

Ark makes the grade with highest ever quality score

Care services delivered by Ark to vulnerable customers across Scotland

over the last year have achieved their highest ever average grades from Scotland's care regulator.

The organisation, which supports people to live good lives at home and in their community, has revealed its inspection scores from the Care Inspectorate have maintained a year-on-year improvement trend and are now at record high levels.

Inspections carried out on Ark's 15 registered services – which operate in 12 local authority levels – show an average grade of 4.81 cross all six Care Inspectorate inspection themes. That is up from 4.76 from the previous year – and, significantly, up from 4.05 in 2017.

The impressive results were revealed at Ark's AGM with the organisation's workforce being singled out for special praise for their unstinting devotion to their job during the Covid pandemic.

Ark's Director of Operations Mark Hall said the Care Inspectorate grades were an important marker in its goal to build a reputation for excellence and to be recognised as a high quality provider of housing and care.

He said: "Since 2016/17, we have put in place a rigorous improvement process to ensure we are delivering the best service we can for our customers.

"Our Care Inspectorate grades have improved each year and now sit at their highest-ever average score.

"Our aim now is to maintain this upwards improvement pattern and to achieve an average grade of five – which would be a hugely impressive landmark for Ark."

Ark's 15 registered services are made up of two care homes, plus care at home and housing support services and the 4.81 average grade accounts for inspections carried out over the Care Inspectorate inspection year up to March 2020.

The Care Inspectorate grades services using a six-point scale from unsatisfactory (1) to excellent (6) which examines a detailed range of key quality indicators, such as quality of staff and leadership, care planning and the level of support for people's well-being,

Ark – which was formed 43 years ago and employs more than 900 people – provides care, support and *housing* for adults with complex and enduring needs and their families, as well as general needs *housing*, across Scotland.

Mark said although the rise in improvement is gradual, the ever-improving average score is important as one failing service or bad inspection can significantly impact on the figures.

Mark added: "These results should make very pleasant reading and provide assurances to our customers, their loved ones and family members, that they are getting some of the best care services to be found in Scotland – as well as providing a solid endorsement to our staff of the quality of work they are providing.

“Clearly, this success doesn’t come easy. It requires a combination of strong, value based leadership, a sound understanding of outcome focused support and support workers who are fully focused on providing enhanced levels of care that are tailored specifically for each individual.”

Among the highlights in Ark’s inspection reports, Ark Clackmannanshire scored an excellent ‘6’ grade with no requirements and recommendations. The report stated: ‘Support plans are individual to each person using the service and are completed to an excellent standard.’

Elsewhere, Ark Perth & Kinross service also scored 6’s and the inspector commented that people “were able to get the most out of life because the people and organisation who supported and cared for them had a very enabling attitude and believed in their potential.”

The 43rd Ark AGM – which was held virtually over video – also heard that Ark’s housing business continued to meet all expectations with regard to the Scottish Housing Quality Standards and the Energy Efficiency Standard in Social Housing while also keeping rents affordable at social rent level

In his report to the AGM, Board Chair Graham Mitchell said it had been another year of very strong operational and financial performance for Ark.

Graham also paid tribute to all staff across Ark for their response to the Covid-19 crisis.

He said: “We saw normal business operation changing overnight and without their flexibility and support, Ark may have struggled to make the necessary changes as quickly as we did.”

Graham, in particular, singled out Ark’s support workers – and the managers who run the teams – for their ‘incredible’ work during Covid crisis.

He said: "Their diligence and professionalism has kept our supported people safe. As of today, Ark has had had no reported cases of Covid-19 amongst our group of supported people since the crisis began.

"Our care and support teams should be very proud of what they have collectively achieved through such a unique and challenging time."