

# news spring 2020

## welcome

We know that this is a very concerning time for customers, staff and contractors, in light of the impact the coronavirus lockdown has had on all our lives.

As ever, we would like to reassure customers that we are doing everything we can to make sure that we provide safe, high quality services.

We would also like to say a huge thank you for your patience and understanding during this difficult time.

**John Hudson**  
Director of  
Operations



## our approach to coronavirus

The team at Arches has been working really hard to make sure that you're still receiving all the essential services you need.

We're currently operating the following services:

- Our repairs service is now emergencies only.
- We are offering support for anyone who needs help with starting a new claim with Universal Credit or any other advice with benefits.
- We are still responding to reports of antisocial behaviour or concerns for someone's wellbeing.
- We are still offering advice on tenancy issues.

- We are working with Food Works, a local social enterprise, to ensure our tenants have access to affordable food. We're offering a delivery service for tenants who need to stay indoors during this time and are unable to pick up food and other necessities. If you need help with accessing food, please give us a call.
- We're calling all of our vulnerable tenants to make sure they aren't adversely affected by the situation. If you haven't heard from us and need extra support, please give us a call and we'll do whatever we can to help.

As the situation changes, our approach may change. You will be able to find the latest information about our approach to coronavirus at [www.archeshousing.org.uk](http://www.archeshousing.org.uk).

If you think you might have coronavirus, don't go to your GP or A&E – call 111 instead.

You can find the most up to date information on coronavirus from the NHS at [www.nhs.uk/coronavirus](http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus).



# worried about paying your rent?

## I'm worried about paying my rent - what should I do?

We don't want anyone to lose their tenancy as a direct result of the virus.

The most important thing to do if you're struggling with paying your rent is to get in touch as soon as

possible. If you need support with applying for Universal Credit or are having problems paying your rent, please give us a call - we have staff ready and waiting to support you.

## Do I get rent relief during the lockdown?

We aren't able to stop collecting rent during the lockdown. If we did, we wouldn't be able to carry out our essential services.

However, we understand that this is a difficult time,

and you might be experiencing difficulties that could affect your rent. If you're experiencing financial difficulties, please get in touch - we have staff ready and waiting to take your call.

## The Government said my landlord can't take action regarding my rent. Is this true?

All evictions have been suspended for three months. However, if you get behind with your rent payments, you will need

to work with us to establish a repayment plan at the end of this period, or you may be at risk of losing your home.

## I'm self-employed and affected by the lockdown - what should I do?

The Self-employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) will support self-employed individuals (including members of partnerships) whose income has been negatively impacted by

the lockdown.

However, it will be some time before this grant is open for applications. In the meantime, you should apply for Universal Credit to top up your income.

## I pay a service charge, but you're not doing any cleaning or gardening at the moment. Will I get my money back?

Once services return to normal, we will assess our unfulfilled services and credit the amount we

charged you to your rent account. If your account is in credit, you will be entitled to a refund.☺

# a message from the board

Who would have known just a few weeks ago that all our lives were about to change so much?

At Arches our aim is always to provide safe, secure, warm homes for our residents. We know that having a good place to live is vital to people's physical and mental wellbeing. As we are all being asked to stay at home to help halt the spread of coronavirus, this is now more important than ever. The Big Conversation we held a few months ago reinforced just how much it means to you to know that you have a home for life, if that's what you choose.

As a Board our role is to provide leadership to Arches, supporting the executive team and holding them to account. I feel really privileged to chair the Board of such a great organisation. Everyone associated with Arches should be proud of what has been achieved over recent years. And their response to the coronavirus pandemic has been truly fantastic, whether that be quickly changing to home-working so that we can maintain essential services safely, ensuring that we continue to be well-run and are managing our finances effectively or making sure residents who are self-isolating have shopping, a hot meal and someone to chat to if they are feeling lonely.

We understand many of you will be experiencing really difficult times and want you to know that Arches is here to support you. And if the Arches team can't help they probably know someone who can, so please don't hesitate to get in touch. Now more than ever we need to stick together and look out for for each other.

Best wishes, and stay safe.

**Kay Dickinson**  
Chair



# new developments

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We've been busy bees over the past year, developing lots of new properties for our local communities!

In March, we handed over four stunning properties for rent in Waverley and over the next few weeks, we have 25 more properties due to hand over in the Rotherham area.

We're hotly anticipating the completion of 15 homes in July on the Lordens Hotel site

in Dinnington, which unfortunately had to be delayed due to the lockdown. We're really excited to see these beautiful new properties take shape and become lovely family homes.

And we're also excited to be planning Arches' first in-house development in many years - a scheme of 10 bungalows in Rotherham for over-55s, due for completion by the end of 2021. ☺



## investing in your home

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Firstly, we'd like to say a great big thank you to our tenants that have supported us in delivering a very ambitious programme of works through this last year.

Together with our partnering contractor, Novus Property Solutions, we have successfully completed a variety of works to 370 properties - which is almost 33% of our stock! The programmes have been delivered on time and to budget, demonstrating value for money for the organisation and you, our tenants.

These works are made up of 95 full bathrooms, 89 shower installations, 43 kitchens and the external painting to 143 properties.

Throughout the works, 92% of tenants told us they were satisfied or very satisfied.

We are busy preparing as much as we can for this year's programme during these difficult times, and we'd like to take this opportunity to ask for your cooperation in providing access as soon as government advice allows. ☺

## welcome to our new contractors

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We have appointed our new contractors for the 2020/21 financial year. The new contractors took over on Monday 30 March 2020.

Robert Heath Heating took over annual gas servicing

and heating and hot water repairs.

Fortem have taken over our out of hours service, which covers emergency repairs and services while the office is closed.

This won't affect the way you access our services. We're still available 24/7 on 0114 228 8100.

All you need to do is give us a ring and use the menu to dial through. ☺

# the big conversation

We'd like to say a massive thank you to everyone who participated in the Big Conversation!

In Autumn 2019, we went out to you to ask you five simple questions on our services. We spoke to 256 of our residents (which is about 22% of our tenants). We also consulted six third-party organisations you might work with.

## What you told us...



It was very clear you thought repairs were our most important service.



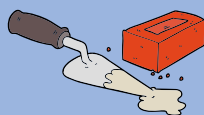
You wanted our services to be delivered quickly.



You wanted us to keep our promises and do what we say we're going to.



You just wanted to know that we are doing our jobs properly.



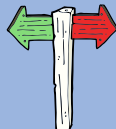
You wanted us to concentrate on being a good landlord and doing that well.



You were interested in getting involved with Arches on questions about your area.



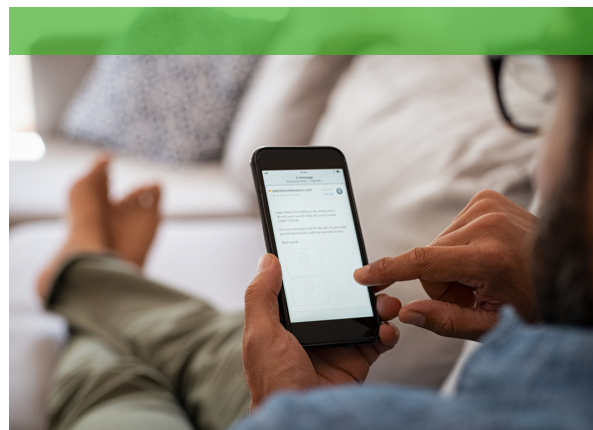
Other organisations thought a quality, safe home for life was the most important thing we offer.



They thought we should offer extra support through our community partners, rather than ourselves.

Your answers were really important to us, as we're using them to craft a set of service standards, which will be the criteria we hold ourselves to when delivering services to you.

Every resident who participated in the Big Conversation was entered into a £100 prize draw. We'd like to say a huge congratulations to Natalie who won the grand prize!🍀



## join our facebook group

We're committed to making sure you can get in touch with us using the methods you feel most comfortable with. That's why we've created a brand new Facebook group, My Arches, to help you get information and answers to any queries as quickly as possible.

The group will be open for a trial run for three months to see if this is something that will be useful to our tenants. The group will only be open to tenants and you will be asked to privately confirm your address before joining.🍀

Join the conversation at [facebook.com/groups/myarches](https://facebook.com/groups/myarches)

 **archeshousing**  
peoplecommunitieshomes

If you would like to discuss anything in this newsletter, or would like to contact us about anything else, you can do so at:

Tel: 0114 228 8100

Email: [involvement@archeshousing.org.uk](mailto:involvement@archeshousing.org.uk)  
Arches Housing Limited, 122 Burngreave Road, Burngreave, Sheffield S3 9DE

 /archeshousing  @archeshousing

