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Complete our Spring wordsearch correctly and you could win a £20 shopping voucher.



## Woodthorpe and Lower Manor estates get an early Spring clean

Our team in Sheffield went out during the freezing temperatures of January to tackle rubbish on the estates on Woodthorpe and Lower Manor in Sheffield.

They went onto the streets to do a litter pick and identified several areas that needed looking at further.

Ruth Barnett, our Area Service Manager, said: "The two litter picks were a great way to get involved in the community and drummed up lots of interest from people on the estate. We did it to help out the community, identify fly tipping and generally give the area a tidy up."

## Nearly £4,000 raised for Teenage Cancer Trust

We've raised almost £4,000 for our charity of the year, the Teenage Cancer Trust.

It has been a fantastic year of fundraising and activities to raise money for the charity. Some highlights include our Three Peaks Challenge, our Mount Snowdon climb, community centre fun day and our office Christmas jumper day.

In total, we've raised an amazing £3,953.48! We want to say thank you to everyone who got involved in activities and donated.





# Two join our new leadership team

We've appointed two new people to our restructured executive leadership team.

Andrea Lowman joins as Director of Property Services from Phoenix Community Housing, where she held an identical position, while Adrian Chamberlain has been promoted to Director of Finance from his Head of Finance role at Acis.

Experienced housing professional Andrea has operated at director level for almost 20 years in property, business development and growth roles and is a member of the Chartered Institute of Building.

Adrian takes up his role having spent 16 years working up through the ranks in finance roles at Acis House.

Andrea said: "I'm thrilled to join the Acis team. The organisation



has clear objectives and I'm looking forward to working with my new colleagues to continue our goals of delivering for our customers."

Adrian said: "I'm delighted to take up this new position. Acis has been a huge part of my working life, and am very happy to be at an organisation with progression opportunities like this. This is an important time for us, as we concentrate on making sure we're providing value for money for our customers."

Andrea and Adrian join Chief Executive Greg Bacon and Director for Customer Excellence Paul Woollam on the Acis executive leadership team.

Greg said: "We're very pleased with Andrea and Adrian's appointments and looking ahead, both will play a huge part in our growth plans."



## Funding success

We have been awarded funding worth £4.8m to develop 150 new homes over the next five years.

The funding, from the Homes and Communities Agency's Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme is part of wider grant of £36m given to the Blue Skies Consortium, which we are a part of.

The money will go towards our commitment to developing at least 150 homes a year across our operations. We already own and manage more than 6,800 quality, affordable homes across Lincolnshire, South Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

Specifically, this extra funding will be used to develop a mix of shared ownership and rent to buy properties in Corringham, Caistor and Sturton by Stow in Lincolnshire among others.

Greg Bacon, our Chief Executive, said: "We are delighted to have been successful in this funding bid, demonstrating our long-term commitment to providing affordable homes where they are most needed.

"We're committed to continually improving communities - whether that's in the areas where we currently work and help our customers, or new areas of work for us.

"We're looking forward to developing the new homes, and supporting even more customers towards better lives."



## Top safety accreditation gained

We have been awarded accreditation from a leading scheme recognising excellent health and safety in the workplace.



We've been given the accreditation from Alcumus SafeContractor, which recognises extremely rigorous standards in health and safety management.

Gemma Archibald, Director of Alcumus SafeContractor said: "More companies need to understand the importance of adopting good risk management in the way that Acis has done. The firm's high standard has set an example which hopefully will be followed by other companies within the sector."

## Investing in our sheltered schemes

Our nine sheltered accommodation residencies are getting a refurbishment – and our customers are choosing the colour schemes.

We're reaffirming our commitment to our sheltered accommodation properties by investing in them this year. We're working with experts to make them more safe, and giving our tenants the opportunity to pick what colours they'd like to see around the communal areas of their homes.

And we're continuing to work with the Wellbeing Service in Lincolnshire to provide additional levels of support for our tenants.



## Gainsborough store bringing the community together

Gainsborough's Uphill community has a new local store after residents called for one to be reinstated in the area.

The new community shop at the Gainsborough Uphill Community Centre has reopened after a period of four years without a tenant. It comes after almost two thirds of local residents told us it was highly-important to have a local shop in the area.

Local resident Eric Aldogan has been handed the keys to the store and is using the shop as a community convenience store selling bread, milk and other convenient products.

People in the area have struggled recently with older people having to walk long distances to the nearest store. But with Eric's new shop, residents have been praising the store even giving Eric hugs and thanking him.

He said: "It's been a long process to get here but we finally have our store. People have responded fantastically and I have had people hug me and say thank you for me being here as I've helped their lives.

"It's a very handy shop and it is close in the community for people to get bread and milk. It really helps residents.

"We'll be having fresh fruit and vegetables soon and we take advice from customers for what they want us to sell."

The new shop comes a year after the community led a £90,000 refurbishment of the centre. For more information on activities at the centre, search 'Gainsborough Uphill Community Centre' on Facebook.



# We open our doors to possible future employees

Around 20 students from Queen Elizabeth High School in Gainsborough took part in a world of working day at Acis to explore and learn about life after school.

With help from the EBP (Educational Business Partnership) we wanted to educate the students in the different type of roles and pathways students could take in working life. We have nearly 200 employees and have a vast range of roles from plumbers to marketers and accountants to gas engineers.

The students were treated to talks from our Chief Executive Greg Bacon, Head of Marketing

Claire Woodward and Efficiency Officer Tracy O'Neil as they discussed our values and what it is like to work in the affordable housing sector. The group also took part in an office tour where they could see the various teams busy at work. Students thoroughly relished the day with many saying they really enjoyed the day and had a valuable and interesting experience.

Queen Elizabeth High School teacher Mr Kingdom said: "The day was a fascinating insight into a large organisation. Acis is one of the largest employers in Gainsborough and what struck the students was the variety of roles on offer. We visited all of the

**"The students thoroughly enjoyed the day and gained a huge amount from it"**

departments, from IT to HR and project management, to marketing and planning. A number of members of Acis people, including the Chief Executive and the Head of Marketing outlined their career paths and the qualities that they looked for in potential employees. The training also covered how students should market themselves and even gave them a chance to practice their handshakes!

"The students thoroughly enjoyed the day and gained a huge amount from it. It was a unique opportunity for them to see a workplace in action and to hear the life stories of some successful and hugely inspiring people. As one student commented 'I didn't really know what people did at work....it all looks a lot more interesting than I thought it would be..'

"Having an idea of both the hard and soft skills that they will need to succeed in the workplace is extremely important for students. The opportunity to engage with adults in the work environment gives them context and purpose for their studies."







# Acis wins top award at regional event

**"The project helped so many people and brought a lot of happiness to our sheltered residents"**

Our 'growing potential' project that brought together Gainsborough students and some of our residents has won a top community award.

The project with Gainsborough Academy won the 'Collaborative Working' award at the Building Communities Awards.

The growing potential project, which we talked about in our Summer edition of Home News, saw green-fingered students from the Gainsborough Academy help transform the communal areas at Pillared House and Newlands Court sheltered accommodation schemes.

The awards, which were presented by TV personality Russell Grant, were held in

Nottingham and celebrated the professionalism, excellence and innovation sitting at the heart of the East Midlands' construction and housing community in both the public and the private sectors.

Hannah Taylor-Dales, our Fundraising Coordinator, said: "It's great to see such a brilliant partnership project get this recognition. The project helped so many people and brought a lot of happiness to our sheltered residents. This project is a great example of the positive outcomes from partnership working."



# Out and about...

with Claire Tunstall, our Customer Engagement Coordinator

## Why did you join Acis?

I had heard about Acis and I've worked alongside them in previous jobs. I was made redundant in my last job so I had to do a bit of job searching for a bit. I was then lucky enough that I could apply for roles that I was interested in. I had heard good things about Acis so when the position became available I applied straight away.

## What have you been getting up to since you have been here?

Only ten weeks in and I have been very busy out and about with neighbourhood teams in Gainsborough, Sheffield and in rural areas. I have been getting to know people at Acis and I have shadowed a few different people here. I am just finding my feet and I've just met up with all the panels and committees that I help facilitate including the Tenant Led Scrutiny Panel, local management board and steering group at Gainsborough Uphill Community Centre.

## So what is your role?

I think there has been a shift in roles from my predecessor. They were a community coordinator and I'm a customer coordinator so I see my role as engaging with the customers we have with Acis within their community. And making sure we're engaging them in the right way. That means I am helping to make improvements in customer service satisfaction

when engaging with the customer contact centre, with the repairs and getting customers involved in various committees. I want to ensure that contact with customers is a positive one whomever they have contact with. My role is to encourage customers to get involved within groups scrutinising any of our policies and procedures.

I have also been trying to get out and about in the communities and around rural areas just to see what is actually happening in those places. Any services we cannot offer our customers we will be signposting them to the right place to get them the help if they need it.

## What's the best thing about working in the affordable housing sector?

What I like about Acis is that all the departments are in the same place. I think we can get things done more quickly and more efficiently. I know I can go

upstairs to see Marketing, which room to go to see HR and I'm really close to the neighbourhood team which I've never had before.

## How do you think you are settling in?

Really well, everyone is very friendly and I think the induction was good that I could shadow different people in various departments. I was able to see what they do and how I could work with them in the future.

**"I have been getting to know people at Acis and I have shadowed a few different people here"**







# Gas safety

Keeping you safe is one of our main priorities. We have a legal obligation to service your gas appliances every year and make sure they're safe to use.

If gas appliances are not checked over time they may become unsafe and can produce carbon monoxide. This is extremely poisonous, you can't see or smell it but it can cause some serious risks to your health in relatively short periods of time, and potentially death – so it's really

important to have everything checked.

By having your gas boiler regularly serviced by a qualified engineer, it is also less likely to break down when you need it most and it will run more efficiently and can reduce the cost on your energy bills.

Checks on your home will be carried out by Prime engineers on the Gas Safe register, so you know you can trust them.

We also carry out safety checks on solid fuel appliances if they are installed in your home, such as coal fires and oil fired appliances.



## What will happen?



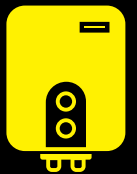
**1** We will send you a letter prior to your appointment providing you with a date for when we will do a gas service.



**2** Before your appointment, we will give you a call to check that you are in so we can do a gas service check.



**3** The first thing the gas service engineer will do after knocking on your door will be to show you their ID.



**4** The engineer will then carry out a safety check on your gas boiler.



**5** They will then locate your gas meter and will carry out a tightness test to check for any gas leaks, also spraying the gas meter with a special leak deduction spray.



**6** Next, they will come back to the boiler, set up their Flue Gas Analyser to test the emissions from the boiler. The engineer will also check the gas rate of the boiler ensuring efficiency.



**7** A check of all the seals on the boiler casing is carried out, making sure no fumes can escape into your home, and then all components are put together again.



**8** The engineer will also check the flue (the pipe that goes outside from your boiler).



**9** Any other gas appliances will also be tested, including a visual inspection of your gas appliances – for example, a gas cooker.



**10** They will do a check of your fire alarm and your carbon monoxide alarm if you have one.



**11** Finally, they will fill in the gas safety checklist with you and all will be done! All finished within approximately 45 minutes.

If you can't make the appointment let us know on 0800 027 2057 as soon as possible and we'll re-arrange the day and time. We can even arrange times around the 'school run' for example.





# Acis in Bloom 2017

Have you got a garden to be proud of?

We broke our record for the number of entries last year but this time we are aiming to go one step further.

We have seen how much you love your garden and take pride in it. We had so many fantastic entries last year, but we're looking for more people to get involved and looking for any expert fruit and veg growers too.

This year we are running three categories: best flower garden, best fruit and veg plot and best use of your outside space.

Think you can win? All you need to do is take a picture of your garden and send it to [marketing@acisgroup.co.uk](mailto:marketing@acisgroup.co.uk) along with the award category you want to enter and a short paragraph of why you love your garden.

You can also submit your pictures via our website at [www.acisgroup.co.uk](http://www.acisgroup.co.uk) or

through the post by cutting out and using the form below.

We've also launched our own Instagram account to show off our fantastic garden entries, to give you some helpful tips and to show you how we're doing with our own gardening. Simply follow us at @acis\_group.

There are first, second and third place prizes for each category with winners getting £50 in gardening vouchers.

Deadline for entries is 28 July 2017 so don't delay and get your entries in early!



## Acis In Bloom 2017 entry form

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

.....

Telephone:.....

Award category:.....

Why do you love your garden?:.....

.....

Send your entry form to:

**Marketing and Communications, Freepost RTSH-THEK-SRRJ,  
Acis, Acis House, Bridge Street, Gainsborough DN21 1GG**





# Watch your garden Spring into action










As we launch this year's Acis in Bloom competition, we've teamed up with Nicky Greenwood, the Head Gardener at Uncle Henry's Farm in Lincolnshire, to share some of their tips – especially if you want to grow your own fruit and veg.

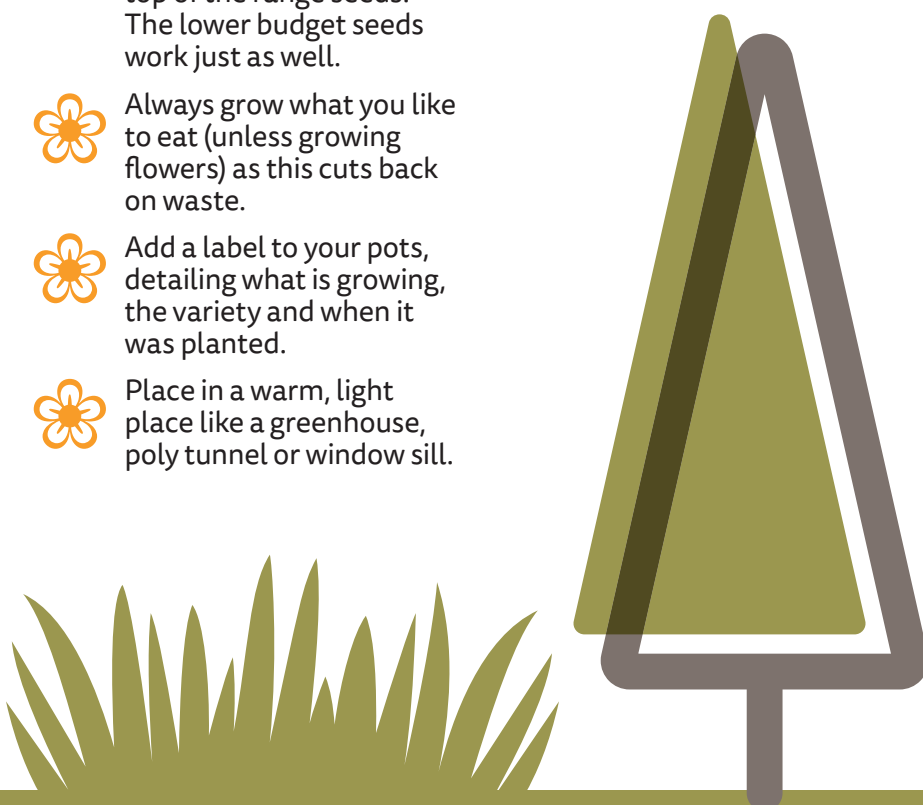


## Nicky says:

March for me was the turning point month when at last, colour began to creep stealthily back into the garden in the form of snowdrops, aconites, daffodils, dwarf iris and primula. Their powerfully pure colour creates mini focal points within the garden which draw your eye and lift your spirits.

We're also now at the beginning of serious seed planting season! My top tips for success when planting from seed are:

-  Always ensure that whatever you are planting into is perfectly clean.
-  Use good quality compost.
-  Mix in a small quantity of perlite to your compost. This will create better drainage and air spaces in your compost.
-  I have found you don't have to spend a fortune on top of the range seeds. The lower budget seeds work just as well.
-  Always grow what you like to eat (unless growing flowers) as this cuts back on waste.
-  Add a label to your pots, detailing what is growing, the variety and when it was planted.
-  Place in a warm, light place like a greenhouse, poly tunnel or window sill.
-  Water only when the compost looks dry and remember, too much water is as bad as too little.
-  Be patient. Germination can take 20+ days with some seeds. But be prepared to be ultra-excited when you see the first green shoots peeping above the soil!







## Prepayment cap

There's good news for those of you on pre-payment energy meters – the energy regulator Ofgem has announced there will be a price cap on them.

The cap, which comes into effect in April, will mean customers with prepayment meters could save around £80 a year.

It will be updated every six months until 2020, when the smart meter roll out has been completed.

For help with energy saving, speak to our energy management officer Anna Cooper on 0800 027 2057.

## Smile - you're on camera

We're on the lookout for some volunteers to take part in a photoshoot to help update our images we use for marketing purposes.

We're looking for people of all ages, particularly families, who are willing to pose for photographs inside and outside of their homes.

Does this sound like you? To find out more, email [marketing@acisgroup.co.uk](mailto:marketing@acisgroup.co.uk)



# view it

Our 'view it' estate walks are a fantastic opportunity for you to get involved and talk face-to-face with one of our team.

If there's something in your community you're not happy about, these walkarounds give you the opportunity to speak to us and get the changes you want made.

These 'view it' walks have helped make improvements in the community including fixing fences, picking up rubbish and cleaning gardens.



Join us for one of our 'view it' estate walks, we meet at:

**Sheffield,  
South Yorkshire**

### **Lower Manor**

Third Friday of every month  
10am start, meet at the Lidl supermarket, Alison Crescent.

### **Woodthorpe**

Second Friday of every month  
10am start, meet at Nodder Road shops.

We also carry out view it walks in Dinington, Auckley, Wath-upon-Dearne, Mansfield, Thurcroft, and Kilnhurst for dates and times of the next 'view it' walk in these areas go to the events page on our new website.

**Gainsborough,  
Lincolnshire**

### **Park Springs Estate, Gainsborough**

Fourth Thursday of every month 10am start, meet up at Gainsborough Uphill Community Centre.

**For information about all our walks please call our customer contact centre on 0800 027 2057 or email [info@acisgroup.co.uk](mailto:info@acisgroup.co.uk) you can also find out about 'view it' walks on our website at [www.acisgroup.co.uk](http://www.acisgroup.co.uk)**

# How we're doing

We're committed to providing a good, value for money service for all our customers.

Feedback we get from you helps us shape our service and make improvements where we need to, so if you've experienced anything good or bad we want to know about it - please let us know.

We understand that every now and then things go wrong and we need to learn from these experiences. Our formal complaints procedures allow us to investigate in a fair and honest

way and change things where we need to so we do things better next time. You can get in touch with us by using the contact details at the top of the page.



We're beating our target



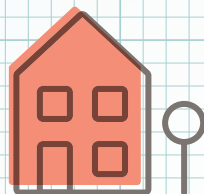
We're not beating our target



**80%**

Overall customer satisfaction with Acis and its services

Target as at 31 December 2016: 80%



**82%**

Customers satisfied with the quality of their home

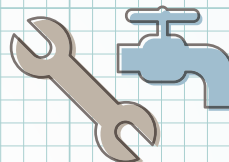
Target as at 31 December 2016: 70%



**63%**

Customers satisfied that we get back to them and keep them informed

This is a new measure we're currently monitoring.



**68%**

Customers satisfied with the overall repairs and maintenance service provided

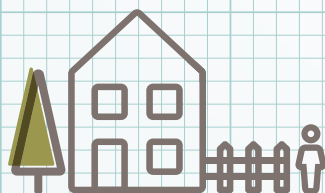
Target as at 31 December 2016: 80%



**51%**

Customers satisfied that their views are being taken into account

Target as at 31 December 2016: 70%



**84%**

Customers satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live

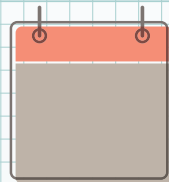
Target as at 31 December 2016: 76%



**85%**

Customers satisfied with the value for money of services provided

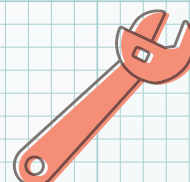
Target as at 31 December 2016: 68%



**95.48%**

Repair appointments kept

Target as at 31 December 2016: 97%



**96.03%**

Jobs completed right first time

Target as at 31 December 2016: 97%



## Festive fun at Acis

There was plenty of festive activities to get involved in last December at the Gainsborough Uphill Community Centre with crafts, food and even a visit from Father Christmas himself.

During the Christmas Cracker event on Friday 9 December, Air Cadets volunteered to help make Christmas decorations such as Christmas cards and bird seed bells. These decorations were added to festive hampers which were given to sheltered accommodation schemes around Gainsborough and rural Lincolnshire.

There was also a Christmas fun day on Saturday 17 December where more than 30 people turned up to take part in craft making, cookie decorating and story time with Father Christmas.

Bryony Roberts, Talent Match Ambassador at Acis, organised the events. She said: "I have only been here for a short time and I love the fact that we engage with the community like this. Running these events means a great deal. You can show such high levels of caring and commitment to the community just by helping with the smallest things."



## Spreading the Christmas cheer

We donated more than a hundred festive hampers to some of our isolated residents over the Christmas period.

Our people and eight volunteers from The Prince's Trust helped in packing the hampers which included mince pies, cheese biscuits and more festive treats.

In total, almost 150 hampers were given to our customers across Sheffield, Gainsborough and rural Lincolnshire including bumper hampers going to our sheltered accommodation schemes. Our neighbourhood team and customer support team nominated people from their areas who they thought needed some extra Christmas joy over the winter period.

Angie Stevenson, Area Service Manager, said: "I nominated three of my customers for hampers, one has just been widowed, one is a new customer who has been very ill and is still undergoing treatment for cancer and the third one is for another widow,

"This year we  
wanted to do  
something a little  
special for our  
customers"

who has had a tough year. I feel extremely happy to have the opportunity to give these hampers to three customers whose lives have changed dramatically this year."

Our Fundraising Coordinator, Hannah Taylor-Dales, said: "This year we wanted to do something a little special for our customers who we know to have had a difficult year or who will be struggling in some way. We hope the hampers were enjoyed by everyone who received one."



# New grounds maintenance contracts

We are pleased to announce that we have awarded new contracts to two specialist companies to carry out grounds maintenance works including grass and hedge cuts, shrub maintenance, weed treatment, and litter collection.

Works in West Lindsey, North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, City of Lincoln, North Kesteven and East Lindsey will continue to be carried out by Continental Landscapes, who have worked for us over the last seven years. Works in Sheffield, Auckley, Doncaster, Gedling, Chesterfield, Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Rotherham, and Bolsover will be carried out by Glendale.

The new contracts, which will run for at least the next three years, were scoped out following the valuable work of the Tenant Led Scrutiny Panel.

Tenants were involved in scoring the tenders and the interviews with the contractors who were shortlisted.

We will be working closely with both companies to ensure the delivery of a quality, value for money service and creating opportunities for tenants to assess the works by attending regular inspections and giving us feedback.

What's more, both contractors will be working on community initiatives with us and have committed to their own work placement and apprenticeship schemes to help the next generation with their careers.

All contractors will wear ID badges at all times, so please ask to see identification if you do not think they are genuine.



## Help for rural communities

Our partners Citizens Advice are offering special rural drop-in services across West Lindsey.

The service can help with money, benefit, housing or employment programmes and is on offer in Binbrook, Brookenby, Market Rasen, Caistor, Brookenby, Newtoft, Welton and Hemswell Cliff.

For up to date session times please visit [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/west-lindsey](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/west-lindsey)



## Volunteering to help families

Home-Start Lincolnshire is recruiting volunteers to help support vulnerable families.

The charity is looking for volunteers to support parents with isolation, bereavement, multiple births, illness, disability and many other struggles.

To find out more, call 01507 308 030 or email [enquiries@homestartlincolnshire.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@homestartlincolnshire.co.uk)



# Spring wordsearch competition

Can you find all the words below?

DAFFODILS  
CROCUS  
BLOOM  
EASTER  
BUTTERFLY  
RAINBOW  
CHICK  
LAMBS  
BUNNY  
SHOWERS



F	C	R	O	C	U	S	F	Y	A
F	H	K	C	I	H	C	L	R	D
S	L	I	D	O	F	F	A	D	F
S	R	F	W	F	R	I	M	N	B
O	N	E	E	E	N	S	B	S	C
W	R	M	T	B	D	D	S	R	O
S	F	T	O	S	U	B	L	I	Y
F	U	W	O	O	A	N	H	I	T
B	O	B	L	D	L	E	N	W	H
F	C	L	O	Y	T	B	B	Y	S

Name:.....

Address:.....

Telephone:.....

Please complete your details for a chance of winning a £20 voucher.

Send your completed entry form to: **Marketing and Communications, Freepost RTSH-THEK-SRRJ, Acis, Acis House, Bridge Street, Gainsborough DN21 1GG.**

Closing date: 26 May 2017.



## Our lucky winners are...

### Satisfaction survey winner

**Our quarterly satisfaction survey draw winner is Mr A Wilmore, Caistor, Lincolnshire.**

We want to keep improving, our satisfaction survey cards help us to do this. If you get one please complete it and return it to us and you could win £50 in our quarterly draw.

### Festive Wordsearch competition winner

**Congratulations to Mr K Rose from Gainsborough, Lincolnshire who found all 10 words.**

Why not have a go at our Spring wordsearch? It's free to enter and you could win £20 of shopping vouchers.

