

# home news

*Keeping you informed*

*The tenant newsletter from Acis Group*



## Welcome

Welcome to the spring 2011 edition of Home News. In this issue you'll find a feature on the official opening a recently completed new homes development. We've also got an update about this year's garden competition and how you can enter.

There's news about the handing over of keys to our latest new customers and how you could become a tenant member of the Acis Board, as well as articles from around the regions. We've also got items on becoming involved with Acis and some useful information for you and your home.

In addition, there's also a chance to win £20 worth of vouchers in our competition.

## Also inside this issue

**STATUS** survey results  
Local offers  
Resident group dates





Read all about it...

## New homes development officially opened

**We officially opened our latest new homes development in Gainsborough in late January.**

The Richardson Rise development was declared 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 £7.5 million 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.

The 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.

It was Mr Richardson's work with the British Legion



**The development is officially opened**

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."**

Read all about it...

# Local Offers

The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, which became effective from 1 April 2010, required that we consult with tenants on the desirability and range of Local Offers.

We began consulting on Local Offers via the summer 2010 edition of Home News, which set out our intended actions and a timetable. A final draft consultation of Local Offers was included in the winter 2010 Home News.

In producing our Local Offers we have tried to make sure that:

- ✓ **They are measurable so that we can assess and report on how we are performing**
- ✓ **Where possible, they can be compared (benchmarked) with similar offers made by other landlords**
- ✓ **They have an intended impact**



The local offers were endorsed by the Resident Advisory Panel and approved by the Board in January. Local Offers will be effective from 1 April 2011. The enclosed 'Local Offers' document shows our finalised offers and details what we set out to deliver.

Going forward we will report on how we are performing in delivering our Local Offers to both the Board and Scrutiny Panel on a quarterly basis. We will also publish performance details for all tenants in future editions of Home News and Annual Reports.

## Acis has been shopped

In the last quarter, we supported a number of tenant mystery shoppers to pose as customers seeking advice and/or support from our staff.

It was found that whilst the overall number of contacts made was relatively small, this provided both favourable feedback and some areas for consideration around call answering speed and the overall extent of call handler knowledge.

### So what is mystery shopping?

Mystery shopping is a form of market research which uses customers to assess service standards. This involves training individuals to pose as customers and undertake a series of agreed tasks, which are aimed at monitoring service delivery. Mystery shopping can be carried out in person, by telephone, letter or email, over the internet or in any way that customers interact with an organisation.

### Could you be our next mystery shopper?

As we look to the future we are keen to engage with more and more of our tenants and seek their support in resident involvement activities. If you feel that mystery shopping might be for you, please contact our **Resident Involvement Officer on 0800 027 2057**.

### Mystery shop and shop on us

In return for your support, we want to help you shop with a **£20 high street voucher** on completion of two shops in a financial year.



Read all about it...

# 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.

**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."



## **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."

Get involved

# Become a Tenant Board Member

We are looking to recruit new tenants to our Board. We spoke to current Tenant Board Member Mike Richardson about why becoming part of the Board is a great way to get involved with Acis.



Mike has been a Tenant Board Member since 2009 and an Acis customer since 2007. Throughout his working life Mike has developed many skills. He has a particular interest in team working and managing diversity to ensure all community groups receive an unbiased

and first class customer service. Mike works full-time as a Social Worker with Catch 22 in Lincoln, an organisation that provides housing-related support to young people.

Mike feels strongly that becoming a Tenant Board Member is something that is open to all tenants to participate in. Mike told us: "No-one is excluded from applying to be a Tenant Board Member. I wanted to get involved and try and make a difference. I saw a recruitment advert for Tenant Board Members and thought it was the perfect opportunity. I hope other tenants do too."

Tenants can make a positive contribution to the Board. They can help Acis to become more customer focused by having actual Acis customers as Board Members. Mike continued: "Tenants can really play a part on the Board, often by being the voice for the needs of other tenants. The delivery of repairs is a great example. I wasn't always happy with the quality of service I was receiving at times and I wanted to be able to rectify this and aim to ensure mistakes weren't repeated."

Mike is a firm believer in having a greater diversity amongst Board Members in order to provide more useful input into developing strategies for the future. He added: "We want to increase the proportion of tenants on the Board and also increase the diversity of members. It's

important for the Board to include members from a range of backgrounds and from all walks of life to bring new skills and experience."

**So what does Mike want to say to anyone interested in becoming a Tenant Board Member?** "I would really like to encourage tenants to get involved with Acis and becoming a Tenant Board Member is a great way to do this. It's a vital way of helping us to improve our services."

**Does becoming a Tenant Board Member at Acis appeal to you?**

If you are interested in applying please call Liz Reading on 01427 675751 or email [liz.reading@acisgroup.co.uk](mailto:liz.reading@acisgroup.co.uk)

**Deadline for registering interest**  
22 April 2011

## Board meetings

**Would you like to see what happens in our Board meetings?**

Details of our next Board Meetings are as follows:

26 April 2011 – Acis House, Gainsborough

25 May 2011 – Acis House, Gainsborough

**If you'd like to attend one of our Board meetings please call Liz Reading on FREEPHONE 0800 027 2057 or email [info@acisgroup.co.uk](mailto:info@acisgroup.co.uk)**

# Garden competition

## Do you enjoy gardening?



If you're proud of the patch of land outside your front or back door then we want to hear from you.

We're looking for the best gardens across the region in our annual garden competition.

The competition has different categories so that everyone can join in and is open to tenants of all ages.

Prizes are on offer for each category. First place in a category will earn you a £50 voucher, second prize scoops a £30 voucher and third place wins a £20 voucher.

The closing date for entries is 1 August 2011.

Please note that you can only enter one category.

**I would like to enter the following category:**  
(please note that you can only enter one category)

- Best Flower Garden**   
**Open to all under the age of 60**
- Best Container Garden**   
**Open to all - ideal if space is limited**

- Best Senior Citizen Garden**   
**Open to all over the age of 60**
- Best Community Garden**   
**Open to a group of people working together (first place prize only)**

Name: .....

Address: .....

Telephone: .....

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

## Make better use of the **Acis website**

### Are you making the best use of the Acis website?

Take a look below at some of the services that are available on our website. We are continually striving to improve our online services for customers to make them more accessible and user friendly.



**We have a wide range of information and services for tenants contained on our website including:**

#### Useful information

- Report a repair (non emergency only) - you will be taken through an easy to use step-by-step process, clicking on pictures to establish exactly what repair is required
- Apply for a home
- Paying your rent - payments can be made from the comfort of your own home, saving you time, effort and potential travel costs
- Transfer to another home
- Apply for adaptations
- Make a compliment or complaint
- Get a community alarm
- Apply for housing benefit
- Saving energy in your home

#### Your tenancy

- Anti-social behaviour
- Repairs and improvements information
- Tenant Handbook

#### Resident involvement

- How to get involved
- Different ways of involvement

#### Latest news

- Newsletters
- News releases
- Events
- Changes to services
- Surveys and consultations

#### Looking for a new home

- Homes available to rent
- Homes available for shared ownership
- Homes available for rent to home buy
- Supported housing

#### Leaflets

- Information leaflets
- Application forms

#### Useful external contacts

- Web links
- Phone numbers

#### About us

- Corporate information
- Working for us
- Contact details and opening hours

Why not log on to the Acis website today and see for yourself.

[www.acisgroup.co.uk](http://www.acisgroup.co.uk)

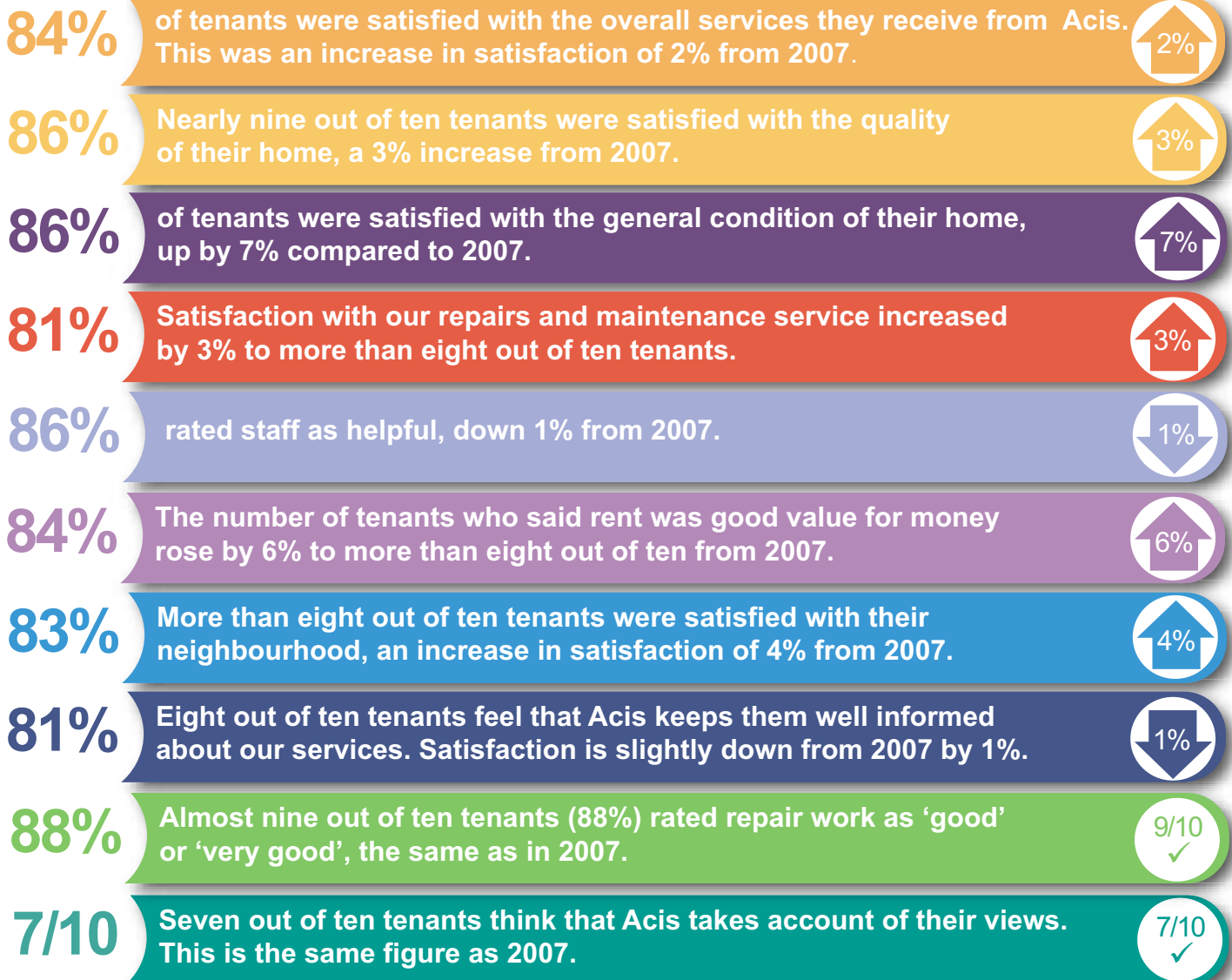


# How you rated us

## STATUS survey results

Following the recent STATUS survey that was undertaken between September and November 2010, we now have the results. STATUS is the standardised tenant satisfaction survey and is a requirement set out by our regulator, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA).

The survey was sent to our tenants and customers to complete and the responses have now been collated. The results showed that:



The majority of the key areas mentioned saw an increase in satisfaction compared to the 2007 results and out of 18 satisfaction questions, we rated above the National Housing Federation average in all 18.

STATUS is the most important survey of its kind that we carry out. It allows us to take into account the views of our tenants, helping us to shape our services accordingly to meet customer needs. It provides us with an up-to-date profile of our customers and an up-to-date picture of satisfaction with homes and services. To be able to compare our performance with other social landlords and compare current performance with that of previous years is vital for our ongoing development. Overall, the results showed a positive direction of travel. Lots of good work has been completed but we need to strive to improve in order to increase customer satisfaction and deliver even better services. Thank you to everyone who completed a STATUS survey.

A full report is available for you to view, where you can see how we were rated in a range of different areas.

Please visit [www.acisgroup.co.uk/main/news](http://www.acisgroup.co.uk/main/news) to view the report online.

# Anti-social behaviour

## Family's reign of terror put to an end with the help of community



A peaceful cul-de-sac in Gainsborough was turned into a nightmare place to live after a problem family moved in. We were forced to take action against the parents of the family after they moved into one of our properties in the Park Springs area.

Soon after, it was reported to our ASB Unit that the family's daughter had assaulted the daughter of one of our tenants. An interview revealed that the victims had been targeted by family members for several months and despite warnings things didn't improve.

As a result, we applied for an Anti-Social Behaviour Injunction on the family's father. This was granted, however the victims continued to suffer anti-social behaviour and damage to their property. Together with Lincolnshire Police and West Lindsey District Council, we approached neighbours to see if they had witnessed any of the incidents.

Five independent witnesses gave statements which revealed that the family had been intimidating and abusive, as well as having late night drinking parties most weekends, disturbing the entire road.

The family's behaviour was so intimidating that the witnesses stopped relatives from visiting and were frightened to leave their homes for fear of them being vandalised. One witness was too frightened to use her front door.

At the time of the injunction, a Notice Seeking Possession was served on the family and the court hearing scheduled. A week before the case was due to be heard, the family handed in their keys and moved out voluntarily due to the overwhelming evidence against them.

Speaking after the case, one of the witnesses said: "If people stand together you can stamp out anti-social behaviour, but you must stand together. I would do it again if needs be. We have had great support from Acis, the police and West Lindsey District Council."

### **Claire Glasby, Community Safety Manager for Acis, commented:**

"This is an example where tenants uniting together against anti-social behaviour and working with us can make a difference. Although the process can take some time, gathering the evidence is vital in this type of case to secure the right outcome for the community. I would like to thank the witnesses and also our partner agencies, the police and West Lindsey District Council who helped to achieve this positive outcome. I would say to anyone suffering from anti-social behaviour - don't suffer in silence make sure you report it."

### **Michelle McIlroy, Police Inspector for Gainsborough and Market Rasen Sector, added:**

"We are committed to stop anti-social behaviour being carried out and will take positive and robust action against any perpetrators, using all the weight of the criminal and civil court system. This would not have been possible without the conviction and tenacity of the witnesses involved who were prepared to stand up and be heard by the courts, as the voice of the law abiding and reasonable person should always be listened to. We are delighted with this result."

## Have you been a victim of anti-social behaviour?

**If so, don't suffer in silence. You can overcome anti-social behaviour by working with us.**

We have a legal and moral responsibility to make sure our customers are safe, secure and comfortable in their homes and we are committed to getting rid of anti-social behaviour within our communities. The care of victims is vitally important to us and we work closely with agencies to provide the support needed. We will try to assist victims in both coping with their problems and in supplying evidence for use in court when required.

**If you are experiencing anti-social behaviour, contact our ASB Unit on FREEPHONE 0800 027 2057 or email [asbu@acisgroup.co.uk](mailto:asbu@acisgroup.co.uk)**

# Changes to our Sheffield services



**We notified all Sheffield tenants last year that the contract with the YES (Your Estate Services) Team came to an end on 31 March 2011.**

**What will happen to the services that were provided by the YES team?**

### Estate services

A new contract for estate services has been awarded to Vale Contract Services after a formal process that we had to go through to meet legal requirements. A member of the Local Management Board was involved in the interviews of the shortlisted contractors.

Vale Contract Services are a well established and highly experienced company providing similar services to a number of landlords like Acis.

**What will they be doing?**

**The key activities that they will carry out are:**

- ✓ Grass cutting
- ✓ Shrub maintenance
- ✓ Garden pledge work
- ✓ Responding to incidents of fly tipping and graffiti
- ✓ Litter picks
- ✓ Dry store clearance

**How will they be accountable?**

- For routine work (grass cutting, shrub maintenance) they will provide details of what they are going to do, where and when. This can be provided to any tenant and if you would like it, please contact Lianne Shepherd on 01427 675714.
- They will attend Local Management Board meetings to report on their performance
- They will attend estate walkabouts
- There will be opportunities for tenants to get directly involved in inspecting their work. If you are interested in this, please contact Lianne Shepherd on 01427 675714.
- There will be routine surveys carried out to find out tenant views on work they carry out

- They will provide regular reports to Acis to confirm what they have done and when
- Their performance will be monitored through a number of indicators

Opportunities to meet with Vale Contract Services will be available in the coming months, including monthly estate walkabouts.

### Wardens

The warden service will become a direct part of the Acis team operating in Sheffield and will work closely with both the Area Housing Managers and our Anti-social Behaviour team. We are keen to ensure that the wardens are very visible and focus on things that we are aware matter to tenants.

### Block cleaning

This will be undertaken separately by a local company. We will notify all tenants who live in blocks who will be doing the cleaning, once the appointment is made. As with estate services, we will be assessing the contractor's performance and hope that tenants will take the opportunities that we create for your voice to be heard about the standard of service that you receive.

**We believe that these new arrangements will result in improved services being delivered and look forward to tenants working with us to assess this.**

**STOP PRESS**

**Come along to our 'meet and greet' session for tenants with Vale Contract Services.**

- Friday 8 April 2011
- TARA meeting room, Ulley Road, Sheffield
- 10am start

**Call 01427 675714 for details**

Read all about it...

## Investors in Diversity

In February we undertook reaccreditation for the Investors in Diversity (IiD) Standard. This is a highly prized and prestigious quality mark and shows an all-encompassing approach by us to managing equality, diversity and inclusion effectively. It enables us to take a structured and planned approach to embedding equality and diversity at the heart of what we do.

As part of this process, a number of Acis employees were interviewed by an IiD Assessor and the National Centre for Diversity also carried out an online survey to staff, partners and tenants.

We are delighted to announce that following this we have now been reaccredited with the Investors in Diversity Standard.

Thank you to everyone who participated.



## Your home

### Improvement programme priorities for 2011/12

**As part of our Local Offers to tenants, we committed to publishing an overview of our improvement programme priorities at the start of each financial year.**

In giving priority to works required on a 'worst first' basis, where our condition surveys have indicated that the remaining life of components is lowest, the improvement programme for 2011/12 will focus on:

- Central heating (220)
- Door replacement (300)
- Kitchen replacement (180)
- Bathroom replacement (80)
- Roofline works (600)
- Electrical upgrades (800 tests will be carried out to identify requirements)

The numbers in brackets are the works that we intend to carry out in each category. It is not appropriate to publish details of individual homes that will be included in the programme in Home News. However, as we committed to as part of our Local Offers, we will be contacting tenants and discussing the implications of improvements at least six weeks before any works start.

**Please see over the page for information on improvement works.**

## Improvement works - information for tenants



**We recognise that good communication about improvement works is important to you. This information is intended to provide clarification about our approach to planning improvement works and address some questions that are frequently asked.**

### **What are improvement works?**

Like any landlord, we have a duty to carry out improvements to our homes, as and when they are required. This is also known as planned maintenance and will include replacing/upgrading central heating systems, kitchens, bathrooms, doors and windows, wiring, loft insulation upgrades, and external items such as roofs, soffits, fascias and guttering.

### **How do we know what improvement works are needed and when?**

It is important that we are aware of the condition of our homes and what will need to be upgraded or replaced and when. To do this, we carry out surveys to individual homes on an ongoing basis. The information collected is used to update the condition data that we already hold. This enables us to estimate what will need to be replaced or upgraded and when, and is used to plan our improvement programmes.

### **When can I expect a survey?**

We aim to resurvey 20% of our homes each year. This means that your home will be surveyed approximately once every five years.

### **About the survey**

The survey will take less than an hour to complete and will involve our surveyor taking a brief look in all the rooms of your home, including the loft space if you have one. If you have any maintenance, investment or other related queries to discuss, please feel free to bring these up with the surveyor during their visit.

Please note the stock condition survey is very important, as you will NOT be considered for any improvements until a survey has been completed. It is important therefore that our surveyor gains access to your property as quickly as possible and your co-operation in this matter will be greatly appreciated.

If you would prefer that no improvement works are carried out, you have the right to refuse and will simply be asked to sign a form to confirm you do not wish to be included on the programme. You will be asked in the following financial year if you would like the work done and again have the right to refuse if you so wish.

### **What will happen after a survey?**

After carrying out a survey we will provide a property statement which will give a guide to the remaining life (REM life) expectancy of all of the main components in your home and indicate when improvements may be expected. There will be a separate survey done when your property is due for refurbishment. This may include such things as detailed measurements of kitchens to plan layouts or detailed measurements of windows before new ones are fitted.

# Your home

## How do we decide what will be included in our improvement programme each year?

Our stock condition information indicates what requires to be carried out. We do have to prioritise some works ahead of others and will generally give priority on a 'worst first' basis, meaning those properties with the lowest REM life.

## Where does the money used to carry out improvements come from?

Almost all of the money for carrying out improvements comes from income from rents, with a minor contribution from available grants.

## Why are we investing in new homes when existing tenants are waiting for improvements?

We are committed to growing our business and providing more homes for people with a housing need. The cost of developing new homes is met from borrowing that we are able to undertake for this purpose. The additional income from rents that new homes provide enables us to meet the cost of repaying the borrowing, and over a longer term period will give us more income to invest in improving homes.

## Why can't we borrow to carry out improvements like we do for build new homes?

We would not gain any additional income from improving homes to meet the cost of borrowing.

## When will the improvement programme for each year be confirmed?

We confirm programmes in March and contact individual tenants at least six weeks before works are due to start.

## What will happen when my home is included on an improvement programme?

- ✓ A survey appointment is arranged and carried out, with designs and choices determined where applicable
- ✓ You will be contacted before works are due to start and informed of the date that work will begin
- ✓ Work will be carried out, which includes regular contact to update you on progress
- ✓ On completion, a handover inspection will take place



Read all about it...

# New van fleet

We have invested in a fleet of 11 new vans for the Responsive Repairs Service. The new fleet arrived in February and have been fitted out with specialist equipment such as hydraulic ladder rack systems, shelving and work lights. The vans are also fitted with 'tracker' devices that pinpoint the whereabouts of the vans in three designated areas. The vans are 'tracked' at Acis House and monitored via a plasma screen in the Responsive Repairs office.



Repairs Team Leader Mark Parker said: "The 'tracker' systems will enable us to improve our responsive repairs service to our customers by getting the nearest tradesperson to the nearest job."



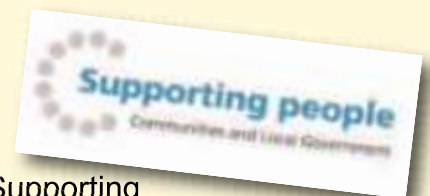
Repairs Team Leader Mark Parker showing the fitted interior of the new vans.



Repairs Team Leader Mark Parker and Plumber Richard Scott take delivery of one of the new vans.

## Supporting People validation

To ensure that we continue to receive funding from the Government to finance support staff in our sheltered housing schemes, the Supported Housing team have to be working at a certain level in accordance with Supporting People, the working partnership of local government, service users and support agencies.



Following a detailed review by Lincolnshire County Council Supporting People, we are pleased to announce that our Supported Housing team has been judged as providing an 'A' rated service, having scored a grade 'A' in all five areas of the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF). This is an improvement on our 'B' rating last year. The Supporting People Manager visited our Acis House offices, as well as making inspections at some of our schemes.

Our Supported Housing team are committed to the continuous improvement and development of our services, which are not only customer focused but meet with approval of our funders.

# Resident involvement

## Local Management Board

**We are seeking to recruit rural tenants of West Lindsey onto the rural Local Management Board (LMB).**

We would like to encourage our tenants to become members of the LMB which meets bi-monthly at local venues.

**The purpose of the LMB is to:**

**Act as a locally based residents forum for Acis to:**

- ✓ Monitor and review service standards
- ✓ Determine and agree local housing policies
- ✓ Oversee the delivery of major improvement programmes including monitoring contractors and consultants working on estates
- ✓ Monitor housing management and repair services
- ✓ Monitor estate budgets
- ✓ Set local targets and key performance indicators
- ✓ Oversee delivery of estate services, agreements and working arrangements with local partner organisations
- ✓ Oversee policy development

**If you feel this is an opportunity you might be keen to know more about, either complete the enclosed 'Involvement options' leaflet or call our Resident Involvement Officer on FREEPHONE 0800 027 2057.**



## Resident Advisory Panel winds down

The Resident Advisory Panel (RAP) meeting held on Monday 10 January 2011 saw the final meeting of this group. The meeting unanimously agreed to fold RAP principally on the basis that following development of the Scrutiny Panel, there was a strong chance of duplication. Additionally, the group agreed that all of the RAP's current functions could be dealt with by our other resident involvement methods.

The RAP ran and functioned well for over three years and has achieved much in that time. Clearly however, the time has come to move onto other structures which fit better with the current move to a system of co-regulation.

Thank you to all residents who have contributed to the RAP since September 2007.

In terms of policy development, consultations will now be directed via Local Management Boards or other alternatives such as one-off focus groups which have proved very effective over the last couple of years. As an additional part of the process, we will be looking to develop a virtual 'policy sounding board'. If you feel that this is a group you might like to know more about, please complete the 'Involvement options' leaflet enclosed with Home News and return it to our Resident Involvement Officer.



# Resident involvement

## Residents group meetings

### 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 our Resident Involvement Officer on 01427 675806 or FREEPHONE 0800 027 2057 to discuss further.

### Tenant and Residents Associations (TARA)

#### Dinnington

(Meetings held last Monday of every month)  
Next meeting - The Gallows public house, Hangsman Lane, Dinnington on Monday 25 April 2011, 6pm – 7pm

#### Woodthorpe

(Meetings held second Tuesday of every month)  
Next meeting - Woodthorpe TARA meeting rooms, Ulley Road on Tuesday 12 April 2011, 7pm – 8pm

#### Lower Manor

(Meetings held third Thursday of every month)  
Next meeting - Lower Manor meeting rooms, Angleton Avenue on Thursday 21 April 2011, 6.30pm – 7.30pm

### Residents Groups

#### Residents Groups

Park Springs Residents Group  
(Meetings held third Tuesday of every month)  
Next meeting - Park Springs Community Centre, Riseholme Road, Gainsborough on Tuesday 19 April 2011, 6.30pm – 7.30pm

#### Kelsway Residents Group

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

#### Willow Tree Drive, Market Rasen Residents Group

(Meetings held quarterly)  
Next meeting - Fletcher Court, Market Rasen on Friday 3 June 2011

#### 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)



## Heroes of the snow

During December we experienced a period of heavy snow which had a wide range of impacts on our tenants and our services.

We heard a number of examples of communities pulling together. This included neighbours helping out those less mobile than themselves, such as doing shopping and picking up medication.

Some of our tradesmen also helped out where they could when they were unable to reach the destination of their normal jobs due to roads being unfit to drive on.

Kier, our partner contractors in Sheffield, helped out in the local community clearing snow from front doors and footpaths. With certain trades also unable to carry out their normal working duties, Kier wanted to assist the community in some way.



Two Kier operatives clearing snow in Sheffield

## Considerate Constructors Scheme Awards 2011

The Lower Manor and Woodthorpe estate work in Sheffield, carried out in partnership with Frank Haslam Milan (FHM), is in consideration for being presented with a 2011 Considerate Constructors Scheme National Site Award.



These prestigious awards are only presented to the top performing 7.5% of sites inspected each year and are designed to recognise and reward those who have demonstrated exceptional levels of consideration against the Scheme's Code of Considerate Practice.

An independent panel will meet to determine which sites should win National Site Awards, based on the scores and comments recorded by monitors during visits. They assess the site against the Scheme's Code of Considerate Practice, which deals with the impact on the general public, the environment and the facilities provided for those working on site.

We will update you with further details when they have been announced.

## Everybody needs good neighbours

Following the hard work and dedication of a team of neighbours at Addison Crescent in Riby, they have transformed a garden for a neighbour who was having difficulty in maintaining overgrown trees.

Debbie Clubley, Area Housing Manager for Acis, would like to thank all those neighbours concerned for their hard work and dedication in transforming their neighbour's garden.

Well done.



Read all about it...

## Try something new at Park Springs

The Park Springs Community Centre in Gainsborough offers a wide range of activities that are available to all ages. Classes, groups, training courses and learning programmes are provided.



Below are just some of the things taking place at the centre.

- Large hall available for children's parties - only £10 per hour
- Dance lessons to suit all ages including ballet, jazz, cheerleading and modern dance
- Karate and judo classes
- Baby and toddler group every Thursday morning – only £1 entry per family
- Free legal advice available every Monday morning
- Large variety of adult learning classes from hand and nail care to introduction to criminal law
- ICT support and training
- Support to find employment
- FL:AIR programme – Foundation learning for 16 to 18 year olds

For more information please contact Hannah on 01427 611666. Park Springs Community Centre is located on Riseholme Road, Gainsborough, DN21 1NJ.

### Do you have reusable items of furniture to donate?

Gainsborough Furniture Resource Centre is a local community organisation which collects furniture in good, clean condition from the general public free of charge and within a 12 mile radius.

Furniture items are urgently needed.  
We require:

**Beds** (all sizes)

**Wardrobes**

**Drawers**

**Chairs**

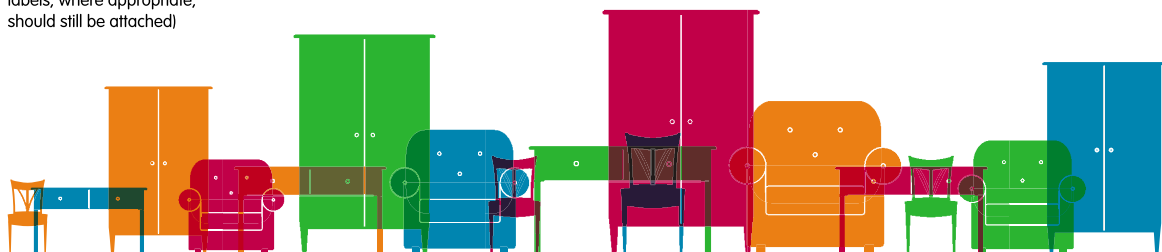
**Settees** (fire safety labels, where appropriate, should still be attached)

**Tables** (all types)

**GFRC**   
Gainsborough Furniture Resource Centre

We redistribute the furniture to those on benefits/lower incomes in the local area through referrals from registered agencies such as **Homestart** and **Social Services**.

To donate furniture please call **01427 675804** or email [gffc@acisgroup.co.uk](mailto:gffc@acisgroup.co.uk) to arrange free collection at a convenient time. We are open Monday to Thursday 9am-5pm and Friday 9am-4.30pm, with an answer machine available out of hours.



Read all about it...

# Acis scheme secures homes

We recently completed our latest Mortgage Rescue Scheme case just in time for Christmas, helping another family to keep their home. We have now completed three such cases since the scheme's inception in June 2010.

The Mortgage Rescue Scheme provides vital support to private homeowners who are struggling to maintain their mortgage payments. In essence, the Mortgage Rescue Scheme works via an agreement for Acis to purchase a property and then rent it back to the original homeowners.

We have worked closely with West Lindsey District Council's Home Options team, who handle the initial stages of the process. When a case is passed over to us, a home visit is carried out to clarify the process with applicants before a stock condition survey is undertaken.

A Mortgage Rescue Scheme case is achieved by Acis purchasing a property via a combination of grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency, funding from ourselves and a contribution from the applicants. Throughout the process, we work closely with the local authority and the applicants to provide support and reach a solution.

**Michelle Sleight, Property Sales Officer for Acis, said of the scheme:** "The Mortgage Rescue Scheme is very discreet and everything is carried out in confidence. Applicants are supported through the whole process. The scheme can help if all other options to pay a mortgage have been exhausted and the mortgage lender is taking action."

The scheme concludes with applicants becoming new Acis tenants, having the security of a three year tenancy agreement. They also benefit by being able to avoid repossession and stay in their home, having the security of a social landlord, paying a subsidised rent of 80% of the market value and being able to claim housing benefit.

**Michelle added:** "As an organisation we obviously benefit from acquiring new properties and their tenants. However, more importantly, we are able to play a vital role in keeping families in their homes and believe we have a social responsibility to the communities that we operate in. To help families to stay in their homes is a fantastic thing to be able to support and we hope to undertake more Mortgage Rescue Schemes in the future, supporting those families who need our help."



## Don't pay over the odds for gas and electricity

### My Home Energy Switch

The National Housing Federation, in partnership with uSwitch, has launched My Home Energy Switch – designed to help tenants save money on energy bills.

The process is simple, fast and effective and can be easily completed in a few minutes by visiting [www.myhomeenergyswitch.org.uk](http://www.myhomeenergyswitch.org.uk) or calling **0800 051 5346**. This is a freephone number but some mobiles may be charged. You can ask for a call back if you wish.

#### Why use My Home Energy Switch?

- uSwitch.com is the number one energy comparison site
- There is no charge to use the comparison and switching service
- They compare all UK energy suppliers
- They are completely impartial and strive to get you the best deal
- All you need is your most recent energy bill (if you don't have one, simply call the number given above)
- It only takes a few minutes to compare and switch
- They take care of all the paper work for you

Visit [www.myhomeenergyswitch.org.uk](http://www.myhomeenergyswitch.org.uk) and see if you could save on your bills.



## Being water-wise

The typical household could save the equivalent of fifteen baths of water every week by following the tips given below.

- ✓ Installing a water meter can save you water and money by monitoring how much you use
- ✓ Lag your pipes to avoid bursts and leave your heating on a low setting while you are out in cold weather to prevent pipes freezing
- ✓ Use the dirty water when cleaning a fish tank on your house plants. It's rich in nitrogen and phosphorous, which provides an excellent fertiliser.

### Water saving tips for the bathroom

#### Bath, shower and sink

A dripping tap could waste as much as 90 litres a week.

Taking just a five minute shower every day, instead of a bath, will use a third of the water, saving up to 400 litres a week. You can use less water by turning the hot tap down, rather than the cold tap up, if you require cooler water.

Turn off the water whilst brushing your teeth or shaving. Brushing your teeth with the tap running wastes almost nine litres a minute. Rinse out from a tumbler instead.

#### Toilet

If you have an older toilet, fill a plastic one-quart bottle with water and place it in the toilet tank. To anchor the bottle, partially fill it with sand or any heavy substance. This does not affect the efficiency of most toilets and can save five or more gallons per day for a family of four. Do not use bricks as they will break down over time and can cause problems.

Save water – fit water saving devices to the toilet cisterns. A water hog is a bag containing a special filler that is put in your toilet cistern and limits the amount of water you use each time you flush.

### Water saving tips for the kitchen

#### Washing machines and dryers

A single machine wash uses up to 100 litres of water. Cutting out one wash a week will save over 5,000 litres annually, so it makes sense to make sure a machine is full each time it is used.

Always wash a full load. However, if you can't, use a half load or economy programme if your machine has one.

Always use the low temperatures bearing in mind that modern washing powders will be just as effective at lower temperatures. Very water efficient washing machines and dishwashers are now manufactured. Machines with 'A' ratings are the most economical.

#### Kettles

Fill with enough water for your needs but not to the brim. Filling the kettle to the brim wastes power as well as water.

#### Cooking

Every time you boil an egg, save the cooled water for your houseplants. They'll benefit from the nutrients released from the shell. Choose the right sized pan for the food and cooker and keep lids on when cooking so you don't use more water than you need for food.

Everyone cleans and peels their vegetables before cooking. However, if you do this under a running tap you are wasting precious clean water down the plughole. A tap left running for ten minutes wastes approximately 100 litres of water – more than enough for three showers. Put the plug in and use some water in the sink instead. An added bonus is soaking vegetables can make them easier to peel.

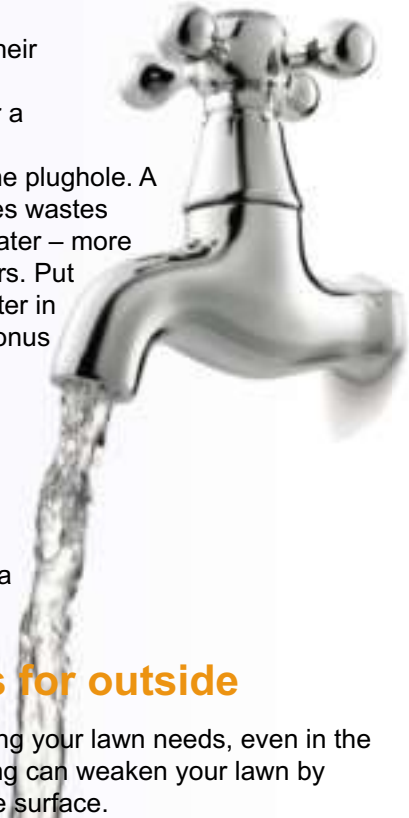
#### Fridge

Cool water kept in the fridge means you won't have to run the tap for a long time to get a cold drink.

### Water saving tips for outside

Once a week is all the watering your lawn needs, even in the hottest weather. Over-watering can weaken your lawn by encouraging roots to seek the surface.

- ✓ Purchasing a water butt will help you to collect rain water for use on the garden
- ✓ Careful weeding and hoeing ensures that watering helps plants and not weeds
- ✓ Washing your car with a bucket and sponge uses much less water than using a hosepipe
- ✓ Grow your grass a little longer. It will stay greener than a close mown lawn and needs less watering.
- ✓ No further watering is usually required for established trees and shrubs
- ✓ Trigger nozzles on hosepipes can save water by using it only when needed. This can save up to 225 litres a week.
- ✓ Mulch for moisture in the garden - adding a layer of tree bark, compost, coconut husks or even newspaper keeps the sun off the soil and retains precious moisture
- ✓ Sprinklers can be wasteful. It doesn't take long for sprinkler to soak your lawn thoroughly. A sprinkler can use as much water in an hour as a family of four will use in a day.



# How we are performing

## 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.



Service area	Target 2010/11	November 2010	December 2010	January 2011
<b>Services</b>				
Percentage of customers satisfied with the overall service provided	86%	84.1% 😊	85.5% 😊	88.2% 😄
Percentage of customers satisfied that Acis keeps them informed	84%	79.3% 😞	82.1% 😊	86.5% 😄
Percentage of customers satisfied with the outcome of a complaint	75%	57.1% 😞	60.0% 😞	61.8% 😞
<b>Repairs</b>				
Percentage of customers satisfied with the overall repairs and maintenance service provided	83%	85.8% 😄	86.1% 😄	82.2% 😄
<b>Home</b>				
Percentage of customers satisfied with the quality of their home	87%	84% 😊	81% 😞	86% 😊
Percentage of customers satisfied with the quality of their home improvement	99%	97.8% 😊	97.7% 😊	97.5% 😊
<b>Anti-social behaviour (ASB)</b>				
Percentage of customers satisfied with the outcome of an ASB case	82%	73.9% 😊	74.6% 😊	74.2% 😊



## Your letters

Dear Mr Smallman

I felt that I must write to express my thanks to you and your workmen after completing modernisations to my home.

Everything was completed on the day allocated for each job and to my total satisfaction. Your workmen were very polite and concerned that they did not cause me any inconvenience or unnecessary disruption and always cleared up their work area before they went home. All FHM staff who have come to my home have treated me with the utmost respect and concern to disrupt me as little as possible. I would like to take this opportunity to say that the work you have done in my home is of a very high standard in my opinion. If I was asked by anyone about FHM management and staff I would certainly recommend you.

I would also like to thank Nick Thacker and Stuart of Acis for their help throughout the modernisation of my home.

Sheffield tenant

To Aaron Services Ltd, Lincoln

This is just a note to express our thanks for a great service at such a crucial time.

I was very, very cold when the heating failed. The engineer arrived in response to Acis call out service. It was some time between 9.00pm and 10.00pm when he arrived. The engineer was friendly and very efficient in getting the heating back working again. It was very good how he explained the problem and what he needed to do in an uncomplicated way.

Just watched Strictly Come Dancing. Dancers can be awarded 10 points for outstanding dancing skills. The engineer didn't dance for us but we award him 10 points!

Thank you to all of you.

Lammas Leas, Market Rasen tenants

Dear Mrs Thorley

Please accept my thanks for your help and assistance in obtaining a grant for me to pay for a walk in shower, plus new toilet and wash basin.

It has made a great deal of difference to my bathing life, having to climb in and out of the bath to have a shower was presenting all sorts of problems without the grab rails and centre pole I would have many a tumble.

So thank you again.

Saxilby tenant

Dear all

Just to say many thanks for the kitchen alteration very much appreciated.

Nettleton tenant

## Changes to Customer Contact Centre phone line opening hours

From Monday 4 April 2011, our Customer Contact Centre will be operating amended opening hours for our phone lines.

**The Contact Centre phone line opening hours will change to:**

- Monday – 8am to 5.30pm
- Tuesday – 8am to 5.30pm
- Wednesday - 8am to 4pm (phones and reception)
- Thursday – 8am to 5.30pm
- Friday – 8am to 4.30pm

The reason for the change is to provide a service that meets our customers' needs, enable greater access to our services and have better trained and informed staff.

Reception office hours will remain unchanged except for early closure on Wednesdays at 4pm.

## Prize draw winners

### STATUS survey prize draw

There were three lucky winners in our STATUS survey prize draw. These were:

- 1st Miss J Wood of Nottingham (£100)
- 2nd Ms J Inchley of Sheffield (£50)
- 3rd Mrs J Odlin of Gainsborough (£20)

### Financial Inclusion prize draw

Miss L Horwood and Mr S O'Mara of Gainsborough were the lucky winners of £50 in our Financial Inclusion prize draw. Pictured with Phil Metham, Housing Benefit Liaison Manager.



**Congratulations to all the prize draw winners**

# Competition time

Can you find where the new strapline for Home News, 'Keeping you informed', is located in this edition?

Can you find where the new strapline for Home News, 'Keeping you informed', is located in this edition?

Tell us which page this is on and you could be in with a chance of winning £20 worth of vouchers.

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

Closing date for entries is 1 May 2011.

## Home News winter 2010 competition winner

Well done to Mrs J Graham from Nettleham who was the winner of the winter Home News competition. Mrs Graham correctly answered that the dates for the next two Acis Board meetings were 21 January and 30 March 2011 and that this information was found on page 4. Mrs Graham wins a £20 voucher.

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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