

Ark[®] NEWSLETTER



We wish you all a happy festive season.

Ark's office in Edinburgh will close at **1pm on Friday 22nd December 2023** until **9am on Wednesday 3rd January 2024**. If you need to call an emergency contractor, please see the article on Page 3.



Welcome to the Winter edition of our newsletter.

There are a lot of updates and advice in this newsletter.

We tell you:

- ▶ How to stay warm and keep your home safe
- ▶ Get help with energy costs





There is news about people we support, and an article about Myra who has lived with Ark and been supported by Ark for 40 years. Congratulations Myra and to everyone who has worked with you.



We tell you about what rent we plan to charge from April 2024 and why we are making this change.



We are planning for the next 2 years.
We will:

- ▶ Improve our homes and the housing services you receive
- ▶ Improve our care and support services
- ▶ Move to a smaller office



Contact us if you need more information.

I will be in touch with you again in the Spring.

Bobby

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Human Rights



Treating everyone fairly is important to us and it is the Law.

We have a new plan in place to make sure we value all cultures and groups in Ark in everything we do.

We will set up a group about this work.



Reactive Repairs Service over Christmas and New Year



Ark will provide an Emergency Repairs Service only from **1pm on Friday 22nd December 2023** until **9am on Wednesday 3rd January 2024** when our offices open.

Find contact details for Emergency Contractors on our website.



An **Emergency Repair** is needed if there is a risk to your health and safety or a risk of serious structural damage.

Winter Advice



Please check the Met Office website for weather warnings.



Between November and March, if you are going to be away from your home for more than 2 days, let your neighbour(s) know, leave a key with them and ask them to keep an eye on your home for you.

Energy Fund



Our Housing Services Officer Lyn Davey has secured £86,000 from the Social Housing Fuel Support Fund to provide practical support to Ark's tenants.



This money is going to be used in 3 different projects. We will soon tell you more about this.

Tenant Hardship Fund



Ark has recently introduced a £6,000 fund to help tenants who may be struggling with the cost-of-living crisis.



If you think that you would benefit from this fund, contact your Housing Services Officer who will support you to make an application.

Engaging with Tenants



The Housing Services Officers have been arranging their annual visits to all tenants.



You will get a letter 2 weeks before they visit. Please contact the housing office if you need to change this appointment.

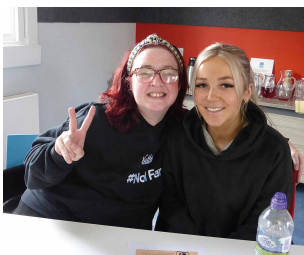
Community Benefit Fund



Ark is currently working with tenants to develop and deliver projects in several areas. If you have any ideas of projects that would benefit the community in your area, drop an e-mail to communitybenefitfund@arkha.org.uk

Participation & Tenant Involvement

Ark Voices Group



2023 has been a strong year for the Voices Group. This forum met 3 times and over 30 people supported by Ark across Scotland came to Edinburgh to talk about important issues.

At the meeting in March people said that they felt excluded from accessing their community since shops and cafes don't accept cash anymore and many people don't own a debit or credit card. Ark is looking at this to help people manage their money safely but also independently.





Involve

At the meeting in June, we learned from one of our supported people, Olivia, how to sign 'You raise me up' from Westlife. Olivia was a great teacher and the whole room was singing and signing.



At the meeting in September, we invited Dates-n-Mates to deliver a workshop about Healthy Relationships and Dating. It was great to hear people' awareness of what makes a relationship healthy, unhealthy, or abusive.



Our Participation Officer Gloria has now left Ark to work with the National Involvement Network. We will let you know soon how we will carry forward our participation activities.

Myra's 40 years with Ark



On 12th September 1983 Myra became an Ark tenant and moved into one of our properties in Blairgowrie so this year marks her 40 years with us!



In September she threw a big party and invited family, friends and staff that used to work with Ark at the very beginning of the project in Blairgowrie. The Town Hall was full as over 70 people came to celebrate Myra's milestone and they all raised over £450 for Cancer Research UK.



Myra likes her neighbours and says that it is like a big happy family. On sunny days everyone sits outside together in the garden and chats.

We are honoured to have provided housing and care to Myra for all these years and to have witnessed her achievements and dreams.

To many more years together Myra!

Speak Out Groups



The Forfar Speak Our Group met in September to talk about road safety.

People enjoyed getting together for a drink, a chat, and some games.



Speak Out groups are designed to give people the opportunity to share experiences, discuss issues that are important to them and influence the service they get from Ark as well as their community.

Ark Scrutiny Group



The group has welcomed a new member, a tenant from Edinburgh.

At the October meeting they talked about the performance of the repairs service. They are going to send a questionnaire to tenants to find out what they think about the repairs service.



If you want to join the group contact your Housing Services Officer or Sharon Donohoe at TIS on **0141 248 1242** or **sdonohoe@tis.org.uk**

Other tenant involvement



Congratulations to Fiona, one of our tenants in Portlethen, for receiving the Real Life Options Real Hero award.

Fiona attended the Real Life Options conference in Dunfermline on 1st November and talked about her community and the work she does to promote disability and autism awareness.



Fiona said:

“The Awards ceremony was held in Carnegie Hall Conference suite in Dunfermline. I went along with Oye my support worker and Michelle my manager. It was called My Voice conference. I gave my speech about my community and about all of the work I do to promote disability awareness. I was presented with the Real Life Options Real Hero trophy and certificate from our big boss for all the work I do.”

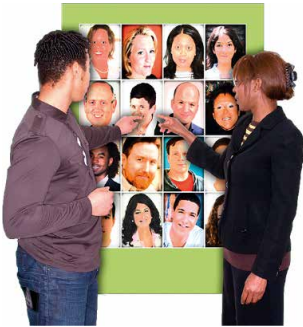
Staff Updates

Talent & Engagement Co-ordinator



In the Summer Newsletter we told you about the Talent & Engagement pilot which focuses on recruitment and retention of support staff in Edinburgh and the Lothians.

Lindsay Fallon continues to lead the pilot with strong results for Ark. She was able to fully staff 6 services out of 9!



She is working with our Participation Officer to develop resources to involve people we support in recruitment across all levels within Ark.

Staff within Housing & Property



There are some changes in our team.

Our Head of Assets, Dave Gray, left Ark at the end of July 2023. **Victoria Hennesy**, our **Senior Property Services Officer** has taken on the temporary role as our Asset Lead.

We have a new **Property Services Officer, Jon Mitchell**, who started with Ark in October 2023. Jon is providing advice and support across all 3 areas, while we recruit for a new **Property Services Officer** for Edinburgh Lothians and the Borders as **Brendan Thomson**, left Ark.



Claire Young, our Housing Services Officer, is providing temporary property services cover in Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire and Moray.



Customer Services Advisors: Dylan and Tullia left, and we have two new members, Karen and Tessa. David will support them.

Please report any property problems to **repairs@arkha.org.uk**



Our reception is now covered only from **Monday to Wednesday morning**. As a result, the options on our phone line have changed. Please listen to these carefully before choosing the correct one.



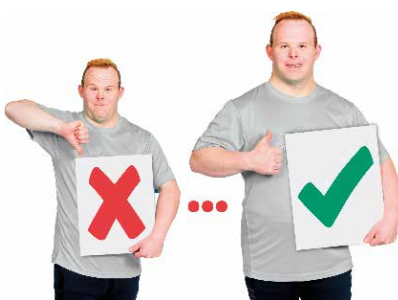
We have recently introduced a new Housing Management System and within this there is a **TENANT PORTAL**. We hope to launch this soon. Once this is launched you will be able to report repair issues directly through the Portal and will be able to track progress with it.

Complaints



During July – September 2023, Ark received a total of 5 complaints.

What you said	What we did
Issues with contractor	We raised the concerns with the contractor.
Follow up / Communication	We are giving ongoing training to all Asset staff on adaptations and grants.
Standard / quality of work	We will review and correct system.
Timescales	We will improve tracking and management of outstanding repairs.



A full report can be found on our website at www.arkha.org.uk/about-us/complaints/

Rent Review for 2024-25

Ark Services Ltd / Ark Commercial Services Ltd



In 2022 the Scottish Governments passed a 'rent freeze/cap' legislation.

This meant we could not change the rent until August 2023.

The rent for 2024 will not change until August 2024.



The legislation allows for landlords to apply rent increases once within a 12-month period.

We will consider raising the rent in March 2024 for Ark Services and Ark Commercial Investment.

We will write to everyone affected in April 2024.

Ark Housing Association



Last year Ark raised the rent less than what our contractors applied to us. We could do this thanks to some savings, for example money saved by staff working from home.



These savings have also allowed us to put in place a long-term investment plan, delivering energy efficient net-zero homes for our tenants.



This year we plan to increase rents by 6.7%. However, all service charges will be held at the same rate as 2022-23, meaning that the overall increase would be 6%.

Contact Us



If you would like to give us feedback about any of the information in this newsletter, please e-mail us at **housing@arkha.org.uk**



Otherwise here is a reminder of other ways you can keep in touch with what we are doing:

Website: **www.arkha.org.uk**

Facebook: **www.facebook.com/ArkPeopleHousingCare/**

X: **www.twitter.com/Ark_PHC**

Instagram: **www.instagram.com/arkpeoplehousingcare/**

Linkedin: **www.linkedin.com/company/arkpeoplehousingcare/**