

yourhome



Spring 2011

The home ownership newsletter from Acis Group



Welcome

Welcome to Your Home, the home ownership newsletter from Acis Group. The bulletin features useful information and advice for our shared ownership and rent to home buy customers, as well as the latest news from Acis.

In this issue

- New homes development officially opened
- Acis goes back to the future for new recruit
- Latest new homes are handed to customers
- Properties available
- Looking after your home
- Get involved with Acis
- STATUS survey results
- TSA judgement

Comments? Suggestions? Ideas?

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

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

“Better homes and better services for better lives”

New homes development officially opened

Acis officially opened their latest new homes development in the town of Gainsborough in late January.

Acis declared the Richardson Rise development officially open on 28 January in front of customers, local dignitaries, special guests, partners and employees. Guest of honour Professor Mary Stuart, Vice Chancellor of the University of Lincoln, was on hand to cut the ribbon and addressed the assembled gathering together with Acis Chairman Roger Buttery.

The £7.5million scheme has created over 70 affordable homes thanks to £3 million of funding from the Homes and Communities Agency and a further £4.5 million of investment from Acis. Lincolnshire-based construction group Lindum was appointed to carry out the work, which began in February 2009 and was built on land belonging to Acis at Park Springs.

This first phase of the project saw 37 new homes handed over, featuring a mix of two and three bedroom bungalows, two, three and four bedroom houses, and two bedroom flats. Following the completion of the second phase, a total of 74 new homes were built for rent, shared ownership and intermediate market rent.

Chief Executive of Acis, Valerie Waby, said: “Officially opening this multimillion pound development is a proud day for the organisation. The scheme represents our commitment to the residents of Gainsborough and West Lindsey and these new homes have enabled us to help meet the growing demand for high quality affordable homes in this area.”

The opening of the scheme was also marked by the attendance of Gainsborough resident Frederick Richardson. Mr Richardson, or Fred as he is known, is a well known figure in the town and had the honour of having the development named after him following a recommendation to West Lindsey District Council.



The development is officially opened

It was Mr Richardson's work with the British Legion that was recognised foremost. After becoming a member in the mid-1940s, Mr Richardson has been directly involved in poppy collections for the past 40 years. He has also completed 35 years as Branch Chairman and Mr Richardson has played a key role in keeping the Gainsborough branch of the Royal British Legion going for three decades.

It was a double celebration as Mr Richardson celebrated his 90th birthday just a couple of days after the event. Mr Richardson was presented with a crystal decanter by Acis to commemorate the scheme opening, as well as a birthday card and cake.



Mr Richardson at the official opening

Roger Buttery, Chairman of Acis, said: “Mr Richardson richly deserves this recognition and I'm delighted he was present to mark this occasion with us. Acis prides itself in putting people first and providing better places for people to live and I believe Richardson Rise meets this criteria. I know I speak for everyone who has been involved in this development when I say what a success it has been. The opening event is another milestone in the company's history and one I am extremely proud to be part of.”

Acis goes back to the future for new recruit

Acis recently turned a placement position into a permanent member of staff after signing up to a Government jobs scheme. A new member was appointed to the Customer Contact Centre team following a successful placement period with the company.

22 year old Katy Allen was taken on as part of the Government-led Future Jobs Fund initiative back in March 2010. The Future Jobs Fund aims to reduce rising unemployment among 18-24 year olds and targets unemployment 'hot spots'. Katy, from Upton in Lincolnshire, was classed as Stage 3 unemployed, meaning she had been out of work for more than six months. Katy said of the scheme:

"The Future Jobs Fund was a brilliant scheme for me. I had all the qualifications I needed but I just needed someone to give me my first job, as I had no previous experience. Even if I hadn't been offered a permanent job at Acis, the Future Jobs Fund would have provided all that was necessary for me to go on and find my next job."

Katy and Acis were brought together by the Healthy Hub, a social enterprise trading as a community interest organisation. The Healthy Hub was one of the first organisations in Lincolnshire to win bids from the Government to get jobs for people that need them.

The Healthy Hub took Katy for some basic training, gave her a variety of job placements to apply for, pre-interviewed her and the next thing Katy secured a placement at Acis. The Healthy Hub paid Katy's salary for six months and we ensured she got at least five hours a week learning and training time.

Katy's main area of work was a financial inclusion project, gathering information from customers about the issues and barriers that people face in order to help us try and combat exclusion. Working with Acis gave Katy a way in to the world of work and a wealth of experience in a range of different areas.

New recruit
Katy
Allen



In July, the permanent position of a Customer Advisor in the Customer Contact Centre was advertised. Following Katy's positive experience of Acis she was keen to apply and after a successful interview was offered the role. Katy was looking forward to starting in her new role as a Customer Advisor, which began in September, and commented:

"The staff at Acis have been great. I ended up working with practically every department in the company and everybody was really helpful. While I've been here I've developed a real enjoyment for interacting with customers and I'm glad I'll be able to continue that in my new job. Before I didn't really have a career direction but now it's really nice to have found an area of work that is worthwhile, that I enjoy and that I'm good at too!"



Latest new homes are handed to customers

We recently handed over the keys to our latest new homes in the town of Sleaford. We gave the keys to our new residents of the Tamer Road development, just off Church Lane.

The scheme of 72 affordable homes and was handed over during January. We worked with development consultants POD to deliver the project, which represents a total investment of £9.4 million and was part funded by a Homes and Communities Agency grant of £3.7 million. Midlands property developer Westleigh Developments were appointed to undertake the scheme's construction.

The Tamer Road project features a mix of one and two bedroom flats, and two, three and four bedroom houses, available for rent, shared ownership and rent to home buy, where customers can rent now and buy later.



New Acis resident Susan Hobbs commented: "I had always longed to own my own home but it always seemed out of reach. Acis understood what I was looking for and discussed the rent to home buy scheme and how to apply. I immediately thought this was for me. After a few months of eager excitement, I have found the home I have been waiting for. I am now settled and planning for the future in my lovely new home. In today's climate of house buying, I highly recommend the rent to home buy scheme and the understanding and helpfulness of Acis."



Kate Boxell, a new resident of Tamer Road, said: "The process was easy to understand, there was always someone at Acis on hand to help. Acis have been fantastic to guide us every step of the way. The rent to home buy scheme is such a brilliant idea to help people get on, or in our case back on, the property ladder in this tough economic climate. We are aiming to purchase part of the property after the first year because of the huge incentive Acis offers by giving us the first year's rent back towards our mortgage. We are absolutely over the moon with our new home, it's everything we hoped and more."

Chief Executive of Acis, Valerie Waby, said: "The completion of our latest new homes development represents another milestone for the organisation and for our new customers in Sleaford. Working in partnership with Westleigh, we have ensured that a wide variety of property types have been included in the development, from one bedroom flats to four bedroom houses, with three different types of tenures. This shows our commitment to providing more homes for more people and ensuring that those in housing need are provided with a choice of home that meets their aspirations."

Properties available now

Shared ownership properties



From £25,000

4 x 3 bed houses
Richardson Rise,
GAINSBOROUGH



From £27,487

1 x 2 bed house
Haydock Way,
MARKET RASEN



From £30,000

2 x 2 bed and 1 x 3 bed
houses, Moor Lane,
BRANSTON



From £26,250

6 x 2 bed and 5 x 3 bed
houses, Tamer Road,
SLEAFORD

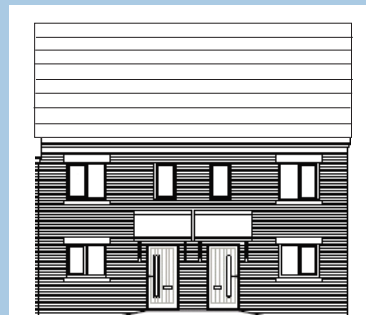
All shared ownership prices quoted are based on a 25% share being purchased

Rent to HomeBuy properties



Rent TBC

3 x 2 bed house
Axholme Road,
EPWORTH



Rent TBC

2 x 2 bed houses
Shuttlewood Road,
BOLSOVER

If you are interested in any of the properties, or would like to know about upcoming developments, please contact our Property Sales Officer.

FREEPHONE: 0800 027 2057

Email: info@acisgroup.co.uk

Text: 07800 002270

Website: www.acisgroup.co.uk

**Coming soon: 8 properties at North Hykeham
estimated completion March 2011**

Recommend a friend

Do you know someone interested in getting on the property ladder?

Maybe you have a friend or relative that would like to buy their first home?

Acis run a 'Recommend a friend' scheme that gives you the chance to help them make that move and earn yourself a £100 reward at the same time. If you recommend a friend or family member to Acis and they then buy one of our properties, you will receive a £100 bonus as a special thank you.

Michelle Sleight, Property Sales Officer for Acis, explains: **"The 'Recommend a friend' scheme allows us to provide an incentive to our customers which rewards them for their loyalty. From as little as £25,000, a 25% share can be purchased and we currently have a range of properties available."**

Call our Property Sales Officer on FREEPHONE 0800 027 2057 for more information.



Looking after your home

Keeping your home free of damp

Do you have problems with damp in your home?

Damp and cold homes can cause mould on walls and furniture and damage window frames. Mould can increase the risk of respiratory illnesses that cause problems with breathing for some people.

Very often damp and mould growth is caused by condensation, which can be easily solved by taking simple steps. Read through this guide for tips on how to reduce the risk of damp and mould in your home.



What is condensation?

There is always moisture in the air. If the air gets cold it cannot hold all the moisture and tiny droplets of water appear. You may notice it when you see your breath on a cold day or when a mirror mists over when you have a bath. This is condensation.

How to avoid condensation:

- ✓ Cover pans and don't leave kettles boiling in the kitchen
- ✓ Avoid using paraffin and portable bottled-gas heaters as they produce lots of moisture into the air
- ✓ Dry clothes outdoors
- ✓ Keep a small window or trickle ventilators open to let air circulate
- ✓ Open windows in the kitchen and bathroom when in use
- ✓ Open doors to cupboards and wardrobes to allow air to circulate around furniture
- ✓ Leave space between the backs of wardrobes and the wall
- ✓ Where possible, put furniture against walls that have rooms either side
- ✓ Do not block ventilators or chimneys
- ✓ Do not draught proof rooms where there is a fuel-burning heater, cooker or gas fire
- ✓ Do not draught proof windows in the bathroom or kitchen

Remember - in cold weather the best way to keep rooms warm enough to avoid condensation is to keep the heating on low all day.

Is it condensation?

Damp can also be caused by: leaking pipes, wastes or overflows, rain seeping through a leaking roof, and rising damp due to a faulty damp course or a lack of damp course.

If your home is newly built it may be damp because the water used in its construction and in the plaster is still drying out.

If you do not think the damp in your home is caused by condensation, please contact us for our advice. We can arrange a time to visit you and make an assessment of the problem.

Resident involvement

Residents group meetings

Open to all Acis residents

Local Management Boards (LMB)

Gainsborough (town and rural) LMB

A joint Gainsborough rural and town LMB meeting will be held on Friday 15 April 2011 at Acis House, 10am – 12 noon. Observers are welcome to attend the LMB by appointment only. If you wish to attend, please call Lucy Picksley on 01427 675806 or FREEPHONE 0800 027 2057 to discuss further.

Tenant and Residents Associations (TARA)

Dinnington TARA

(Meetings held last Monday of every month)
Next meeting - The Gallows public house, Hangsman Lane, Dinnington on Monday 28 March 2011, 6pm – 7pm

Woodthorpe TARA

(Meetings held second Tuesday of every month)
Next meeting - Woodthorpe TARA meeting rooms, Ulley Road on Tuesday 8 March 2011, 7pm – 8pm

Lower Manor TARA

(Meetings held third Thursday of every month)
Next meeting - Lower Manor meeting rooms, Angleton Avenue on Thursday 17 March 2011, 6.30pm – 7.30pm

Residents Groups

Park Springs Residents Group

(Meetings held third Tuesday of every month)
Next meetings - Park Springs Community Centre, Riseholme Road, Gainsborough on Tuesday 15 March, 19 April, 17 May, 21 June, 19 July and 16 August 2011, 6.30pm – 7.30pm

Kelsway Residents Group

(Meetings held quarterly)
Next meeting - Drakes Court, Caistor on Monday 23 May 2011, 7pm – 8pm.

Willow Tree Drive, Market Rasen Residents Group

(Meetings held quarterly)
Next meeting - Fletcher Court, Market Rasen on 4 June 2011, 10am - 11am

Middlefield Lane Residents Group

A newly formulated residents group has been established for the tenants and residents of the Middlefield Lane area of Gainsborough. We will be meeting at Park Springs Community Centre on Wednesday 6 April 2011, 6.30pm – 7.30pm. Look out for further information.

Welton and Dunholme Residents Group

(Meetings held quarterly)
Next meeting - Dunholme Village Hall on Monday 16 May 2011, 6.30pm – 7.30pm

Bardney Residents Group

(Meetings held quarterly)
Next meeting - Bardney Village Hall on Wednesday 25 May 2011, 6.30pm – 7.30pm

Drop-in resident surgeries

Acis Area Housing Managers hold drop-in surgeries for residents to answer questions and to give help and advise regarding any housing matters.

- **Park Springs** - Park Springs Community Centre on Thursdays between 2pm and 4pm (Jo McLaughlin)
- **Caistor** – Multi-use Centre, Caistor on Fridays between 10am and 12 noon (Debbie Clubley)

Get involved... ...and make a difference

Here at Acis we encourage all our customers to have a say in how their homes and neighbourhoods are managed.

We are really keen to get you involved to help us deliver and develop our services to meet your needs. There are many ways for you to get involved and make a difference.

Please see the enclosed 'Involvement options' leaflet for more information about the different ways to get involved with Acis and how to register your interest.

You can also visit our website at www.acisgroup.co.uk/main/have-your-say



In the last edition of Your Home we asked you to let us know what you thought about the newsletter via a feedback questionnaire. Thank you to those who responded. Your feedback was greatly appreciated and the suggestions for improvements and features will be considered for future editions.

The lucky winner in the free prize draw for £20 worth of high street vouchers was Miss C Anderson from Welton.

STATUS survey results

Following the recent STATUS survey that was undertaken in late 2010, we now have the results. STATUS is the standardised tenant satisfaction survey and allows us to take into account the views of our customers, helping us to shape our services to meet their needs. It is a requirement set out by our regulator, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA).

The survey was sent to our homeowner customers to complete and the responses have now been collated. The results showed that 86% were satisfied with the quality of their home, with 89% satisfied with the neighbourhood. However, we scored less well in other areas and this is something we are already in the process of trying to put right.

The levels of satisfaction in comparison with other landlords, taken from the National Housing Federation's averages, were favourable. Of 25 standard satisfaction questions, we scored above average in 17, level in 2 and below in only 6. In terms of our sales process, we scored above average in 13 out of 17 standard questions, level in 1 and below in only 3.

A report is available online, where you can see how we were rated in a range of different areas. Please visit www.acisgroup.co.uk/main/news to view.

TSA judgement



In late October 2010, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) published its latest Regulatory Judgement about Acis on their website. The TSA made the following assessments:

Viable - the association meets the requirements set out in the Governance and Financial Viability standard of the Regulatory Framework in relation to financial viability.

Properly governed - the governing body gives effective leadership and control, has a wide range of skills and experience and, supported by appropriate governance and executive arrangements, is improving its own performance and that of the organisation.

These assessments are the highest assessments that can be awarded. For viability, this assessment is one that is commonly awarded to associations. In terms of being properly governed, this assessment is one that only a handful of organisations hold. These continued assessments provide some external assurance that we are continuing to get things right for you, our customers, and that we are a strong and stable company.

This newsletter can be made available in **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.

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business for neighbourhoods

