arkha.org.uk

0131 478 8143

Don't miss out on important updates...

Our housing team are sending regular updates via email to tenants and we want to ensure that we reach as many of you as possible.

If you do not already receive emails from Ark please send us an email to housing@arkha.org.uk and we will add your updated contact details onto our system.



0131 447 9027