

homenews

Spring
2015

The tenant newsletter from Acis Group
Keeping you informed



In this issue
Silver surfers
Gas safety
Estate tours

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Comments? Suggestions? Ideas?

If so, please email them to marketing@acisgroup.co.uk.

Alternatively, you can post them to Marketing and Communications, Acis Group, FREEPOST NEA 10963, Gainsborough, DN21 1BR.

Home News is also available online. Visit www.acisgroup.co.uk/newsletters to view electronic versions of current and past editions.

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

Regulatory judgement



Acis has received revised judgement from our regulator, the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), downgrading our governance grading from a G1 rating to a G2 rating.

This means as an organisation we meet our governance requirements, but need to improve some aspects of our governance arrangements to support continued compliance. In particular we need to ensure that our Value for Money Statement is transparent to external stakeholders.

"Whilst this is a huge disappointment for everyone at Acis, we are pleased that the HCA has continued to award us with a V1 rating, the highest rating for our financial viability,"

said Acis Chief Executive, Valerie Waby.

"Our priority continues to be improving the lives of our customers and to be able to do this we need their full confidence as well as that of our regulators and stakeholders. We are absolutely determined to regain the highest rating for governance so that we continue to demonstrate to everyone the value we add to our communities."

Meeting the HCA standards for compliance with the Governance and Financial Viability Standard is stated using four grades, from G1 to G4 for governance and V1 to V4 for viability. For both governance and viability, a G1/V1/G2/V2 judgement means that we meet the Standard.

STAR *action plan*

Thank you to everyone who filled in the Housing Satisfaction (STAR) Survey questionnaires towards the end of last year.

Your feedback (44 per cent of people who received a questionnaire responded), has provided us with invaluable information, telling us where we are doing well and where we need to make improvements.

We now have an action plan providing us with challenging targets to meet, at the latest by the time of the next STAR survey in 2016.

The good news is that you told us you are happier with the quality of overall services than you were in the previous year. Satisfaction increased from 77 per cent to 79 per cent. Other areas you rated as being good, or improving included:

- Satisfaction with the overall quality of the home which remains unchanged at 77 per cent although there are some interesting inconsistencies across the patches
- Satisfaction with quality of the bathroom, kitchen and doors which improved by one or two per cent
- Home improvements showed major increases, ranging from 13 per cent for being kept informed of delays to 26 per cent satisfaction with the overall quality of the work
- The way we deal with repairs is considered to have improved by two per cent to 78 per cent
- There has been a small improvement in satisfaction with the neighbourhood as a place to live (85 per cent)

We have set some challenging targets for improving customer satisfaction in areas where we are seen to be wanting. These include:



- ▶ Reducing the time taken to start repair works by 25 per cent to 6.3 days (by March 2016)
- ▶ Improving satisfaction that we listen to what you tell us and act on it (5% by 2016)
- ▶ Improving how we tell you about changes in work we have planned e.g. home improvements (8% by 2016)
- ▶ Improving how you feel about whether you are getting value for money for your rent (5% by 2016)
- ▶ Developing a new customer survey process to reduce the number of surveys and improve the information we get and ways we use it (March 2015)
- ▶ Increasing customer satisfaction in the quality of the home (5% by 2016)

We will publish information about how we are progressing with these targets in future editions of Home News and on the Acis website www.acisgroup.co.uk.

Universal Credit

The Department for Work and Pensions has announced the latest areas to make the switch from paying existing benefits, including housing benefit, to the new Universal Credit system.

Who will be affected?

Universal Credit is only being rolled out to single working age people without children who are believed to be fit for work and who make a fresh claim for Jobseekers Allowance in the areas affected by the roll out.

This group includes current single tenants who are working and claiming partial Housing Benefit and/or Working Tax Credit who then become unemployed and need to make a fresh claim for Jobseekers Allowance (it will be a Universal Credit claim).

These claimants must also satisfy a number of conditions for Universal Credit. For example they must be aged less than 60 years and six months (which is younger than Pension Credit age).

Customers who are currently on Employment and Support Allowance or Income Support, or who have a current claim for Jobseekers Allowance will NOT be affected.

To start with, only new single claimants, or those with a change in circumstances, will receive their Universal Credit payment paid direct into their bank account. Any Acis customers receiving the new credit will be responsible for paying the whole of their rent to us (including the amount of Universal Credit received towards their rent).

Universal Credit is currently being rolled out in Bassetlaw. North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire will transfer between May and July.

Between September and November, the following areas will switch to Universal Credit:

- 
- Bolsover
 - Doncaster
 - East Lindsey
 - City of Lincoln
 - Mansfield
 - North East Derbyshire
 - North Kesteven
 - West Lindsey

Sheffield residents will move to the new benefits system between December 2015 and April 2016.

Meanwhile, there are things you can do to get ready for the switch, including:

- ✓ setting up a bank account which can receive and make automated payments as that is how you will receive your Universal Credit and pay your rent
- ✓ setting up access to the internet whether at home or elsewhere as this is how you will need to manage your Universal Credit claim. Staff at your local Jobcentre will be able to tell you where you can get online

Once you can get online, you will be able to find out more about how you can prepare for the introduction of Universal Credit by visiting the Money Advice Service website at www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/categories/universal-credit.

You can contact us for advice on monthly budgeting or information about where you can get support to help with rent issues.

Anybody who will be affected by the change will be contacted direct by their local authority (council) nearer the time.

Read all about it...

Silver surfers rule the airwaves

Acis sheltered scheme customers have been proving that when it comes to all things wi-fi, age and lack of online experience are no barrier to being internet-savvy.

A digital inclusion project delivered jointly by Acis and West Lindsey District Council has been providing residents at Lammas Leas with coaching and hands-on experience of the World Wide Web. It has proved so popular that it is planned to roll the scheme out across all the sheltered schemes as fast as Acis can install wi-fi.

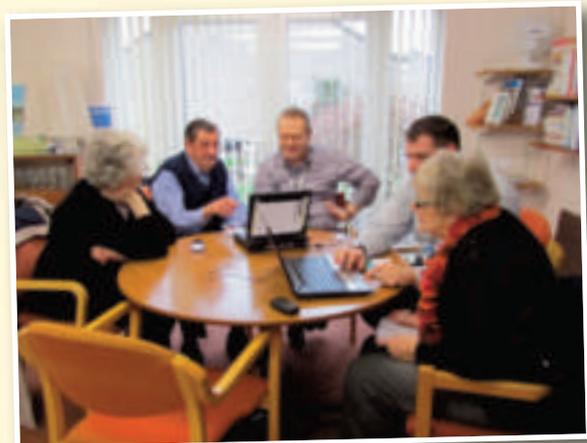
Subjects covered include shopping online, using email, researching family members and pretty much anything else customers ask about. And it doesn't matter how much experience they have of using IT equipment. In fact, after the first week, many were buying their own equipment!

There is no cost to customers as the laptops are provided by WLDC for the sessions, unless participants already have their own equipment.

Olive Ellis, a member of the Acis Tenant Led Scrutiny Panel, is already an experienced surfer but has been encouraging friends to attend the workshops at Lammas Leas.



"The whole area buzzes," she said. "Some people are using computers to play games and for others, being able to get onto the internet has opened up a whole new world. They've been able to do family research and contact friends and family by email. People have learned so much and so many things – they are so chuffed."



Declan is Opening Doors



Declan File

Meet Declan File, who has just joined the Opening Doors training scheme and will be with Acis and Galatia for the next couple of months.

Declan, aged 19, has been living in Gainsborough since September last year and was introduced to the Opening Doors work experience programme by Acis Community Involvement Co-ordinator, Lucy Picksley after his Area Housing Manager Erica Watkins suggested he might find it useful for getting a job.

"I'm really enjoying being here, it's good to have a nice team around me

and we are having fun while I'm learning," said Declan, who has spent time with the repairs teams as well as in the office.

"I'm hoping to get a job either in administration or in an accounts department, so this is giving me lots of experience in the workplace."

Opening Doors is an award winning UK-wide scheme pioneered by Willmott Dixon Partnerships – the partner of Acis Group which jointly formed Galatia.

We'll be following Declan's progress on the Acis website over the next few months, at www.acisgroup.co.uk.

Turning the **heat up** on gas safety

Apparently spring is just around the corner – even if the wind-chill says otherwise!

It doesn't matter what time of year it is, many of us rely on gas for heating, cooking or hot water. Which means that the importance of making sure the gas equipment in our homes is safe never goes away.

One of the biggest risks of using unsafe gas supply or equipment is carbon monoxide poisoning. It's silent, invisible and deadly.

Acis has a legal responsibility to carry out an annual service and safety check of every piece of gas equipment we supply and connect at every one of our properties. This responsibility is set out under the:

- Health and Safety at Work Act
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations

We are also answerable to our regulator, the Homes and Communities Agency, which checks that we are fulfilling our duties for managing gas safety.



What should you expect from us?

The cost of this service is covered within your rent and, as our customer, you can expect:

- ✓ Fully qualified and accredited engineers, from our joint venture partner company Galatia, to carry out all gas safety checks and services at your home
- ✓ Ongoing maintenance of gas pipework, gas appliances and their flues that we have supplied to your home
- ✓ An annual safety check of gas appliances and their flues
- ✓ To be provided with a record of the annual gas safety check within 28 days of the check
- ✓ To be provided with a copy of the safety check record before you move into your home
- ✓ To have a safety check carried out on any new appliance or flue within 12 months of the date of installation at your home
- ✓ We will 'cap off' any piece of equipment that is considered to be 'At Risk' by the gas engineer. This means that you won't be able to use it until it has been made safe or replaced and the 'At Risk' status has been removed



You and your home

What we need from you

Please help us to make sure your home is safe by keeping appointments we make with you to carry out the check. **We have a legal right to enter your home to do this BUT we would much prefer that you let our engineers in yourself.**

If you have a piece of gas equipment installed, such as a cooker, ensure it is fitted by a fully qualified and registered Gas Safe engineer. They must carry an identity card which will list the tasks they are registered to do and the dates the registration ends. If you have any doubts, or need advice, get in touch with the Customer Contact Centre. Also:



- ✓ Keep all ventilation grills clear to allow free flowing air
- ✓ Follow all instructions provided with equipment when using it
- ✓ Be carbon monoxide aware (see below)
- ✓ If you, or a member of your family, have to sleep downstairs where there is gas equipment, let us know so we can make sure the room is gas-safe. For example, if you have been in hospital and can't manage stairs

Be Carbon monoxide aware

Carbon monoxide (CO₂) has rightly earned a reputation for being dangerous and is often called 'the silent killer'. This is because; at high levels it can kill within three minutes without the victim even being aware of any danger.

- Recognise the early symptoms of poisoning – headaches and flu-like symptoms, breathlessness, nausea, dizziness, tiredness and confusion
- Spot the signs of danger around your appliances – staining or soot around the appliance
- Install a carbon monoxide detector with a loud alarm and test regularly
- Seek medical advice immediately if you are worried that someone may have been exposed to carbon monoxide

If you smell gas

If you smell gas call the National Grid Gas Emergency Helpline immediately on 0800 111 999.

- Do not turn electric switches on/off or do anything else that could create an electric spark
- Do not smoke
- Do not use naked flames and extinguish any that are present
- Turn off your gas supply at the meter
- Open your doors and windows
- Keep people away from the area

Register My Appliance

A new website has been launched to help the public to stay safe by warning them about any safety issues involving household appliances that would put them at risk.

All you need to do is register the details of domestic appliances that are up to 12 years old and manufacturers will be able to let you know about any problems or recalls involving those products.

To register, go to www.registermyappliance.org.uk

New homes

A first for Acis

One of Acis' youngest customers was a special guest at the official opening of our new development at Waterford Meadows, Cherry Willingham near Lincoln.

Six week old Lily joined her parents Zoe Parker and Scott Coupland just as they were settling into their new home a couple of weeks before Christmas.

Despite the January chill, Lily was content to be photographed as Acis Chief Executive Valerie Waby cut the ribbon outside their home, marking the latest addition to the company's rental property portfolio.

"Acis is thrilled to have been involved in this scheme, which provides homes close to the city but with the added benefit of being in a beautiful rural location. We are grateful to have been invited to be part of the development by our business partners at Lindums," Valerie said.

The development includes 32 two, three and four bedroom homes of which eight have been sold outright to new owners.



Acis Chief Executive Valerie Waby with Zoe Barker and Scott Coupland and baby Lily outside their home at Waterford Meadows.

"This is the first time Acis has built houses for direct sale with the intention of re-investing the profit into building more social housing," said Valerie.

"I am pleased to say it has been very successful and we are looking at this as a model for future developments where we can. The re-investments we can make help us to meet our aim of increasing the number of rented homes we have available for people who might otherwise struggle with getting a roof over their head," she explained.

Park Springs project wins national funding

A project to open a community-owned shop at Park Springs Community Centre is one of only 10 projects to be awarded £5,000 of support by rural enterprise charity the Plunkett Foundation.

The project which is led by Acis customers, local stakeholders and volunteers, is one of only 10 projects to benefit from specialist support in the Foundation's pilot project Our Urban Shop.

The Plunkett Foundation will now work closely with the group, helping to introduce the shop, which is based on a model that has already been highly successful in rural communities looking to combat similar issues to those found in the Park Springs area.

As well as giving local people access to good quality, affordable food, the new community hub will provide opportunities for employment, training and volunteering.

"The community-owned shop will help to empower local people to take more control of some of the issues they face," said Lucy Picksley, Community Engagement Coordinator.

"This new facility will also help to open up opportunities for our customers to make life-changing decisions."

Community shops are owned and run by local people, often relying on volunteers. They have helped to transform rural communities and there are now 320 open and trading across the UK.



Resident involvement

Estate inspections

Estate inspections are a valuable way of providing continuous feedback on neighbourhoods and identifying any issues so that we can tackle them as early as possible.

In the recent (STAR) customer satisfaction survey, 85 per cent of our customers who responded said they were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live. However, one in ten people are unhappy and carrying out regular estate inspections enables us to see where there are existing or potential problems.

We work closely with the Tenant Led Scrutiny Panel and will be reporting further detail, including the dates and results of the inspections, on the Acis website and in future



editions of *Home News*. We will also use Facebook and Twitter to update you.

We are developing ways of reporting back on our estates inspections. The following issues were identified, and actions taken during February's inspections.

Month	Area	Issues found	Action taken
February	Gainsborough and rural areas	6 untidy gardens cases 11 communal area audits 2 Health and Safety issues found	Tenants contacted: Acis to follow up and action specific issues
	Sheffield	6 incidents of fly-tipping 6 untidy garden cases 6 estate management cases (e.g use of bins, electric meters)	Removed within 24 hours Tenants contacted

Repair recharges



Did you know that you might be asked to pay for some of the repairs you ask us to carry out at your home if you, or someone living with or visiting you, causes any damage?

As an Acis customer, you know that you won't be expected to pay for any repairs or improvements to the structure outside.

However, choked drains, damage or vandalism to any of

these may attract a re-charge, depending on the reasons why the repair is needed.

We have recently reviewed our repair re-charges and will be applying them at our discretion (e.g. depending on the circumstances) when we are required to put things right.

A copy of the recharges is published on the Acis website www.acisgroup.co.uk/repair-responsibilities and we are happy to provide a printed version on request.

Our performance

Take a look below at how satisfied you are with our services. This summary is based on the results of the various satisfaction surveys completed by customers. It shows our current levels of satisfaction across all locations in which we operate compared to the targets for 2014/15.



Beating our target



Below our target but within tolerance level



Not meeting our target or tolerance level

^ Profiled target and changes on a monthly basis.

Service area	Target satisfaction for 2014/15	Year to date total number of respondents (28 February 2015)	Year to date satisfaction (28 February 2015)
Customers satisfied with the overall service provided 	82.0%	371	84.4% 
Customers satisfied with the overall quality of their home 	84.3% ^	371	76.8% 
Customers satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live 	85.7% ^	371	79.8% 
Customers satisfied with the overall repairs and maintenance service provided 	82.0%	3684	93.0% 
Customers satisfied with the outcome of recent contact 	83.8%	371	82.8% 
Customers satisfied with the outcome of an anti-social behaviour case 	87.3%	104	96.2% 
Customers satisfied that their views are taken into account 	76.0%	371	76.8% 
Percentage of Customer Service Promises met 	100%	n/a	100% 

Noticeboard

Competition winners

Winter Home News reader survey draw winner

Well done to Mr Law from Dunholme who was the winner of our winter 2014 *Home News* reader survey draw. His completed reader survey was drawn at random from all the entries received. Thank you to everyone who completed and returned a completed a reader survey.

Repairs satisfaction survey winner

Mrs Langston from Gainsborough was the lucky winner of the quarterly prize draw for our repairs service satisfaction questionnaire. She receives £25 worth of vouchers.



Home News

Over the past few months we've received some feedback that you'd like to see more useful information published in *Home News*. For example, it seems that you liked the feature we published in December about preparing for winter.



We are reviewing the way that we publish information by increasing the range of communications channels and are currently considering whether to reduce the number of print copies of *Home News* produced. The online version would be published so that it could be printed by the reader.

There will be an update in the next edition of *Home News* and we will make sure that customers can continue to receive the publication.

Our contact details

- phone:** ☎ FREEPHONE 0800 027 2057 or telephone 01427 678000
- post:** ✉ Acis Group, Acis House, Bridge Street, Gainsborough, DN21 1GG
- email:** 📧 info@acisgroup.co.uk
- website:** 💻 www.acisgroup.co.uk
- in person:** 📍 Acis House, Bridge Street, Gainsborough, DN21 1GG

Get social with us

Acis is on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

We post news, information, events and links that are relevant to our customers on our Facebook page. We tweet about our successes and achievements, plus news and views on the social housing sector via Twitter. And our YouTube channel features our Tenant Handbook videos, where you can view individual sections about your tenancy, repairs, paying your rent and getting involved with us.

Visit our social media pages and take a look for yourself.



Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/acisgroup



Watch us on YouTube at www.youtube.com/acishousing



Follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/acisgroup

Competition time

Spring word search

To be in with a chance of winning £20 worth of vouchers, simply find all the words from the list hidden in the grid.

April showers Lamb
Bluebell Flower
Easter Chick
Garden Sun
Spring

Send your completed word search to Marketing and Communications, Acis Group, FREEPOST NEA 10963, Gainsborough, DN21 1BR, stating your name, address and telephone number.

Closing date for sending in your entries is 1 May 2015.

Q	Y	H	E	A	B	P	J	I	U	X	L	N	B
U	A	P	R	I	L	S	H	O	W	E	R	S	A
L	F	G	E	W	U	D	B	L	S	A	I	C	L
B	G	I	O	Z	E	L	E	H	U	S	A	O	J
G	P	R	A	F	B	U	Q	C	N	T	D	H	G
S	X	E	D	S	E	D	B	P	C	E	V	W	C
C	F	W	S	R	L	Y	O	J	I	R	N	P	I
H	I	O	Y	M	L	H	Z	Y	D	E	K	A	T
I	M	L	B	Q	X	N	S	L	G	Q	F	N	R
C	L	F	V	I	G	N	I	R	P	S	E	K	V
K	A	A	W	F	E	L	O	N	X	D	A	B	E
H	D	O	M	V	P	U	O	J	R	M	N	E	G
U	Z	A	C	B	R	M	Y	A	E	N	F	T	S
S	W	E	K	A	A	R	G	V	E	M	S	Y	L

Please complete your details below for a chance of winning a £20 voucher. Send your wordsearch to Marketing and Communications, Acis Group, FREEPOST NEA 10963, Gainsborough, DN21 1BR.

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

By request we will do what is reasonable to provide the content of any document in another format or language.

Please contact our Customer Services team on **freephone 0800 027 2057** or email **info@acisgroup.co.uk** for more information.

Acis Group is a registered charity

