



Residents' Annual Review

Autumn 2023



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Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce you to our Annual Residents' Review for 2023.

As the new Chair of Arhag's board, I am committed to supporting Arhag's development and improving services for you. The issues facing migrants and refugees are very close to my heart, and I have worked extensively with organisations supporting their growth.

There are many recent achievements to be proud of – for example, we've brought in a new repairs contractor to help us improve our repairs service, we've provided vital support during the cost-of-living crisis, and we have advanced our equality, diversity, and inclusion agenda.

Looking forward, we're committed to delivering four priorities: improving resident engagement so that we listen better, continuing to improve what we know about our residents and properties so that we can focus on doing the right things in the right places, delivering better services for residents and making sure that our business is strong so that we can continue to fulfil our vital mission. I am energised and excited by what lies ahead.

Reena Purchase, Arhag Board Chair



It's important to reflect on how far we have come as an organisation, as well as looking squarely at the challenges that still lie ahead. In everything we do, I take pride in our strong and continuing commitment to supporting you as an Arhag resident.

Being a strong voice for migrants and refugees is an integral part of why we exist. It's important that our voice is heard on your behalf and so this year we have dedicated significant efforts to raise our organisation's profile, advocating for our residents.

In this review, we provide you with more information on this and take a look at the many ways we have been working to enhance the services we provide. I hope you enjoy reading our latest residents' review.

Chris Harris, Chief Executive Officer



Arhag's Residents' Scrutiny Panel (RSP) has an essential role in providing resident feedback directly to Arhag's senior management team and Board.

The RSP has had an ambitious and productive year, from scrutinising service standards, taking a leading role in our Board Chair recruitment process, providing representation on the complaints panel, to participating in the Arhag All Together Day residents' conference.

I strongly believe that the more residents who get involved then the better the service will be. For this reason, I encourage more of you to take an active role in saying what you want from Arhag.

I hope you find this annual review interesting and valuable.

Syeda Miah, Resident Scrutiny Panel Chair



About Arhag

Arhag was founded in 1979 as a campaigning organisation for the better treatment of migrants and refugees. The aim was to provide a stable, decent, and affordable home which would act as the platform for residents to improve their lives, support their families, and make a positive contribution to their communities.

In 1989, Arhag was formally registered with the Housing Corporation and spent the next 30 years working to become a good housing association. We now manage and own 910 homes across 14 London Boroughs and one borough outside Greater London. Most of our tenants are nominated by the councils in the local authorities where we work.

In 2016 we decided that, whilst a stable and decent home was a good platform, the other needs of migrants and refugees were not being met. One such unmet need was health where we noticed that for various reasons many migrants and refugees become isolated from the health service. In response, we decided to set ourselves up as a "go-to" organisation, working in collaboration with partner agencies which provide a range of non-housing services as well as training and support for women suffering gender-based violence.

In July 2019, we established our head office, The People's Place in Stratford, as a hub for these services and collaborative efforts with our partner agencies. Our commitment to the "go-to" agenda drives us to meet the broader needs of migrants and refugees beyond housing.



Arhag's vision & mission

Our social purpose is enshrined in our vision, defines our mission and informs our values.

1. Vision

To ensure every migrant and refugee in London has a good home, is empowered to safeguard their individual rights, have their voice heard and make a full contribution to their community.

2. Mission

To provide the best housing services to our customers while developing the potential of migrants and refugees in London.



Our performance this year

We are committed to learning from your feedback and your experience of our services to make improvements. We have introduced a number of improved key performance indicators (KPIs) which help us monitor and report on our performance in a dashboard. This helps us be as transparent as possible and track our progress so that we can hold ourselves accountable.

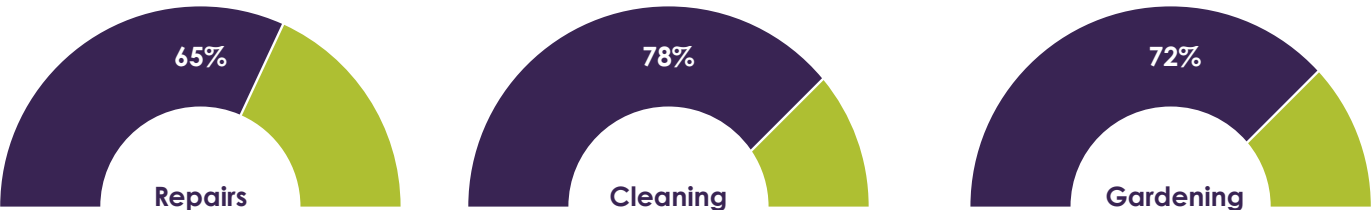
How are we doing?

This year, the KPIs show that while your satisfaction with our repairs service went down slightly at the beginning of the financial year, it improved once we mobilised our new repairs contractor in late 2022. We are confident this positive trend will continue as we work closely with our contractors to improve the service.

The key performance indicators

The figures below show the average resident satisfaction scores and exact compliance statistics for the financial year April 2022 to March 2023.

Resident satisfaction scores for repairs and estate maintenance 2022-23



Your safety is always our priority. We are happy to report that our gas safety and fire risk assessment compliance remains at 100%. Electrical certificates just missed the 100% but we are making sure to have all homes checked by year end.



* Limited access to one home prevented us from achieving 100% compliance.



Complaints handling

We have taken a long look at the issues we have had in the past with complaints handling and have committed to making ongoing improvements.

During the year, we dealt with a small number of legacy cases, of which 10 progressed to the second stage of our complaints process. This year, we also dealt with a small number of cases from prior years which had been taken to the ombudsman.

Introducing improvements

We have implemented changes to improve our complaints service. We have introduced a change to our staff training, clarifying roles and responsibilities in our teams to ensure our colleagues know what to expect. This has allowed us to focus our attention on addressing your concerns collectively and in a joined-up way.

We have overhauled our repairs service specifically to address the need to answer calls better - this way fewer issues spiral into a complaint. We have also updated our residents' handbook this year to make it clearer how to access our complaints service.

With the help of our Resident Scrutiny Panel and staff, we have taken a big step in the right direction. Since implementing changes, in the first quarter of this year, we responded to 100% of complaints within our target timescale.

What we've learned: Here are four outcomes we have achieved throughout our journey to improve complaints handling:



Effective communication is key: Our communications are now more responsive and proactive. We are doing a better job at keeping you informed throughout the whole process.



Hands-on approach: Taking the time to go further, we often visit residents to see and listen to how we can resolve an issue. Also, revisiting to ensure an adequate resolution has been found, and to the required standard.



Detailed reporting: We know how important it is to keep detailed, accurate records. That's why we rigorously note down all complaints information using a detailed monitoring sheet. This helps us keep track of how things are going and allows us to provide accurate reports.



Easy access to updates: We know how important it is for you to have a clear point of contact, a colleague who is there to provide you with the right information and updates, when you need them.



Here is how we managed our finances this year

These numbers provide an insight into how we're managing our finances and investing in our community. We're committed to transparently sharing this information with you.

Here are some key statistics on our performance in the last financial year:

	Routine & planned maintenance	Reinvestment in homes	Turnover
2022	£1,201k	£287k	£6,793k
2023	£1,359k	£1,076k	£7,018k

Routine & planned maintenance: Our operating costs increased slightly, with routine maintenance costs rising by 48% due to our ability to deliver more services and changes in contractors. This led to a 31% reduction in planned maintenance expenses.

Reinvestment in homes: We have done a detailed survey of the condition of all our homes. We identified pressing needs in certain properties, so our focus for the year was to prioritise heating installations such as boilers.

Turnover: Our turnover increased this year, this was down to an increase in income balanced by an increase in costs having all 21 leased units at Sugar House Island for the entire year.

This is where we reinvested in your homes

	2023		2022	
Component	Properties No.	Value	Properties No.	Value
Expenditure on completed installations				
Bathroom	20	£51K	5	£19K
Kitchens	15	£97K	9	£45K
Heating	60	£150K	58	£124K
Windows	29	£700K	15	£68K
		£998K		£256K



Communicating and engaging across the year – 2022/23

To represent our residents effectively, tackling the issues that matter to them, we must establish a strong and clear voice.

You've told us that effective communication is important. Improving the way in which we communicate to you as a resident, keeping you updated with what is going on day-to-day, as well as representing your needs and concerns as one community, matters to us.

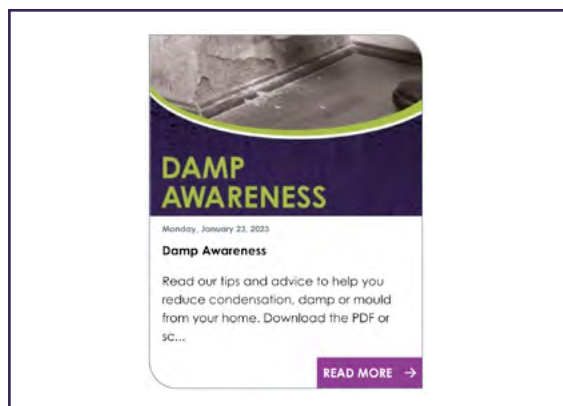
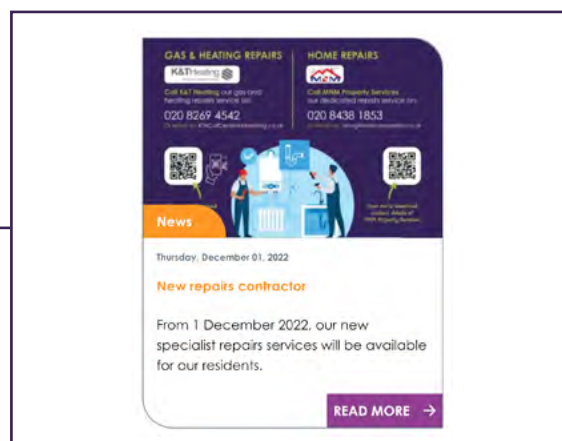
One way we have been working to achieve this strong voice and raise our profile is through improving our content and engagement on both our website and social media platforms.

Here are some examples of information and content we created throughout the year:



We raised awareness about the government's Energy Bill Support Scheme.

To ensure everyone had the opportunity to benefit, we used our website to provide detailed information on how to claim the energy bill voucher.

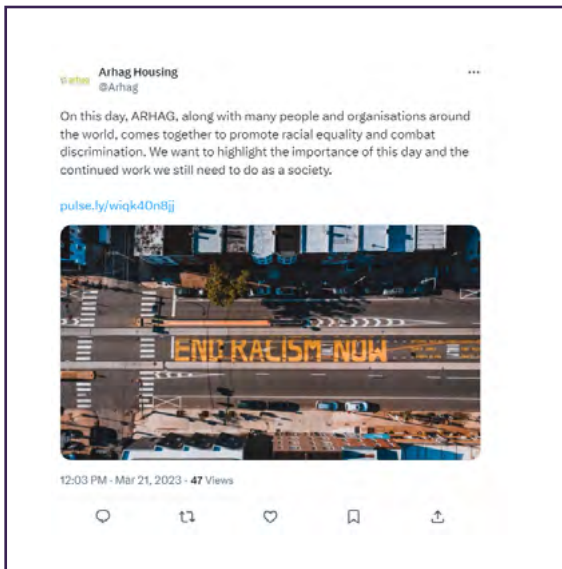


Tackling damp and mould has been a key message this year.

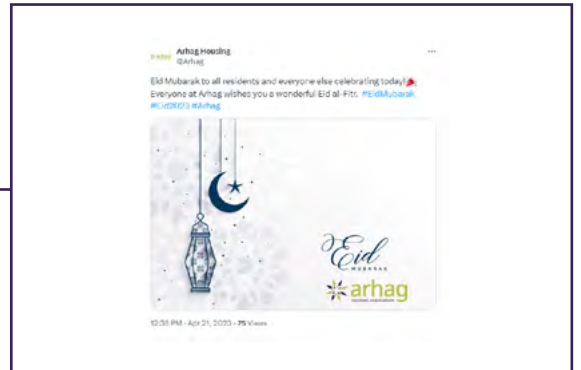
We produced and sent out our guide on how to reduce the risks from damp and mould and made addressing the issues a key priority for our repairs service.



Our public profile highlights days and celebrations that matter to us and our residents.



International Women's Day is an important opportunity to celebrate women's achievements, so this year we focused on the significance of the day for Reena Purchase, Arhag's new Board Chair.



We used our platforms to amplify all our voices on important issues.

Through supporting a number of key national and international awareness raising campaigns, we added our voice to combat discrimination and promote racial equality.

Looking ahead: our key priorities

Although we have made some great progress throughout 2022/23, we know there is much more to be done to become the organisation we want to be.

Chris Harris's pledge

Our Chief Executive is making a pledge to increase how we engage with you:

"We know that the success of our organisation depends on the active participation of our residents.

To encourage more resident participation, we will be actively visiting homes and meeting with residents to discuss your concerns and suggestions.

We are committed to ensuring that your voice is heard and that we are working together to improve our services." Chris' four pledges are outlined below.



Through discussion with our Board and the Residents' Scrutiny Panel, we have identified four key pledges to focus our attention and guide us to success throughout the year ahead:



To improve our engagement with our residents and other key stakeholders
- so that everyone has a voice and is heard.



To develop our asset management approach and strategy
- so that we deliver improved homes and value for money for our residents.



To improve the integrity of our data on people and properties
- so that we understand your needs better and how best to shape our services for the future.



To improve our services to residents and achieve operational excellence
- so you have the best service we can provide.



Our year in review

Here are some of the key achievements and memorable highlights that have shaped Arhag throughout the year.



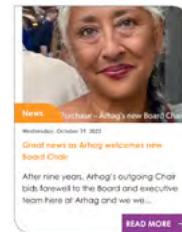
The renewal of our gas heating and hot water contractor: K&T Heating Services

In June 2022, we implemented a new approach where your calls will be directly received by K&T Heating Services.

What does this mean for you? This direct connection gives you immediate access to K&T's dedicated team, including their technical experts.

New Chair appointed

We welcomed our new Board Chair, Reena Purchase in October 2022.



BME National Conference

Our Chief Executive and Director of Property, Building and Compliance were delighted to attend the BME national conference in October 2022.

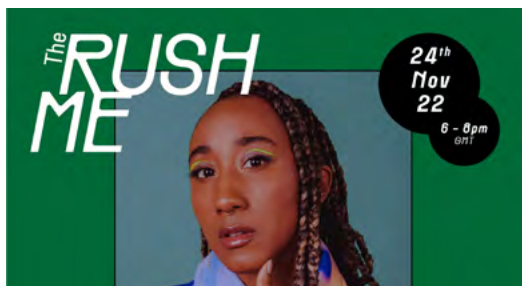
Rough Sleeper Initiative

This initiative goes back to the 1990's to support and reintegrate homeless people into our community and workforce. How? By offering them a place to call home.

At Arhag, we have teamed up with Clearing House and St Mungo's and we have taken over properties that the previous landlord had difficulty renting out. These properties are then made accessible to help put an end to homelessness.

St Mungo's
Ending homelessness
Rebuilding lives





The Rush Me Talk Show

In November 2022, Rush Me Community Workshop invited our residents to take part in their new digital project. They explored important ideas about migration, identity, and belonging echoing the experiences of the Windrush Generation.

New repairs contractor goes live

In December 2022, our new specialist repair service contractor went live. We couldn't have done it without you – here are our residents scrutiny panel members meeting the new contractor before we appointed them.



Arhag All Together Day

Residents from across London joined us at Stratford Town Hall at the end of April to meet with our Chief Executive, Chair of the Board, and Chair of the Resident Panel, enjoy a great lunch with fun activities such as prizes and draws, and arts and crafts.

We welcomed our key-note speaker

Ben Lareya, Chair of BME Landlords London, shared the importance of representation and the progress the social housing sector has made over the last two decades.



Our Migrants' and Refugees' Hub partnership grew in strength

Over the year we welcomed new partners and actively connected residents with the services offered by our partner organisations.

Get involved

As an Arhag resident, the Resident's Scrutiny Panel (RSP) is your direct line to influencing the decisions about your home. We want to know what you think and how we can make Arhag the best it can be.

How has the Resident Scrutiny Panel made a difference?

Between July and September 2022, the RSP played a key role in our procurement of services, including tender reviews and taking part in the interview process. Our RSP works closely with our Senior Management Team and Board to ensure residents' perspectives are taken into account.

It's important that we have a good representation on the RSP to scrutinise crucial issues such as complaints, rent arrears, budgets, and promote accountability and transparency within the organisation.



Joining the resident scrutiny panel

We are actively looking for residents to join the RSP. It's a great way to hear about what's going on, have your voice heard, and share ideas - you get to meet new people too!

To find out more, please speak to your housing officer or email us at housing@arhag.co.uk. You can also contact Syeda (Chair) directly for more info on syedamiah@gmail.com.



Community cookbook

Sharing dishes with loved ones can bring back warm memories of good times with family and friends. We have an ongoing project that aims to bring our community closer together by sharing everyone's favourite foods.

We'd love to hear about your favourite recipes from around the world and the personal stories behind why they mean so much to you.

Once we have enough recipes, we're planning to create a community recipe book that we can all enjoy. Sharing your recipe only takes a few minutes. You can use the online form [here](#) or send an email to contact@arhag.co.uk.

We look forward to reading and trying out all your favourite recipes!

Have your say!

As demonstrated throughout this review, we have been working hard to improve the services we offer, however, we know there is always room for improvement; and that is where you come in.

Tenant satisfaction survey

We have launched our tenant satisfaction survey to collect your feedback. We want to know what we are doing well and where we can do better. We've teamed up with Acuity who are independent from Arhag and a leading market research company. They will be collecting residents' views every three months, so look out for a telephone call survey when they come to you.

Your input has already made a difference. We have made positive changes to communications and customer support, thanks to your feedback. Collaborating with the Resident Scrutiny Panel has also led to improvements in complaints management and contractor appointments.

Submitting feedback

We value your views on the services we provide and we are committed to improving what we do based on your experience. You can email contact@arhag.co.uk or write to us at the address below. Please include your name and address so we can respond to you as quickly as we can:

Arhag Housing Association
The People's Place
80-92 High Street
Stratford, East London
E15 2NE

You will find lots of useful information about our services and our latest news and events on our website www.arhag.co.uk



Need a helping hand?

As a social landlord, we understand how important it is to have the right support and information when you need it. Beyond the services we provide as a landlord, we also make available and can sign-post you to a range of additional accessible services:

Financial support

We are committed to supporting you in different ways, whether it's guiding you towards employment opportunities, helping you manage your benefits, or providing debt advice. If you are struggling or just need some good advice –we are here to help.

Benefits advice

Arhag has an experienced team of Income Officers who work directly with residents and in partnership with our benefit and advice advisory service, Community Links. If you have any queries about Universal Credit, your benefits entitlement, appeals or managing overpayments, please contact the Income Team on 0207 424 7370 who will be happy to help and can also refer you to Community Links.

Debt advice

If you are managing complex debt or have outstanding bills with utility companies, we can support you to get back on track with Community Links. To book an appointment, contact the Housing Team on 0207 424 7370.

Other useful organisations



Citizens Advice

Citizens Advice can help you with the cost of living. They offer guidance on grants, benefits, and the impact of inflation on mortgages. Find out more, [here](#)



Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman Service can help you with complaints and disputes. Their service is free, independent and impartial. Find out more, [here](#)



Tower Hamlets Council

Stay informed with the most recent bulletins about events in your area. Find out more [here](#). If you are interested in having local news sent directly to your inbox, subscribe using this [link](#).



Newham Council

Stay up to date with recent news and explore the various local services available by visiting [Newham latest news](#).

We're here to keep you informed about what's important in our community. Don't see your borough above? To access yours, go to... [gov.uk](#) enter your postcode and search for your borough. Remember that local authorities' pages can be a great resource for finding guidance on local services and support.

Contact us

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Email

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To find out more

www.arhag.co.uk

To report a repair



Gas & heating - K&T

020 8269 4542

KTHCallCentre@ktheating.co.uk



Home repairs - MNM

020 8438 1853

arhag@mn-properties.co.uk

