

Spring Newsletter 2022

Brighter days and lighter nights are on their way

WELCOME

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter. There have been lots happening at Arches as the financial year comes to a close. There is an update regarding our planned maintenance program and what has been achieved in the last 12 months despite the challenges that there have been. There has also been a proactive damp inspection programme that has been done this year. If you think you may have damp please contact us on 0114 2288100 or via our customer portal and we can arrange an inspection.

NEW PORTAL

The new customer portal has now launched! You can now view your rent, log a repair, and manage many other aspects of your tenancy 24/7. We would like to thank our residents who took the time to volunteer to test the new portal before it went live.

If you would like more information on this, please contact us on [0114 2288100](tel:01142288100) or on our website at archeshousing.org.uk and speak to one of our customer service team.

OFFICE CLOSED

Our office continues to be closed to the public for the foreseeable future. However, we will be reviewing our opening times in the coming months, and we remain cautiously optimistic that, in line with government restrictions, we will be able to safely open our office doors again later this year.

Our communal cleaning scrutiny is in the last stages and any recommendations agreed with be shared with residents shortly. We are conducting surveys with residents with regards to the Together with Tenants commitments so if you receive a call please take the time to give your feedback and comments.

Tenant Support & Wellbeing Service

Whatever your problem, our Tenant Support and Wellbeing Service will help you find a solution.

Free, confidential support, in any language, whenever you need it.

Freephone 0330 094 8845

www.tsws-assist.co.uk

Username: arches

Password: tenantsupport



Cleaner environment for all

LITTER AND HOUSEHOLD WASTE

Litter and household waste can become a major problem when it isn't dealt with correctly.

Incorrectly disposed rubbish poses a risk to people and wildlife, can encourage vermin, blights the environment and costs thousands of pounds to clear up.

Not disposing of your waste correctly isn't just a breach of your tenancy agreement, it's also a criminal offence punishable by an unlimited fine or up to five years' imprisonment.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

- Download the FixMyStreet app to instantly report problems with littering or flytipping to the council.
- Take all bulky items to the tip. If you don't have your own transport, the council can collect large household waste for a small fee.
- Sell or donate items you no longer need to a charity shop or via Facebook Marketplace or Gumtree.
- If you buy a new bulky item like a fridge, see if the retailer will take your old one away (sometimes they'll do it for free!)
- Make sure you know your local recycling procedures so waste collectors don't reject your rubbish.

**TIRED OF
POTHOLES
FLY-TIPPING
LOOSE PAVING
DOG POOP VANDALISM
BROKEN STREET LIGHTING?**

**REPORT THEM TO
THE COUNCIL WITH
FixMyStreet.com**

another project from the lovely people at **mySociety**

Sheffield - Household Waste Recycling Centres - Sheffield.gov.uk

Rotherham - Household Waste Recycling Centres - Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

You can also find the information regarding your bins and the collection days from the council's websites.

ESTATE INSPECTIONS & LITTER PICKS

Our estate inspections have now restarted. These are a chance for you to meet with your Housing officer and walk around your neighbourhood. If you like to find out when the next one is in your neighbourhood, please visit our website www.archeshousing.org.uk/current-residents/managing-our-estates/estate-walkabouts/.

Alternatively, you can call our office on 0114 2288100 and our Customer Service Team can tell you when the next one in your area will be.

We will also be doing litter picks in our neighbourhoods. These will be announced later in the year.





Development Update

Looking ahead to 2022/23 we are on track to take handover of four homes in Chesterfield ahead of Summer 2022, from which there will be two rented homes and two shared ownership homes. This coming summer we will also take handover of our first properties on Taylor Wimpey's Swinston Rise development in Dinnington, and take handover of further properties on Waverley in the Autumn. Watch this space for updates and pictures as we look to develop more new homes!

We are working hard to locate new opportunities for homes in the Sheffield City Region, and have offers out on properties and land. We hope to secure some new development sites soon, and be able to share all the details with you.

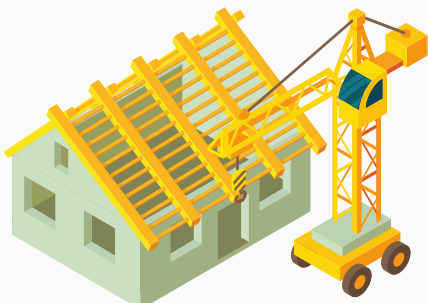


PRO-ACTIVE DAMP INSPECTIONS

Arches Housing has been completing a programme of proactive damp inspections based on historic reports of damp, mould, condensation from tenants. A report was extracted from the repairs database of any reports 3 years old or less, which identified a total of 498 properties. These were then split into 2 phases.

- Phase 1 identified 154 properties with reports of damp 3 times or more, these properties have now all been inspected.
- Phase 2 identified 344 properties of 2 reports or less, these properties have been investigated and inspections completed if identified as required.

A further report was extracted which has now left approximately 80 properties on the proactive inspection programme. These properties will be inspected every 6 months to monitor and give advice to customers on condensation and the importance of ventilation.



PLANNED MAINTENANCE UPDATES

Following the continued issues around restricted access due to the COVID 19 pandemic, and during this time we have continued to prioritise repairs and other essential services. Every effort has been made to deliver both the 2020/21 and the 2021/22 planned programmes together over a 12-month period. The original planned replacement kitchen programme is almost completed with the exception of 2 properties to be completed early 2022. An additional 5 properties have been added to the programme.

The planned replacement bathroom programme is progressing well with 30 properties completed and the rest planned to complete by end of March 2022. Tenants whose homes are due for upgrades will have received letters to arrange access to allow surveys to be completed. We thank you for your patience and understanding in these difficult times.

Despite the continued COVID issues we have managed to complete the planned programme work these include:

- Bathroom replacements and shower installation completed on 30 properties
- Timber external doors replaced with composite doors on 12 properties completed
- Whole UPVC window replacement on 9 properties completed



Learning from complaints

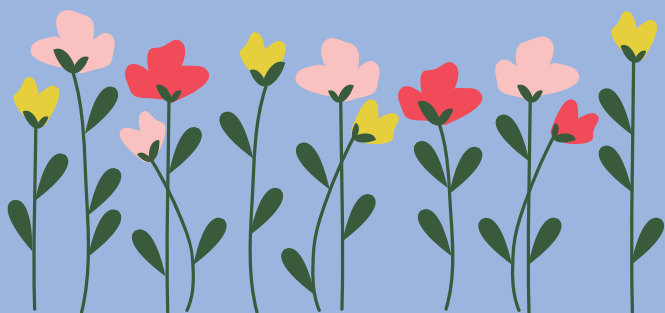
Your complaints are important because they show us where we need to improve to make sure we are giving our tenants good value for money.

We found that some older properties where damp had been reported had unfortunately been overlooked. We have learned from this by putting in place an enhanced inspection programme for our older and more damp-prone properties to make sure we are being proactive to prevent Damp issues, or tackle issues sooner. We now have more information than ever before and are planning a programme of works which will improve thermal warmth and efficiency in our homes.

We have improved how we offer repair appointments so that our Customer Services team can now avoid school drop-off and pick-up times, or other important appointments. This has reduced the number of missed appointments, and the average time taken for certain repairs to be completed.

We have trained all of our Operations team on logging our more common repair requests during a tenant interview with a duty officer. This means more customers can now report their repair more quickly, and on their first call, without having to call and repeat their request to another officer.

We recognise sooner when additional support may be needed in our income management cases. We have improved our referral pathways to help struggling tenants get the support they need faster. Having a secure and stable home is essential, and the help we can now offer through our dedicated Tenancy Sustainment caseworker has helped 25 tenants to avoid the risk of losing their home.



We found that investigations of Stage 1 complaints were taking too long. We have revised our Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy to allow for Managers to investigate formal Complaints, this means there are 5 people, instead of 2 now investigating stage 1 complaints, which has helped us to improve response times. As a result, we have seen a 75% increase in the number of formal complaints responded to within our 10-day target.

We have found that many of our tenants believe that Arches are insured to cover damage from leaks or other repairs within your home – but this isn't the case. Tenants should have their own insurance to protect them when things go wrong. If in doubt check your tenancy agreement. Tenants Contents Insurance offers a very low-cost way of protecting you from the high cost of replacing your belongings should anything happen in your home. Being without insurance has meant some of our tenants have really struggled to replace things like carpets or furniture where they have had a leak. The great news is that Arches is part of a tenants' contents insurance 'club' which means our tenants can access preferential rates on their contents insurance. It can even cover you for accidental damage to electrical equipment such as tablets, laptops, and TV's. For more details check the Current Residents section on our website at <https://www.archeshousing.org.uk/current-residents/contents-insurance/> or alternatively contact us on 0114 228 8100 and we can post an application form out to you.





Rent changes - April 22

Under the terms of your tenancy agreement, we are allowed to review your rent charges every twelve months. We will increase rents in April in line with Government guidelines. Arches manage over 1300 properties across Sheffield, Rotherham, and North Derbyshire, and the money we receive in rent means we can continue to provide services like repairs and improvements to your homes and communities. The annual rent changes will take effect from 4th April 2022. If you pay by Direct debit we will amend your payments to reflect the new rent charges from April 2022.

Direct debit is the easiest way to pay your rent, payment can be taken automatically from your bank account on your preferred date. To set up a direct debit please call 0114 2288100 You can also make payments online by visiting logging onto the customer portal:

<https://portal.archeshousing.org.uk/login.aspx?refer=https://portal.archeshousing.org.uk/default.aspx>

HOUSING BENEFIT/UNIVERSAL CREDIT

If you are on Housing Benefit, we will inform them of your new rent charges. They will calculate your new entitlement and will tell you how much, if anything, you'll need to pay.

If you are on Universal Credit and you get help with your housing costs, you will need to update your journal with your new rent and service charge amount.

Universal Credit will send you a 'to-do' on Monday 4 April 2022 that will be personalised to your own circumstances. It is important that you update your journal as soon as you receive this 'to-do' notification. If you don't report any changes it could lead to delays in payments and your housing cost element will be underpaid. Please use the information that we provide in your Annual Rent Change letter to update your 'to-do'.

Please do not report the changes until you receive the 'to-do' notification in your journal as they will not be accepted.

Your income officer is changing, from Monday 28th March your Income Officer might change.

If you live in the following areas your Income officer will be Harnek Mann:

S9, S60, S66

Harnek can be contacted on 01142288122 or via email Harnek.Mann@archeshousing.org.uk

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM STRUGGLING FINANCIALLY?

If you are struggling with your rent and other bills, please contact us as soon as possible and ask to speak with your Income Officer. The earlier you speak to us, the more we can help which can include a referral to our tenancy sustainment caseworker, Lucy.

We can help with benefit enquiries including giving advice and completing applications Universal Credit, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP), Personal Independence Payments (PIP), etc. The government and local authorities also have grants available to those who are struggling financially and need additional support.

We can also support with signposting and making referrals on behalf of our residents to access community and support agencies, and have provided details of some agencies below that you can contact directly if you require advice or support on money matters.

If you live in the following areas your Income Officer will be Arafat Hussien:

S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S8, S21, S25, S26, S35, S61, S63, S64, S65

Arafat can be contacted on 01142288121 or via email at Arafat.hussien@archeshousing.org.uk



If you or your client require this document in an alternative format, including Large Print, Easy Read or translation services, please email involvement@archeshousing.org.uk or call 0114 228 8100.

Arabic | عربى

إذا طلبت هذه الوثيقة باللغة العربية ، فيرجى الاتصال بالرقم 0114 228 8100.

Urdu | اردو

اگر آپ کو اردو میں یہ دستاویز درکار ہے تو براہ کرم 0114 228 8100 پر فون کریں۔

Punjabi | ਪੰਜਾਬੀ

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਨੂੰ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿਚ ਦੁਬਾਰਾ ਪੁਸ਼ਟੀ ਕਰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 0114 228 8100 ਤੇ ਕਾਲ ਕਰੋ.

Polish | Polski

Jeśli potrzebujesz ten dokument w języku polskim, zadzwoń pod numer 0114 228 8100.

Somali

Hadaad u baahato dukumintiga af soomaali ah fadlan wac 0114 228 8100.

French | Français

Si vous avez besoin de traduction en français, téléphoner 0114 228 8100 s'il vous plaît.

Slovak | Slovenský

Ak potrebujete preklad tohto dokumentu do slovenčiny, zavolajte na číslo 0114 228 8100.