

homenews

The tenant customer newsletter from Acis Group



The annual garden competition winners are announced

Welcome

Welcome to the autumn 2010 edition of Home News. In this issue you'll find a feature on the winners of this year's garden competition. We've also got news about the new Tenant Scrutiny Panel, plus an update on our recent performance.

There's news about a calendar consultation that we would like your views on, as well as articles from around the region. You can also learn more about saving energy in your home with some useful tips.

In addition, there's also a chance to win vouchers in two competitions!

Also inside this issue

Get involved with the Tenant Scrutiny Panel

Our performance

Calendar consultation



Annual Report to Tenants

You will shortly be receiving our annual report for the year ending 31 March 2010.

The report will take a look back at our performance and achievements. It will also set out how we meet, or propose to meet, the new standards that came into force from 1 April 2010.

We hope you find the report useful and informative and would welcome any feedback you have upon receipt.

Comments? Suggestions? Ideas?

Do you have any comments, suggestions or ideas for Home News?

If so, please email them to info@acisgroup.co.uk. Alternatively, you can post them to the **Marketing and Communications Team, Acis Group, FREEPOST NEA 10963, Gainsborough, DN21 1BR.**

Home News is also available online. Previous issues are available on the Acis Group website.

Visit www.acisgroup.co.uk/main/news to view electronic versions of past editions.



Tell us

The Acis Board wants to increase opportunities for the tenants' voice to be heard. Using the return slip below, please use 'Tell us' in order to bring areas of interest, concern or queries to our attention.



Please do not use 'Tell us' to:

- Make formal complaints (there is already a separate procedure for this)
- Make service requests (please use existing routes)

I/we would like to tell you about:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Address:

Name:

Telephone: **Email:**

Please return the slip to Marketing and Communications Team, Acis Group, FREEPOST NEA 10963, Gainsborough, DN21 1BR.

You can 'Tell us' electronically at www.acisgroup.co.uk

Thank you

Read all about it...

Calendar consultation

Each year we produce an Acis calendar for all tenants which is sent out with the winter edition of Home News.

However, the calendar is a costly item to produce and we've been thinking whether this is the best use of valuable resources. Therefore, we are proposing that we discontinue the production of the calendar, starting this year with the 2011 calendar.

Before making a decision, we'd like to know how you feel about this proposal to the Acis calendar.

Do you agree or disagree?

If you disagree, why?

Let us know by contacting us on FREEPHONE 0800 027 2057, emailing info@acisgroup.co.uk or writing to us at Marketing and Communications, Acis Group, FREEPOST NEA 10963, Gainsborough, DN21 1BR.

We will communicate a final decision when this has been made.



STATUS survey may be coming your way



What is STATUS?

STATUS is the standardised tenant satisfaction survey developed by the National Housing Federation (NHF). It is endorsed by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA).

The benefits of undertaking the STATUS survey are that it allows us to take into account your views of our services to see where we are doing well or not so well. The information we get back then helps us when planning for the future, helping to shape our services for you.

The survey is being conducted for us by Feedback Services, the NHF's survey service. They will randomly select tenants to take part in the survey. Acis will never know who has been selected for the survey or who has replied.

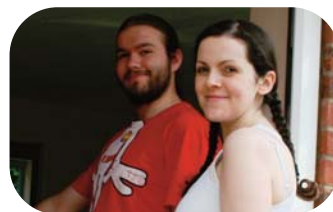
It would be greatly appreciated if you could complete and return the survey if you receive one.

Read all about it...

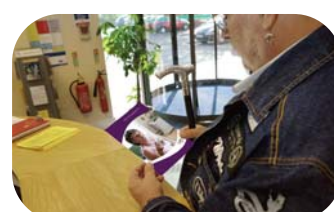
Our performance

Customer satisfaction levels

Take a look at the table below to see how satisfied you are with our services. This quarterly summary is based on the results of the various satisfaction surveys completed by customers.



	April 2010	May 2010	June 2010
Anti-social behaviour (ASB)			
Percentage of customers satisfied with the landlords handling of an ASB case	100%	77.4%	84.1%
Percentage of customers satisfied with the outcome of an ASB case	100%	74.2%	79.5%
Customer Contact Centre			
Customer satisfaction with the Contact Centre	100%	100%	100%
New tenants			
Percentage of new tenant customers very satisfied with their home	78%	72.6	70.2%
Improvements			
Percentage of customers satisfied with the quality of their home improvement	100%	99.6%	98.6%
Repairs			
Customer satisfaction with responsive repairs service	97.3%	97.3%	96.9%
Gas			
Percentage of customers very satisfied with the quality of gas service provided	100%	100%	100%
Customer service			
Satisfaction at the outcome of a complaint regarding poor service	66.7%	42.8%	60%



Garden competition - winners

We are pleased to announce the winners of the Acis Garden Competition for 2010. Well done to all the winners and thank you to everyone who submitted an entry.

Best senior citizen garden Joint first place

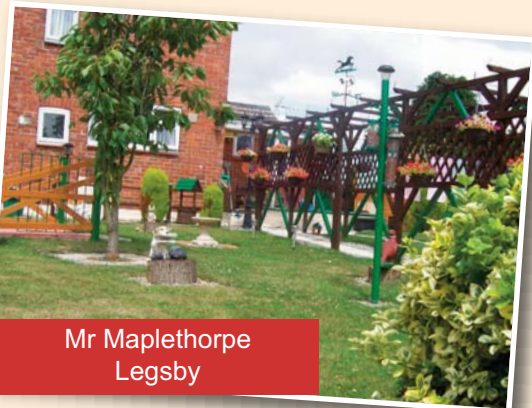


Mr and Mrs Smith
Fiskerton



Mrs Hallett
Bardney

Joint second place



Mr Maplethorpe
Legsby



Mrs Davis
Bardney

Best container garden

1st



Mrs Ardito
Riby

2nd



Mr Waters
Cherry Willingham

Best community garden



St Oswalds
Bardney

Tenant Scrutiny Panel

This is no ordinary resident involvement opportunity. It has the clout to get things done!

We will shortly be recruiting tenant volunteers to sit on the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

This new resident involvement initiative allows real scrutiny of customer-facing services and issues operating on behalf of tenants and residents, ensuring that Acis provides tenant-centred services of the highest standard. It also ensures greater transparency in how we operate and put tenants at the heart of the organisation. The Scrutiny Panel is being developed by a Tenant Steering Group with support from Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS).



What will the panel do?

- Give an independent view of the processes and performance of Acis
- Develop effective links with the Board and the Executive Leadership Team
- Highlight what is good about the organisation and what needs to change
- Make evidence based recommendations to the Board

What would be expected of the individuals on the panel?

- Reading through paperwork
- Taking an objective view on the quality of services provided by Acis
- Comparing Acis services with information from other housing organisations
- Talking to Acis staff and tenant and resident groups
- Work co-operatively with other Scrutiny Panel members, Acis staff and tenants and residents
- Assist in writing reports
- Attending meetings with other panel members and with officers of Acis

What are the key attributes that you would need to be an effective panel member?

- Can commit the time needed to make the panel a success
- Enthusiastic about making a difference
- Able to leave personal issues behind and be as objective as possible
- Be objective and aware of own preconceptions
- Appreciate and uphold confidentiality at all times
- Committed to promoting and upholding the principles of equal opportunities and diversity
- Be prepared to take part in training sessions

Resident involvement

- TPAS will provide support to the panel in its first six months and Acis Tenant Involvement staff will provide ongoing support
- A training and induction plan will be agreed to meet the needs of the new panel members

- Increased skills and confidence
- Opportunity to really make a difference to the services that tenants receive from Acis

What training and support will be provided?

What are the benefits of becoming a member of this panel?

Individuals applying to sit on the panel will be asked to self-assess against the above skills, with those who feel that they meet the criteria being invited to take part in an informal discussion about the role. Those with the best match will be invited to join the panel. Others who may not be successful will be offered other involvement roles and given the opportunity to gain more skills for potential future membership of the panel.

This is a voluntary opportunity, however expenses will be remunerated.

If you are interested in this opportunity then please contact our Resident Involvement Officer, Lucy Picksley, on 01427 675806 or email lucy.picksley@acisgroup.co.uk

What happens next?

September

Recruitment process

- ✓ Advertise to all tenants
- ✓ Opportunities provided to find out more
- ✓ If you are interested, complete the self-assessment



Resident Involvement Officer
Lucy Picksley

October

Selection panel reviews the self-assessments

- ✓ Applicants invited for informal chat with Resident Involvement Officer and TPAS
- ✓ Selection of Scrutiny Panel members
- ✓ Other involvement opportunities identified for those not selected
- ✓ Scrutiny Panel set-up
- ✓ Induction
- ✓ Team building session
- ✓ First meeting

November

- ✓ Training needs identified and individual training plans prepared
- ✓ Scrutiny test case planned



Saving energy in your home

Try using the tips below to get the most from your home's energy use

Lighting tips to save energy

Turn off the lights in any rooms you're not using, or consider installing timers or occupancy sensors to reduce the amount of time your lights are on. Use task lighting - instead of brightly lighting an entire room, focus the light where you need it.

Buy a low energy light bulb. They use a quarter of the electricity of normal bulbs and last 8-10 times longer. Even though they are more expensive than normal light bulbs they are a good investment. You will get your money back in terms of electricity bills saved in the first year.



Washing machines/tumble dryers

- ✓ Use a time clock to make use of the cheaper rate of electricity if you have Economy 7 or other off peak tariffs
- ✓ Dry clothes outside whenever possible
- ✓ If you buy a new machine make sure it is an energy efficient model

About 80-85% of the energy used for washing clothes is for heating the water. There are two ways to reduce the amount of energy used for washing clothes – use less water and cooler water. Unless you're dealing with oily stains, the warm water setting on your machine will generally still do a good job of cleaning your clothes. Don't put really wet clothes into a tumble dryer. Wring them out or spin-dry them first. It's much faster and will save you money.

Hot water/heating controls

Of course water should be hot but it doesn't need to be scalding. For most people, setting the cylinder thermostat at 60°C is fine for bathing and washing and it saves up to £10 a year.

If you're too hot, turn down the room thermostat or the thermostat on the radiator rather than opening a window. Don't let heat escape from your home.

Close your curtains at dusk to stop heat escaping through the window. Make sure that they don't hang in front of radiators or the outside wall will benefit from the heat instead of the room. Also, use thick curtains that are thermally lined. Alternatively, get a second pair of curtains from a charity shop to act as lining material.

Heating too warm?

Is your heating too warm? Don't waste your money - turn your thermostat down by 1°C and it could cut your heating bills by up to 10%. If you're going away for winter, leave the thermostat on a low setting to provide protection from freezing at minimum cost. This could save up to £10 per year.

Electrical appliances

Televisions, videos, stereos, computers and cordless phones - to cut down on wasted energy, avoid leaving appliances on standby and remember not to leave them on charge unnecessarily. However, check the operation manual to make sure that this won't reset the appliance's memory.

Room heaters

If you need an individual room heater for additional heat, the most efficient type is a thermostatically controlled convector heater with timer.

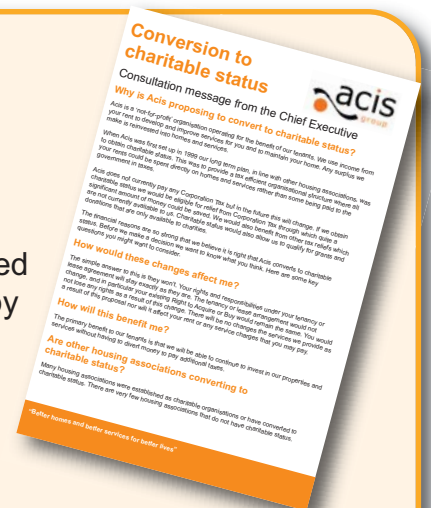
Energy saving tips for the kitchen

- ✓ If you have a big freezer keep it full or you'll be wasting money on keeping an empty space cold
- ✓ Fill up any large gaps with old ice cream boxes filled with water. The frozen water will help to keep the rest of the food cold.
- ✓ Defrost your fridge and freezer regularly to ensure they run efficiently
- ✓ When loading up the fridge or freezer don't keep the doors open for long or the cold air will escape
- ✓ Cooking by gas is cheaper than cooking with an electric cooker
- ✓ Choose the right size pans for the food and cooker, and keep the lids on when you cook as this will reduce condensation as well as energy
- ✓ Cooking with a microwave is quick and easy and uses less fuel than a conventional oven
- ✓ Try and use a low temperature programme on your dishwasher and ensure the you wash a full load

Read all about it...

Conversion to charitable status proposal

We recently sent out a consultation message to all Acis tenants and customers about our proposal to convert to charitable status. We asked that you let us know if you supported or disagreed with the proposal by returning a reply slip. We would like to thank the large number of people who replied to the consultation and gave us their views. Some of the comments we received are shown below.



'Yes I think it's a good idea'

'It would seem to be an excellent move'

'Good for everyone all round'

'A win-win situation'

'I totally agree with the proposal, after all tenants will benefit in the long run'

'It is clearly beneficial to Acis and in turn to tenants'

Following the consultation, the Acis Board will consider all responses before deciding whether to proceed with an application. If a decision is taken to proceed, an application would be put forward to the Tenant Services Authority and the Charities Commission and it is hoped full conversion would occur before the end of the year if approved.

Direct Debit competition

Sign up to pay your rent by Direct Debit during the month of September and you will be entered into a prize draw to win £50 worth of Tesco vouchers.



All customers who pay by Direct Debit as at 30 September 2010 will automatically be entered into a prize draw which will take place in November – this includes all customers who signed up to pay by Direct Debit prior to September. The winner will be notified shortly after the deadline.



For more information, or to request a form to pay your rent by monthly Direct Debit, please contact our Income Team on FREEPHONE 0800 027 2057.

Sheffield loan shark sentenced to 16 months in prison

A loan shark who threatened to burn down his victims' houses was sentenced to 16 months in jail recently.

The 45 year old man ran an illegal money lending business for more than 20 years in Sheffield and had dozens of customers. One woman who borrowed £400 was forced to pay back £5,000 after just a few months. Another victim borrowed £200 and had to pay back £2,000.

The loan shark was investigated and prosecuted by the Yorkshire and the Humber Trading Standards illegal money lending team (IMLT), on behalf of Sheffield City Council. A search of his home by the IMLT found a notebook containing a list of names and amounts of money, dating from January 1988. A truncheon and knuckleduster were found in his home, and a balaclava and body armour found in his car.

Philip Graves, Sheffield City Council's Trading Standards Manager, said: **"This investigation highlights yet again how illegal money lenders prey on the vulnerable within our communities, with victims lured into desperate situations caused by extortionate interest rates, spiralling debt and the very real threat of violence and intimidation.**

Unlicensed money lending is a crime and I would urge anyone concerned, whether they or a friend may be a victim of loan sharks, to get in touch for the confidential help and assistance the illegal money lending team and its partner organisations can provide."

For local debt advice or information on how to start saving contact Sheffield Citizens Advice Bureau debt support unit on 0114 250 1144 or Sheffield Credit Union on 0114 276 0787.

Stop
Loan
Sharks



Nationally, the Stop Loan Sharks project has helped more than 11,500 victims, written off more than £25million of illegal debt and secured more than 60 years of prison sentences.

Update on Pipworth Road multi use games area

Work has been started on site by Streetforce to construct a multi use games area (MUGA) and all-weather pitch on the Pipworth Road open space in Sheffield. This work is being funded by Places for People, Section 106 from housing developments and a donation from a local youth group.

As well as the MUGA and all-weather pitch, there will be a youth shelter, seating, bins and improved paths, with work being carried out to thin out surrounding shrubs. These improvement works will enhance the environmental quality of the site as well as making it feel safer for local residents and the young people using the facilities.

It is planned for work to be completed by early November 2010. For further queries, please call Parks and Countryside on 0114 2500 500.



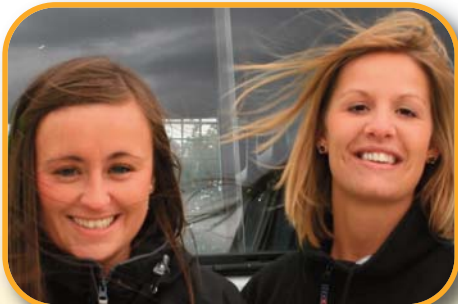
The Pipworth Road MUGA will look similar to the one above at Phillimore Park

Sheffield team success

Housing qualifications achieved

Congratulations to Senior Housing Manager Lianne Shepherd and Area Housing Manager Rebekah Kelly who recently completed their Higher National Diploma in Housing Practice.

Lianne and Rebekah have now achieved their professional housing qualification, as well as their Chartered Institute of Housing qualification.



Recent events

Lower Manor Fun Day

Acis were in attendance at the recent Lower Manor Fun Day in Sheffield.

We agreed to provide funding and had our own stall at the community event. On the day our stall was manned by Acis staff and we provided information and guidance on a wide range of our services.

Our staff also talked to a number of people about a wide range of issues, including resident involvement and scrutiny activity (see pages 5 and 6 for more information on scrutiny).

We gathered a range of feedback on local offers and had a strong interest in our free prize draw, with the winner being Mrs Birks from Sheffield.

Competition time

Can you find the percentage of customers satisfied with the Customer Contact Centre for June 2010 in Home News?

Tell us the figure and the page number of where you found it and you could be in with a **chance of winning £20 worth of vouchers.**

Send your answer to Marketing and Communications, Acis Group, FREEPOST NEA 10963, Gainsborough, DN21 1BR or email info@acisgroup.co.uk, stating your name, address and telephone number.

Your messages

Mr and Mrs Burke
Market Rasen
Lincolnshire

Mr Burke called to say a big thank you to everyone at Acis.

He has had to have major surgery and suffers from osteoarthritis and he says that everyone at Acis have all been brilliant, especially Di Thorley who has really helped him.

Acis have put down a concrete base and electrics for his shed. We also put a pull cord for the light above his bed so he can reach it and numerous other little things that make his life better.

Home News questionnaire feedback results

In the summer edition of Home News we asked you for your thoughts on our tenant newsletter. We had a pleasing number of responses, the majority of which were very positive.

Receiving feedback helps us to check if we are providing the type of content that tenants want to see in Home News and whether there is anything we can do to improve it so you enjoy it even more. Please take a look at the results below.

- 96%** said they read Home News frequently, with **4%** saying sometimes.
- 48%** of respondents said they prefer to receive Home News on a quarterly basis, with the same amount saying they would like to receive it monthly. **4%** said they would prefer twice a year.
- 78%** said they read all of Home News, with **22%** saying they read between half and three-quarters.
- 100%** of respondents said they find Home News relevant or very relevant.
- 100%** of respondents said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with Home News.

When asked what your favourite section of Home News was, respondents said:

- 'What Acis are doing to improve services'
- 'Letting tenants have their say'
- 'Read all about it'
- 'Competitions'
- 'None in particular, it's just interesting reading'
- 'All of it, I really enjoy reading it'

When asked what other features you would like to see in Home News, respondents said:

- 'Local news features'
- 'I'd like to see more people say how good Acis is getting with their services'
- 'What different communities are doing in connection with Acis'
- 'Important phone numbers'
- 'Puzzles'

When asked what we can do to improve Home News, respondents said:

- 'Keep us up-to-date'
- 'Not a lot, very good magazine'
- 'Make sure all the information is interesting'
- 'Nothing, it's good'

Thank you to all of you who completed questionnaires.

The returned questionnaire drawn at random was **Ellen Watkinson from Gainsborough** who won **£20** worth of vouchers.

This newsletter can be made available in **Braille, audio tape, large print or other languages.** Please ask our **Customer Services team** on **FREEPHONE 0800 027 2057** for more information on any of these services.

অনুবাদের ব্যবস্থা রয়েছে

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ترجمہ کرنے کی سروس دستیاب ہے

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