



ARK Housing Association Ltd - Annual Assurance Statement 2022

We comply with the regulatory requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework. This includes that we:

- Achieve all the standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter for tenants, people who are homeless and others who use our services;
- Comply with our legal obligations relating to housing and homelessness, equality and human rights, and tenant and resident safety; and
- Comply with the Standards of Governance and Financial Management for Registered Social Landlords.

The Board of Management has considered sufficient evidence, which to the best of our knowledge and belief, gives us assurance of compliance with the Regulatory Framework.

Internal Audit of the Self-Assessment Process

Following completion of the self-assessment process in May 2022, the Board of Management requested via the Audit Sub-Committee, that we apply an extra level of independent scrutiny of the robustness of our self-assessment process by instructing TIAA, Ark's internal auditor, to carry out an audit of the self-assessment process and a review of the evidence base which supports the self-assessment process.

The scope of TIAA's audit was to examine arrangements to ensure compliance with the Regulatory Standards with review of the evidence bank including the role and operation of the Board of Management and senior management; standing orders and financial regulations; and delegated authorities.

TIAA conducted their review and have provided an overall assessment level of 'Substantial Assurance', which is defined as "there is a robust system of internal controls operating effectively to ensure that risks are managed and process objectives achieved". This is the highest level of assurance attainable within TIAA's audit framework.

Area of Non-Material Non-Compliance 2020/21

During the self-assessment process for the year 2020/21 we identified one area for development, where we assessed that we required to provide more robust supporting evidence; however our judgement was that this was not an issue of materiality and did not impinge on our assessment that we were compliant with the Regulatory Framework in 2020/21.

We have now implemented a more robust approach to tenant scrutiny and reported the outcome of this development work to the Board of Management in May 2022; we now consider this area for development to be completed.

Equalities and Human Rights

Monitoring Data

Ark collect's equalities data as part of our data collection from tenants, in line with the National Guidance on Equality Data Collection update published by the SFHA in April 2022. The provision of personal data by tenants to Ark is voluntary and we have taken the approach to gather as much data as possible at the point of new tenants coming to Ark and we have established a process where we can gather information from tenants who have been with Ark for some time.

We will aim to gather full equalities data from tenants and ensure we are compliant with this requirement, while adhering to the principles of the GDPR.

Internal Audit

Ark's internal auditor, TIAA carried out an audit of our approach to Equality and Diversity in August 2021 and we received Reasonable Assurance.

Key Strategic Findings

- There is appropriate reference made to equality and diversity throughout the Association's key policies.
- The Association has not yet developed an Equality and Diversity Strategy.
- Compliance testing confirmed that Board members received appropriate equality and diversity training and equal opportunities data is retained on the HR system.
- Further reporting to the Board will be required following development of the Equality and Diversity Strategy.

Good Practice Identified

- The Association considers Equality Impact Assessments following the review of any policy or any changes to organisational structure and service delivery.
- A review of the literature within key policies found that stereotypes were excluded to allow for the promotion of equality and diversity.

We are currently in the process of developing our Equality and Human Rights Strategy.

Response to Covid-19

Ark's response to the Covid-19 pandemic ensured we maintained a key focus on delivering excellent Governance of the organisation and high levels of customer service across our customer groups; in particular we ensured:

- We followed all emergency legislation that was put in place for the safe delivery of governance and operational arrangements;

- We identified early in the pandemic all business critical activities and ensured our business continuity arrangements were effective;
- We moved our housing customer services to statutory and emergency services only; whilst proactively engaging with all tenants to maintain contact and carry out early intervention of issues as they arose;
- We met our legal duties and responsibilities to our customers; our people; our contractors and commissioners;
- We implemented remote Board of Management meetings to ensure ongoing oversight and governance of the organisation;
- We implemented an effective communication approach with our people and our customers, ensuring they were kept informed of the ongoing impact of Covid-19 in Ark and the measures we were taking to keep disruption to a minimum across all aspects of the business.

Overall Ark has come through the period covered by this assurance statement very positively. We met our regulatory and governance responsibilities and our business continuity approaches ensured the overall impact on the business was kept to a minimum.

Adoption of the SFHA Charitable Model Rules (Scotland) 2020

A Special General Meeting (SGM) of ARK Housing Association Ltd was held at The Priory, Canaan Lane, Edinburgh EH10 4SG on Thursday 17th June 2021 at 1pm.

The meeting was requested by the Ark Board of Management, after it agreed the new rules at its meeting in May 2021, to enable those members attending the SGM at the venue, to adopt the SFHA Charitable Model Rules (Scotland) 2020 as Ark's new Rules.

As a result of Covid-19 restrictions, we could only accommodate the minimum numbers allowed for the SGM to be quorate, that being seven members, who were chosen from the membership of the Board of Management. Those attending the SGM duly adopted the SFHA Charitable Model Rules (Scotland) 2020 as Ark's new Rules.

We approved our Annual Assurance Statement at the meeting of our Board of Management on 25th August 2022.

Signed on behalf of the ARK Housing Association Ltd Board of Management.

Graham Mitchell
Chair of the Board of Management

Date: 25/08/2022