archeshousing

Tenant Handbook

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1. Welcome to Arches Housing

This handbook is here to help you understand your home, your tenancy and the services we provide. It does not replace your tenancy agreement, but it explains many of the things you may need to know while you are a Arches Housing tenant.

About Us

Arches Housing was established in 1975. We manage over 1,300 homes across Sheffield, Rotherham and surrounding areas. We are committed to providing safe, secure and high-quality homes, supporting thriving communities and listening to our tenants so we can keep improving what we do.

2. How to contact us

If you have a question about your tenancy, your home or our services, please contact us. We will do our best to help.

Telephone: 0114 228 8100
Email (general): info@archeshousing.org.uk
Email (repairs): repairs@archeshousing.org.uk

Office address:
Arches Housing Ltd
122 Burngreave Road
Sheffield
S3 9DE

Opening hours:
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 9:00am – 5:00pm
Wednesday: 12:30pm – 5:00pm
You can also:

- Access your account through our online resident portal
- Pay rent online
- Report repairs online
- Use live chat during office hours

Emergency repairs (out of hours):
Call 0114 228 8100 and follow the instructions.

www.archeshousing.org.uk

3. Lettings and Moving In

Before you move in, we check your home, so it is safe, secure and ready for you. We make sure it:

- Meets the **Decent Homes Standard**
- Has valid **gas and electrical safety checks**
- Is clean, secure and ready to occupy
- Has working heating, kitchen and bathroom facilities
- Includes working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors

Where possible, we aim for homes to achieve an **EPC rating of C or above**.

We hope your move goes smoothly. There can be a lot to remember, so here are some important things to think about when you move in:

- Tell gas, electric, water and telephone companies that you are moving in;
- Find out how your heating system works – our staff can help you with this;
- Find out where water and gas stop taps are, as well as your fuse box.

Keys and locks
You will be given at least two sets of keys to your new home. Please look after them carefully, as we do not hold spare sets. If you lock yourself out, you will need to arrange and pay for a locksmith. We cannot change a lock without payment in advance and photo ID to confirm you are the tenant. It may be a good idea to leave a spare set with a trusted friend or relative.

TV licences, telephones and council tax
You are responsible for ensuring you have a valid TV licence at your new home. You can transfer a licence from a previous address if you had one, or you will need to purchase one. You are responsible for paying for telephone connections and any charges.

Council Tax - you should contact your local Council as soon as you move in and tell them you are the new tenant. If you are on a low income you may be able to get some assistance with your council tax.

4. Your Tenancy Explained

Your tenancy agreement is a legal contract between you and Arches Housing. It explains your rights and responsibilities, and also our responsibilities as your landlord.

Your responsibilities
- Pay your rent in full and in advance
- Keep your home clean and in good condition
- Report repairs promptly
- Allow access for safety checks and repairs
- Be a good neighbour

Our responsibilities
- Keep your home in good repair
- Maintain shared areas

- Ensure all safety requirements are met
- Inform you of any changes that affect your tenancy

Joint tenancies

Joint tenants share the rights and responsibilities of the tenancy. By signing the tenancy agreement, all joint tenants agree to meet the conditions set out in it.

If you want to make any changes to the names on your tenancy agreement, please contact your Housing Officer.

Succession

If a tenant dies, in some circumstances another person living in the home may have the right to take over the tenancy. This is known as a **succession**. Succession rights depend on the type of tenancy, the relationship to the tenant, and whether the person lived in the property as their only or principal home before the tenant's death. If you believe you may be entitled to succeed to a tenancy, you should contact us as soon as possible so that we can explain the process and discuss your individual circumstances.

Lodgers

You may be able to take in lodgers, but you must get our permission first. You are responsible for making sure your lodger follows the conditions of your tenancy agreement and leaves your home if your tenancy ends. If you claim housing related benefits, taking in a lodger may affect the amount you receive.

5. Your Rent

How is my rent set?

Secure (Fair Rent) Tenancies
If you have a secure Fair Rent tenancy, your rent is set by The Rent Service, which is independent from Arches Housing. The Rent Service looks at the size, location and facilities of your home before setting the rent. We cannot charge more than the rent they set, and the rent is registered every two years.

Assured Tenancies
Most assured tenancy rents are calculated using the Government’s formula rent method. This is designed to make rents fair and consistent. It takes account of the size, location and condition of your home, as well as average incomes in the county.

Affordable Rents
Some assured homes are let at an affordable rent. This can be up to 80% of private market rent, which is the average rent someone would pay for a similar home from a private landlord in the area. Arches caps affordable rents at the Shelter Living Rent so our homes remain affordable and reflect local wages.

How to pay your rent?

We encourage tenants to pay their rent by Direct Debit where possible. You can also pay online, by phone or at PayPoint outlets. Your rent is due every Monday and must be paid in advance. You can pay fortnightly or monthly, as long as your account remains in advance.

If you are struggling to pay your rent, please contact us as soon as possible. We will work with you, offer advice and support, and help you look for additional financial help where we can. Not paying your rent can put your home at risk.

Can I get help with my rent?

You may be able to claim Universal Credit (UC) if you are:

- On a low income (including self-employed or part time)
- Out of work or can't work.

If you do qualify for UC you may get some money towards your rent – this is called the housing cost element. You must claim this immediately as it cannot be backdated, except in special circumstances. You need to pay this, along with any additional contribution you may need to pay, to Arches for your rent.

To make a claim visit Universal Credit: How to claim - GOV.UK

If you are pension age you can still claim Housing Benefit, you will need to claim to your local authority.

Can I seek independent advice?

If you would prefer to speak to someone independent about money or financial problems, there are organisations that may be able to help.

Citizens Advice Bureau
Advice Line: (Sheffield) 0808 278 7820/ (Rotherham) 0808 278 7911/ Chesterfield 0808 278 7954
www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Money Advice Service
Tel: 0800 138 7777
Whatsapp: +44 77 0134 2744 (send and receive messages only)
www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk

Turn2us
Online form - www.turn2us.org.uk

Step Change
Tel: 0800 138 1111
www.stepchange.org

Arches tenants can also access our Tenant Support and Wellbeing Service, delivered in partnership with Life and Progress, by phoning 0300 094 8845.

6. Living in Your Home

Insurance

We insure the structure of your home for the full cost of rebuilding it. This does not cover your personal belongings, furniture or household contents. You are responsible for arranging your own contents insurance, including cover for accidental damage.

Contents insurance can help protect you financially if your belongings are damaged or lost because of fire, theft, storm, burst pipes, flood or other unexpected events. It can also give you peace of mind.

We cannot provide contents insurance for you, but we can tell you about a low-cost scheme arranged with an insurance specialist for Arches tenants. Please remember that we are not responsible for the contents of your home. To find out more, please contact us or visit the contents insurance information on our website.

Looking after your garden

If your home has a garden, you are responsible for looking after it. Please keep it clean, tidy and free from rubbish. A poorly kept garden can affect neighbours, attract pests and create health and safety risks.

Damp Mould and Condensation

If you notice damp, mould or condensation in your home, please report it to us straight away. You have the right to know what is causing the problem, what action will be taken and how quickly this will happen.

You should also read the damp, mould and condensation hints and tips leaflet you received when you signed up. Further information is available on our website.

Loft Spaces – keep them clear!

Storing items in lofts can cause structural damage, increase fire risk and can contribute to damp mould and condensation.

In addition, it can cost you more in energy bills as compressing the insulation reduces its effectiveness by over 50%.

Cellar Spaces

Please don’t store items in your cellars – they are usually damp and can be prone to flooding.

Saving Energy

Energy costs can be expensive, so small changes can help reduce how much gas and electricity you use. Here are some practical ways to save energy in your home:

• When buying new appliances, choose energy-efficient models where possible.
• Use low-energy light bulbs where you can.
• Wait until you have a full load before using dishwashers and washing machines. If you need to run a smaller load, use the half-load setting if your machine has one.

• Choose lower temperature wash settings when possible.
• Switch appliances off when you are not using them, rather than leaving them on standby.
• Only boil the amount of water you need when making a hot drink.

Cold Weather

When temperatures stay below freezing for a few days or more, there are simple things you can do to help protect your home and keep warm.
• Keep your heating on at a low level using your thermostat. This helps maintain background warmth and can make it easier to heat your home when you need to.
• Use grit or salt on routes to and from your door to help reduce the risk of slips and falls.
• Keep doors closed to help stop heat escaping.
• If you are going away, or your home will be empty during very cold weather, turn the water off at the stop tap.

Identity cards

Please do not let anyone into your home unless you are satisfied they are who they say they are. All Arches staff carry identity cards with their name and photograph. Contractors working for us will also carry identification. Please ask to see it before letting anyone in.

Pets

You must get our permission before getting a pet. We will not refuse permission without a good reason, but you must keep your pet under control and make sure it does not cause a nuisance, annoy neighbours or cause any damage to property.

Permission may be withdrawn if we receive complaints about your pet's behaviour.

Parking

Please don't:

• park illegally;
• park on a garden, any communal areas or open space;
• park caravans, vans, boats, trailers or other large vehicles where they will cause a nuisance;
• block entrances and exits and please do not park on the pavement – this causes problems for disabled people and parents with pushchairs.

Parking restrictions are there to keep people safe and to make sure emergency vehicles can get through when they need to.

Rats, mice and other pests
If you find rats, mice, fleas, wasps' nests or other pests in your home, please contact us – if this is a pest issue that poses a substantial risk to you or your households' health or is causing an emergency hazard (like rats gnawing through electrical working) we will take responsibility for treating this and the root cause. If you identify pest infestations in your wider neighbourhood, please contact your local authority.

Ending Your Tenancy

If you are moving out, you must give us four weeks' written notice to end your tenancy. Your notice should end on a Sunday. We will tell you when your keys need to be returned. If you do not return the keys by 10am on the date they are due, you will continue to be charged rent until the keys are handed in.

Before you leave, we will arrange a pre-termination visit. This gives us the chance to tell you about anything that needs to be removed, repaired or put right before your tenancy ends.

Here is a list of things to check before you leave your home:

- The property is left in a clean and tidy condition;
- All your belongings have been removed, including carpets and curtains;
- No rubbish is left in the property or garden area. This includes white goods such as old cookers, fridges and washing machines;
- You have completed any repairs that are your responsibility and have replaced anything that may have been damaged;
- Your rent account is paid up to date;
- You have contacted the Council, gas, electricity and telephone companies to tell them you are leaving and have taken meter readings;
- The gas and electricity is switched off;
- The water is turned off at the stop tap;
- Cooker points and light fittings are in working order and in a safe condition;
- If you receive any benefits, let them know you are moving;

Arches Staff and Contractors

Our staff and contractors are expected to treat people with respect, and we ask that you treat our staff, contractors and representatives with respect too. Please do not hinder, obstruct, threaten, abuse or assault any Arches employee, agent or contractor, and do not allow members of your household or visitors to do so.

Hate Incidents

We take harassment, hate incidents and discrimination very seriously. You, members of your household and visitors must not harass or threaten anyone because of race, colour, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability or any other protected characteristic. Everyone has the right to live and work without fear, intimidation or abuse.

7. Safety in your home

Fire safety

Your safety matters. As your landlord, we are responsible for carrying out regular fire safety checks in the shared areas of buildings.

If you live in a building with shared areas, please make sure you know where the Fire Action notices are and what they tell you to do in an emergency.

For more information, please read the Guide to Fire Safety in Your Home leaflet you were given when you signed up. It is also available on our website.

Electrical safety

Electrical safety is important because many domestic fires are caused by electricity.

We are legally responsible for making sure the electrical installation and wiring in your home are safe when you move in and kept safe during your tenancy.

We test and inspect all homes we manage at least every five years. We also test communal areas at least every five years and inspect homes before they are let to new tenants.

You are responsible for changing light bulbs, replacing batteries in smoke alarms and replacing fuses in plugs.

For more information, please read the Guide to Electrical Safety in Your Home leaflet in your sign-up pack. It is also available on our website.

Gas safety

If you can smell gas

• Call the National Gas Emergency number on 0800 111 999 straight away. Use a phone outside the affected property.
• Open all doors and windows.
• Turn the gas off at the meter, unless the meter is in a cellar or basement.
• Put out cigarettes and vapes, and do not use anything with a naked flame.
• Do not use electrical equipment.
• Do not touch light switches, as they may cause a spark.

How to keep you and your home safe

Gas appliances can become dangerous if they are not checked regularly. If a gas appliance has not been checked for 12 months, it may be unsafe.

We must complete an annual gas safety check. Please allow us access when we arrange this with you. If you do not allow access, you will be in breach of your tenancy agreement.

For more information, please read the Guide to Gas Safety in Your Home, which is available on our website.

Asbestos safety

Asbestos is not usually dangerous if it is in good condition and has not been damaged. It can become a risk if it is disturbed and asbestos dust gets into the air. Please do not touch, tamper with or disturb any material you think may contain asbestos.

Our specialist asbestos contractor carries out asbestos surveys across our homes. If we know there is asbestos in your home, we will let you know and provide the survey findings where required.

Please ask us before carrying out DIY, including removing any textured ceiling or wall coatings.

For more information, please read the Guide to Asbestos in Your Home in your sign-up pack. It is also available on our website.

Legionnaire's disease

Legionella bacteria can be found naturally in streams, rivers, lakes, soil, compost and mains water. It can sometimes enter a home's water system.

Is Legionella harmful?

Small amounts of Legionella are not usually harmful. It becomes a risk if the bacteria grow and you breathe in water droplets from a contaminated water system. This can cause infections, including Legionnaires' disease, which can be very serious.

For more information, please read the Guide to Water Safety in Your Home in your sign-up pack. It is also available on our website.

8. Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Crime

We want you to feel safe and able to enjoy your home and neighbourhood in peace. We take anti-social behaviour and hate crime seriously, and we will act on substantiated reports in line with our policy.

Anti-social behaviour and hate crime can include a wide range of behaviour, from persistent nuisance to actions that cause alarm, distress or harm to individuals or the wider community.

Hate crime is when someone is targeted because of who they are, or who someone believes them to be. This can include hostility based on:

- Race or ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity

What is our approach in dealing with anti-social behaviour and hate crime?
Your tenancy agreement makes you responsible for your own behaviour and for the behaviour of anyone who lives in or visits your home. This applies in your home and in also the local area. We may also take action where tenants deliberately damage their property or do not look after their home or garden properly.

We will always consider prevention, early intervention and support first, where this is appropriate. If the behaviour continues or is serious, we can take enforcement action which may result in the loss of your home.

What role can I play?
We want to work with you to help create neighbourhoods where people feel safe, respected and proud to live. You can help by:

- Not leaving rubbish out on the wrong day, in hallways, or where it could cause a problem for others;
- Not causing a nuisance to your neighbours or let anyone living with you or visiting you do so. Neighbours should not have to put up with loud music, swearing, fights, music from car radios and other disturbances;
- Controlling your pets. Do not leave dogs alone to bark during the day or leave your pets where they can cause a nuisance.

What should be my first step if my neighbour is causing a nuisance?
If the problem is not serious and you feel safe doing so, it may help to have a friendly conversation with your neighbour. They may not realise their behaviour is causing a problem.

If the problem continues, or you are worried about speaking to your neighbour, please report it to us.

Criminal behaviour, including damage to property, violence, threats of violence or burglary, should be reported to the police.

Hate crime should also be reported to the police. We will work with the police and other partners to support you and take appropriate action.

If you are unsure at any stage, please contact us for advice.

Do you offer a mediation service?
In many cases, we will encourage people to work together to resolve problems. If both parties agree that mediation may help, we may be able to support this.

What action can you take?
Early intervention, support and mediation can often stop a problem from getting worse. Where needed, we can also take further action, including acceptable behaviour contracts, injunctions and, in the most serious cases, eviction.

We will only take tenancy enforcement action if there is clear evidence of a breach of tenancy and the action is proportionate.

How do I report an incident?
If you need to report serious nuisance, anti-social behaviour or hate crime, please contact us by phone, email, letter or in person.

If an incident happens when our office is closed and you need urgent help, please contact the police.

What will happen next?
We may ask you to help us gather evidence, for example by completing diary sheets. This helps us understand what is happening, how serious the problem is and what action may be needed.

We will discuss your report with you, keep you updated and work with partners such as the police, the council and other agencies where this helps tackle the problem. When the case is closed, we may ask you to complete a satisfaction survey.

9. Safeguarding

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. It means helping to keep people safe from harm, abuse and neglect. We want all tenants to feel safe in their homes, and we work with partners to raise awareness, prevent abuse and respond when concerns are reported.

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call the police on 999. If you cannot speak, press 55 when prompted so the call can be transferred to the police.

For more information please visit our website here.

10. Repairs & Maintenance

If something in your home needs repairing, please tell us as soon as possible. You can report repairs:

- Online via the resident portal
- By phone
- By email
- To our staff during visits

Repair priorities

- Emergency repairs – within 24 hours
- Urgent repairs – within 7 days
- Routine repairs – within 28 days

Emergency repairs can be reported 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. During office hours, please contact us directly. Outside office hours, please use the emergency telephone service. The first priority is to make the situation safe. If follow-up work is needed, this will be arranged as soon as the office reopens.

Emergency repairs include issues that pose a risk to safety or serious damage to the property.

You may be charged for repairs if damage is caused by neglect, misuse or deliberate acts.

Responsibility for repairs

As your landlord, we are legally responsible for some repairs in your home. We understand that normal wear and tear happens. If a repair is needed because of damage caused by you, your household or visitors, you may need to do the repair yourself or pay us in advance for the cost of the work.

Your responsibilities

- You are responsible for keeping your home in good condition – this includes decorating
- You must take care to prevent damage to your property by fire, burst water pipes or blocked drains and sinks
- To give us access annually for the gas safety check to be completed

- To provide reasonable access for our contractors to carry out repairs at the appointed time. You may be charged if the contractor arrives for an agreed appointment and you are not at home

Our obligations

- We are required to keep the structure and exterior of your home in good repair
- We will keep installations for the supply of water, gas and electricity to your home in good repair. This includes an annual gas safety check
- Where there are common entrances and other common part in blocks of flats, we will keep them in reasonable repair

Who repairs what?

As a general guide, we are responsible for maintaining, repairing and replacing the structure of your home, along with plumbing, heating and electrical services. You are responsible for keeping your home in reasonable condition and for repairing or replacing anything damaged through neglect, carelessness or deliberate action by you, your household or visitors.

This table gives you an overview of who is responsible for some of the repairs that may be required in your home

Our Responsibilities:

Repair	Comments	Responsibility	
		Arches	You
Adjustment to doors to clear floor coverings			✓
Any damage caused by forced entry – please note we will carry out repairs to ensure that doors and windows are safe and secure but reserve the right to recharge for some works.	Made at your request	✓	
Bathroom fixtures and fittings	Including, shower heads, plugs and chains to sink, bath and wash basin and toilet seats, toilet roll holders and towel rails etc		✓
Burst pipes and blockages	If caused by inappropriate use or negligence		✓
Chimneys and stacks	But not sweeping the chimney	✓	
Communal areas		✓	
Drains, gutters and external pipes		✓	
Electrical appliances	Such as cookers, fridges, fridge freezers etc.		✓
Electrical plugs (not sockets), fuses, resetting circuit breakers and light bulbs	When changing light bulbs please ensure you are buying the correct voltage which is required for the property. You may be charged if Arches discover the wrong bulb was bought and this is the reason for an electrical fault.		✓
Electrical sockets, smoke alarms and light fittings	But not plugs or appliances which we have not provided or adopted and not	✓	

Repair	Comments	Responsibility Arches	You
	batteries for smoke alarms		
External glazing and all internal glazing	Unless caused by a structural fault or vandalism		✓
Extractor fans and ventilation systems		✓	
Fences and gates	Unless these are non-standard gates fitted by yourself.	✓	
Fixtures and fittings fitted by you or previous tenants	Such as shelves, curtain battens and rails, hooks		✓
Gardens and dustbins	Except in communal areas		✓
Individual television aerials, satellite dishes, radio aerials	Unless a communal aerial or satellite dish is provided		✓
Infestations	By ants, wasps, bees, cockroaches, mice, rats or bedbugs	✓	
Internal decorations and minor plaster cracks			✓
Internal doors and skirting boards			✓
Lifting carpets, floor covering or laminate flooring for access for repairs	Examples of repairs may be for electrical/wiring faults or heating pipework – excludes polyfloor in bathroom and/or kitchen laid by Arches		✓
Keeping gullies clear	Except communal gullies		✓
Kitchen units, basins, baths, toilets, flushing systems and waste pipes	Unless caused by inappropriate use or negligence.	✓	
Lost or broken keys and lock changes			✓
Outside walls, outside doors, window sills, outside woodwork, window frames	Including any necessary external decoration	✓	
Pilot lights	Including resetting any heating controls		✓
Plumbing repairs and leaks		✓	
Plumbing to dishwashers, washing machines and other such appliances	Unless provided by Arches		✓
Sheds			✓
Showers	But not shower heads	✓	
Telephone points			✓
Washing line posts, rotary dryers and water butts			✓

Repair	Comments	Responsibility Arches	You
Water heaters, boilers, fireplaces, fitted fires and radiators	Does not include bleeding of radiators	✓	
Water pipes and tanks, gas pipes and electrical wiring		✓	
EV charging points	Please contact us for advice	✓	✓

Please remember: this list is not exhaustive. If we attend a repair that is your responsibility, we may recharge you for the work.

If you request an emergency repair and it is later found not to be a genuine emergency, we may recharge you for the service. We will look at each case individually and take account of any needs or vulnerabilities.

Emergency repairs out-of-hours
If you have an emergency repair outside office hours, please call our emergency hotline. Our out-of-hours service is managed by an external contractor, and their contact details are listed in the contact section.

The out-of-hours team will attend where there is a clear emergency and your safety, health or home is at risk. Their priority is to make the situation safe. They may carry out a temporary repair and report the issue back to Arches the next working day so follow-up work can be arranged.

Please only use the out-of-hours number for genuine emergencies. If a contractor attends and the repair is not an emergency, you may be recharged.

Quality of the Repair Service
We inspect a proportion of completed repair jobs to check the quality of the work. If work is not completed to the required standard, we will ask the contractor to return and put it right.

Code of Conduct
All contractors are given our code of conduct. This sets out the standards we expect when they work in or around tenants' homes. Contractors must act professionally, keep appointments where possible, treat tenants with respect and be courteous at all times.
The contractor has a similar duty to adopt high ethical standards, honour agreements and undertakings, and be courteous at all times.

Contractors must make sure their employees and subcontractors understand and follow the code while working on Arches properties.

Access
We sometimes need access to your home to inspect its condition, carry out repairs, complete gas servicing or do other works. We will give reasonable notice, usually at least 24 hours, unless it is an emergency. Please allow access at the agreed time.

11. Improving Your Home

Cyclical Maintenance

We plan some maintenance work in regular cycles. This helps us arrange work for groups of homes at the same time and manage costs effectively.

Here's what our cyclical programme is made up of:
- External decorations and other related repairs.
- Gas Servicing - Annually
- Electrical testing – Every 5 years

We also have service contracts with specialist companies to make sure the following are inspected, tested, maintained and repaired in line with manufacturer's instructions:
- Lifts, stair lifts and hoists;
- Fire alarm installations, fire detection and fire fighting equipment;
  Fire doors

Planned maintenance
Planned maintenance helps us keep homes in good condition. By replacing and repairing items at the right time, we can reduce future repair costs and help make your home a better place to live.

We will keep you informed about planned maintenance programmes. Where work is likely to cause disruption, we will aim to give you at least 28 days' notice. Where possible, we will involve you by offering choices such as finishes and other options.

Examples of items covered in planned maintenance programme include; external doors, windows, kitchens, bathrooms, boilers and fencing.

Right to Repair
In some circumstances, you may be able to claim compensation if we fail to complete a qualifying repair within the required timescale.

In some cases, if repair work is not completed on time, you can ask us to arrange for another contractor to do the work. If the second contractor also does not complete the work on time, you may be entitled to compensation.

The 'Right to Repair' will apply if:-
- the repair is a "qualifying" repair (a list of qualifying repairs can be provided on request) and
- The tenant must inform the association within 21 days of the repair not being carried out and
- If the association fails to complete a repair within the target set timescale you must inform us. A job order for a different contractor to carry out the work will then be issued and
- If the second contractor fails to carry out the work you will be entitled to compensation.

The 'Right to Repair' will not apply if:-

- It is not a qualifying repair and
- you fail to provide access for an inspection of the work or for the repair to be carried out or the cost of the work is more than £250.00 or
- Exceptional circumstances which are beyond the associations control, for example very bad weather, time periods for carrying out "qualifying repairs" can be suspended or

- Compensation rules will not apply if the delay is due to parts or materials being on order.

Doing your own alterations and improvements
You may be able to make alterations or improvements to your home, but you must get our written permission before you start. We will say yes where we can, unless there is a good reason not to.

Some changes may also need planning permission or building regulations approval. It is your responsibility to get these approvals before work begins.

Requests must be made in writing. Where needed, please include drawings, photographs, details of the work, a specification and the name of the contractor you plan to use. If the work involves gas or electrics, the contractor must be properly qualified and you must provide proof of this.

If permission is given, we will confirm this in writing and explain any conditions. Please do not start work until you have received written permission. We may inspect the work when it is finished. If the work does not match the approved details, we may ask you to put the home back to its original condition.

If you do carry out certain types of home improvements, at the termination of your tenancy you may be able to claim compensation. The amount will depend on the cost of the work and how long ago it was completed. To qualify for any compensation you must have had permission from Arches in the first place to carry out the work. If you do not obtain permission, you may be charged to restore work carried out.

Improvements you are given permission to carry out will not affect your rent but they will not be maintained or repaired by Arches – this would be your responsibility.

Example of items that commonly fall under this area are:-

- EV chargers
    - Changing doors on kitchen units or internal doors
- Fitting different light switches
- Building patios or decking
- Satellite dishes
- Fitting a gas fire or a fireplace
- Modification to kitchen units to fit in appliances
- Changes to bathrooms or toilets
- New kitchen units
- Adding or moving sockets

12. Tenant Voice

At Arches Housing, we believe tenants are best placed to tell us what is working well and what needs to improve. Your feedback helps us shape the services we provide and the decisions we make.

You do not need to attend meetings or join a group to have your say. Every piece of feedback matters, whether it comes through a survey, a conversation, a complaint, a compliment, a repair request or a community event.
We will listen carefully, make it easy for you to share your views, be honest about what we can and cannot change, and show you what we have done as a result of tenant feedback.

How you can share your views
There are lots of ways to tell us what you think. These include telephone surveys, short surveys after services such as repairs, compliments, complaints, service requests, home visits, neighbourhood events, focus groups, themed discussions, estate walkabouts, tenant scrutiny projects and the Neighbourhood Network.
We also contact tenants who have received a service from us to ask what they thought of it. Please help us by answering these calls where you can. The information helps our teams improve services, review policies and processes, and understand whether we need to contact you to resolve an individual issue.

Scrutiny groups

We regularly work with tenants to take an in-depth look at particular service areas, policies or processes. Scrutiny projects are flexible, so you can be involved in a way that suits you, including from home and through a range of communication methods.

The topics are selected by our Neighbourhood Network and informed by survey results, complaints, feedback and other information about services that may need a closer look. Tenants may also help us review policies, letters, processes, digital services and communications before they are finalised.

Neighbourhood Network

Our Neighbourhood Network is a group of tenant volunteers who meet regularly to help make sure tenant voice is heard in our services and decisions. Volunteers receive payment, training and support to take part.
We also check who we are hearing from and take action if some voices are missing. We will work with local partners and provide information, training and support so more tenants can get involved if they choose to.
How your voice reaches the top
Tenant feedback is shared with senior leaders and the Board. Tenant voice is a regular part of Board discussions, and reports must show how tenant views have been considered. Tenants will also have opportunities to speak directly to senior leaders and Board members, including through “Meet the Board” events.
We use a clear “You Said, We Did” approach so you can see what we have heard, what we are doing as a result, and why. We track progress by looking at tenant satisfaction, whether tenants feel listened to, how many tenants are involved, whether we are hearing from a wide range of people, and how many improvements come directly from tenant feedback.
If you want to know more about getting involved, please contact us.

13. Equality & Diversity

We are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion. We believe everyone should be treated fairly, with dignity and respect. We do not accept discrimination, harassment or bullying on any grounds.

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil Partnership
- Pregnancy & maternity
- Race
- Religion & belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Is Arches Housing an equal opportunities employer?

Yes. We are an equal opportunities employer and service provider. We aim to treat everyone fairly and make sure our recruitment, employment, career development and training opportunities are free from discrimination.

What about access to housing and other services?
We aim to provide services that meet the diverse needs of our communities. Our services should be accessible, non-discriminatory and free from prejudice.

Our main aim is to provide high quality affordable housing that meets the needs and aspirations of our tenants.

What practical steps do you take to ensure equal opportunity?
We design our services and train our employees so we can provide the best possible service for everyone. This means we will:

- Deliver services that are flexible and responsive
- Remove all barriers which may deny access
- Ensure services meet the needs of the diverse communities, particularly those who face discrimination and disadvantage
- Provide information in accessible formats as appropriate, including community languages, large print, Braille and audiotape
- Provide translation and interpretation services

What do I do if I think I am being discriminated against?
Please contact us straight away by phone, email, letter or by visiting us. If you prefer, someone else can make a complaint on your behalf.

We will deal with your complaint quickly, responsibly and sensitively. We will explain what we can do to resolve the situation. We take discrimination seriously.

14. Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions

We welcome feedback because it helps us improve. This includes complaints, compliments and suggestions.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is when you tell us you are dissatisfied with our service, something we have done, or something we have failed to do.

Our process

We follow a two-stage complaints process in line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

- **Stage 1:** Investigation by a manager
- **Stage 2:** Review by a senior manager

We will:
- Acknowledge complaints within **5 working days**
- Provide a clear written response

If you remain dissatisfied after our process is complete, you can refer your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

15. Useful Contacts

Sheffield City Council **–** Telephone 0114 273 4567 www.sheffield.gov.uk

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council – Telephone 01709 822330 www.rotherham.gov.uk

Chesterfield Borough Council – Telephone 01246 345345 www.chesterfield.gov.uk