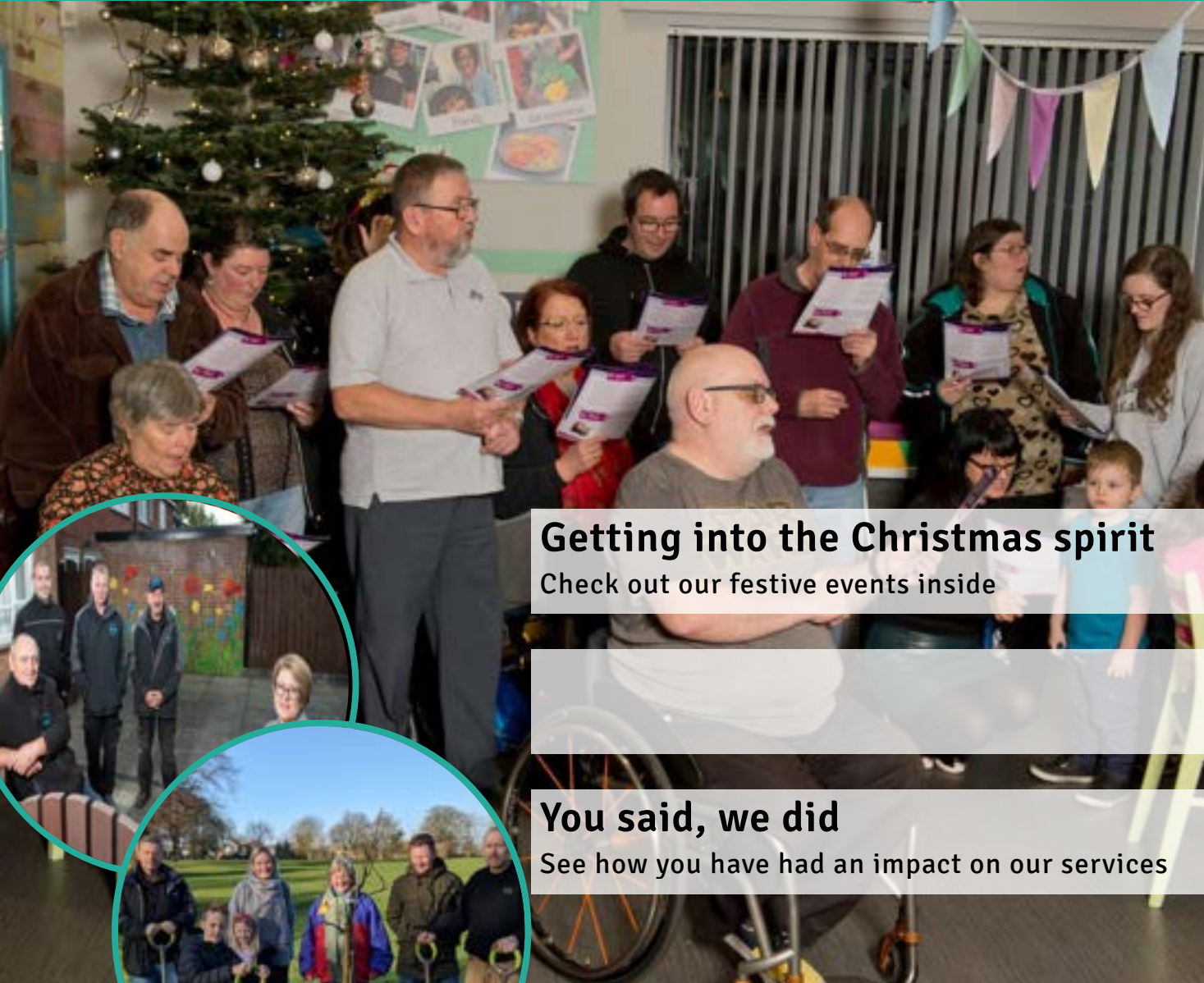




# Key News



## Getting into the Christmas spirit

Check out our festive events inside

## You said, we did

See how you have had an impact on our services



December 2019

## The year is almost at an end, and it's been a really busy and positive 2019.



Our new Corporate Plan was launched at the beginning of the year, and it focuses on three themes – to be a great landlord, to provide quality homes, and to create opportunities. We have made significant progress on each of these. For example, **90% are satisfied that their views are listened to and acted upon, over 94% are satisfied with the quality of their home, and we helped over 180 people to gain sustainable employment.** Find out more in our full 2018/19 Annual Report.

Last month, we sent out a survey to get your thoughts on what you think is important to help shape the three themes of the Corporate Plan. We had 208 responses which gave us a variety of thoughts on how we can be a great landlord, what is a quality home to you and what new homes we should be building, and what is important to you and your family. You can read more about the findings, and how these will inform the three themes, on page nine.

In terms of our new homes, our **first ever development for outright sale was recently completed in Blyton**, and new tenants and owners have moved in. There have been a number of recent developments started and completed in Scunthorpe and in the local villages, including some brand new shared ownership homes in Hibaldstow. Altogether, **we built 130 new homes in 2018/19 and we have started work on 181 other homes** due for completion in 2019/20.

Also, **lots of great work has taken place in your communities.** Recently, following tenant consultation, a communal block at Salisbury Close in Scunthorpe has undergone improvement work in an attempt to reduce anti-social behaviour. Check out more about this project on page seven. Our two community hubs, The Arc and the Viking Centre, are also still having a major impact with a range of projects.

Finally, we continue to progress in our work to get back to a compliant rating for our governance. Recruitment for all board members for the **new Common Board** (Ongo Homes and Ongo Partnership) has taken place, and the board will be formally in place from 1 January 2020.

I hope you all have a happy and peaceful holiday season.

## In the know

We love to hear from you - get in touch with your stories

[editor@ongos.co.uk](mailto:editor@ongos.co.uk)

OngoHomes

@OngoUK

### Christmas opening hours

There are some amended opening hours for our various buildings over the festive period.

**Check out the full list...**



### Fundraiser heroes

Four of our staff have raised £12,000 for the Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire Air Ambulance.

**See more information...**



### Fire alarm testing

The weekly fire alarm testing for our high-rise flats will change for the festive season.

**Find out more...**



### Community group charter

In October, we signed a charter recognising the importance of voluntary and community groups.

**Take a look in more detail...**



# Employment support

## We've secured funding to provide even more fantastic support

Our Communities team has been granted three years of funding for the Building Better Opportunities Lincs project.

It is part of a Moving On: Volunteering & Employability (MOVE) programme that aims to help people into paid work. It allows people the opportunity to benefit from a wide-range of learning, skills and work-related activities.

The project is completely free, and financial help is available for travel and childcare.



Find out from **Laura Sweeney**, one of our **Employment Support Coaches**, how you can benefit from the project

### To find out more or to sign up:

[employmentsupport@ongo.co.uk](mailto:employmentsupport@ongo.co.uk)

[ongo.co.uk/employmentsupport](https://ongo.co.uk/employmentsupport)

Employment Support  
from Ongo

@OngoCommunities

# Help into work

## "They were a brilliant help and taught me many new skills."



Louis Brown, 31, who lives at Keadby, left his previous job at Travis Perkins over a year ago. He had several meetings at the Job Centre and attended several job clubs, but it got to a time when he wanted 'some further support and help'.

That was where the Ongo Employment Support team came in.

After a two-day course, and following just one month with Katie (Work Placement Coordinator), a work placement opening came up at the toy shop The Entertainer in Scunthorpe.

Read more about how Louis found this to be a 'perfect opportunity'.

The work placement was 20 hours a week for eight weeks but, during his time, an opening came up for some temporary Christmas positions. Before he knew it, Louis had one of the jobs.

He said how this 'wouldn't have been possible' without the help from the Employment Support team.

"All the support I received was excellent, and I couldn't have asked for anything more.

"I found everything felt really personal, compared to other places where it feels very impersonal. They want to get to know you, what you want, and how they can help you towards that."

Find out more from Louis about what he learnt from the process, and how he would 'definitely recommend' the team.



Check out our latest job and volunteering opportunities by emailing [employmentsupport@ongo.co.uk](mailto:employmentsupport@ongo.co.uk)

# Tenant takeover

## With Tony Sanderson

In each edition, we talk to a tenant volunteer to find out what they do in their community. This time we talk to Tony about his involvement, how he still enjoys volunteering after many years, and his best moments.



When did you first become involved?

Why did you want to help out?

What is your proudest moment?

What's the best part about being involved?

What is your message to other tenants?

Click on each phrase to find out Tony's involvement story.



## About me

Want to get involved and make a difference in your community?

Check out the [Customer Engagement handbook](#)

Fill out an online [Menu of Options form](#)

# Making a difference

## Check out our communitiy improvement project

Flats in Salisbury Close, Scunthorpe have been the focus of a new project, after tenant consultation revealed environmental issues were most important to them.

The flats share a communal area, which was handpicked as a place for improvement, after high levels of anti-social behaviour and low levels of use.

To tackle the issues, we installed new fencing to secure the area and added a place for bins. Cleaning, landscaping and repairing a shed was also completed.

A bench made from 100% recycled plastic, and some paintings by Wall Things Bright and Beautiful, are further new features to brighten the area.

One tenant who lives in the area commented: "I think the improvements are fantastic. They really raise the atmosphere and lift your spirits."

"Having the place look nice encourages everyone to look after it more, and it's so much better coming home, or having friends and family round."

To find out more about future plans for improvement, take a look on our [website](#).



A wall painting



New bench and plants



Improving the area

# Money matters

Take a look at an update from our Income Collection team



## Non-chargeable rent weeks

This year, the non-chargeable rent weeks this month are weeks commencing 23 and 30 December.

If your rent account is not being paid fully in advance, then you are required to pay as normal.

You can log on to our tenant portal, My Home, to check your rent account.



## Do you receive Housing Benefit?

If so, you may have recently received a letter from us asking you to make contact to discuss your rent account.

This is because your tenancy agreement states that rent is due in advance. However, Housing Benefit (HB) is paid every four weeks in arrears so we are requesting affordable plans are made to build your account to four weeks in credit before each HB payment is made.

We are doing this to treat everybody fairly and consistently regardless of your payment method or income.

# Helping us to help you

You gave us your thoughts on what is important to you

Last month, we developed a survey to find out from you how we can achieve our Corporate Plan.

208 people completed the survey, with the two main age groups completing it being 25-39 and 60+. We received responses from tenants across North Lincolnshire, South Yorkshire including Doncaster and Bircotes, Epworth, Belton, Immingham and Lincoln.

Here's what you said was most important to you:

## How can we be a great landlord?

**64% said...**

You being able to contact us in a way to suit you

**61% said...**

Listening to you

**61% also said...**

Making neighbourhoods places people want to live

## What is a quality home?

**93% said...**

That we make sure all our homes are of a consistent standard when you move in and out

**82% said...**

That our homes are decorated neutrally when new tenants move in

## What new homes should we be building?

**70% said...**

More homes that can be adapted to make them forever homes

**59% said...**

Eco/environmentally friendly homes

## Frequently asked questions

Why do I need to pay in advance?

I receive Housing Benefit, why can't they pay to get me in advance?

What help and support is available?

Click on each bubble to find out the answer.

## What is important to you and your family?

**79% said...** That we have skilled, trained staff to help provide the best service

**64% said...** That you are supported to make positive changes to improve yours and your families lives

All the feedback has been collated, and will be used in helping us to deliver the Corporate Plan.

Keep up-to-date on our [website](#).

# New homes

## Willow Farm, Hibaldstow

Four brand new shared ownership homes have been completed in Hibaldstow.

Three two-bed houses and one three-bed property have been built as part of the Willow Farm development.

**Find out more details...**



Two of the completed homes



An artist's impression

## Outright sale in Corringham

Nine new homes are available to buy in Corringham, which is three miles outside Gainsborough.

The development is made up of four 4 bed homes, three 3 bed houses and two 2 bed bungalows.

**Check out some further information...**



Part of the development

## West Street, Scunthorpe

22 new homes are being built in Scunthorpe as part of a plan to provide more affordable housing in the town centre.

A mixture of two and three-bed homes have begun to be built on West Street, and are due to be completed in June 2020.

**Take a look at some of the new features...**

# New life

**“It is amazing – we love every single part of it.”**

Recently, we have been embarking on some targeted investment work in Scunthorpe and Barton. This involves buying empty, often derelict properties, and bringing them into use by improving them. This not only gives people a new home, but also improves the look of the property and the neighbourhood.

Sam and Cidila moved into one of these new homes at the end of October, and they feel that it is 'absolutely authentic and perfect'.

Cidila said: “We love the size of the home, including the garden, and the renovation was clearly fit for purpose. There is no need for any extra investment to change anything.

“It is amazing how it embodies ourselves – a young couple with future prospects of building a family. It definitely meets our needs, if not more, and it certainly enriches our new life.”

The couple found out about the new home through our Ready to Rent scheme, and Cidila explained how the process was 'smooth'.

She said: “The Customer Service team clarified the Ready to Rent process to us, and this made the whole process much easier.

“We were made aware of everything we needed to know, including any support available, and it was all smooth.”

**Find out more about our Ready to Rent scheme, and the available homes, on our [website](#)**



Before



After

# Christmas events

Take a look at some of our recent festive events



## Dine & Dance does Christmas

Over 140 tenants and staff attended our annual Dine & Dance event which took place at Heslam Park Club, Scunthorpe, on Monday 16 December.

The afternoon gave tenants over the age of 55 the opportunity to enjoy a two-course lunch, music, singing, dancing, a photo booth, and plenty of festivities all for free.

The event gives tenants the chance to meet new people, to spend time with friends, and to reduce social isolation.

Jean Boardman, one of our tenants who attended, said: "I come every year, and I just love it. It's so important to look after each other at Christmas, and that's exactly what this afternoon is about.

"It's lovely to come together and talk to people that might have otherwise spent the day by themselves. I'd like to say a huge thank you to Ongo for organising it."

Helen Wright, Support Services Manager, said: "It's great to host such a fantastic event so near to Christmas.

"I've really enjoyed seeing so many smiling faces, and I can't wait for next year."

[Check out some more photos of the event](#)



## Viking Centre festivities



The community hub in Barton has held a number of free Christmas-themed events and evening meals in recent weeks.

The festivities have included a 'dance into Christmas buffet and songs' event, two festive craft sessions, a Christmas dinner, a Polar Express movie and pizza night, and a big Christmas extravaganza. The team have also provided free nutritional meals and healthy lifestyle advice as part of their weekly Tea Time Club.

A range of children and families attended the activities and meals which led Grace Woolley, Viking Centre Coordinator, to say 'it had been a huge success'.

She explained: "These events have been proven to be very popular and greatly appreciated in the area, especially at this time of year.

"Everybody who came along had a great time, and we received plenty of positive feedback. We're looking forward to putting on even more events next year to benefit the community and local people."



**Check out events and activities at the Viking Centre:**

OngoVikingCentre

[ongo.co.uk](http://ongo.co.uk)



# A day in the life of...

**Marie Merrison, Community Regeneration Assistant.**



**I have been a tenant since...**

**I began volunteering in...**

**I got this job...**

**The role involves...**

**My favourite part of the job is...**

**My proudest achievement in the role has been...**

**About me**

Click on each question to see Marie's answers...

Find out more about what's going on in your community:

ongo.co.uk

OngoHomes

@OngoUK

# Protect your home

**Bed bugs are becoming a common pest so here's some useful information and tips on how to prevent them**

## Characteristics

One of the most frequent ways that bed bugs can be brought into your home is through second-hand beds, furniture and possessions. They often attach to bags and clothing too.

They resemble a small brown disc, and in their infancy they can be hard to detect.

## Habitat

Mainly active at night, bed bugs hide in crevices in beds and surrounding furniture.

They also are known to hide behind skirting boards, under loose wall paper, behind pictures, and even in plug sockets.

## Signs of bed bugs

## How to prevent

If you buy second-hand furniture, ensure to inspect it closely and thoroughly before purchase.

Eliminate clutter in your home and bedrooms to give the pests fewer places to hide.

## How to get rid

If you find bed bugs in your home, then we can give you advice about contacting a Pest Control Contractor immediately to treat the pests.

Contact us via email, our website, Facebook or Twitter pages.



# Four down, 61 to go...

## We have joined the Big Climate Fightback

We responded to the Woodland Trust's call for organisations to play their part in the Big Climate Fightback and joined the mass participation tree planting day on 30 November.

At the beginning of October, we launched an incentive to encourage you to start receiving digital rent statements and pledged to plant a tree for every 100 new tenants receiving their statements this way.

With the help of Bottesford Ward Councillor Margaret Armiger, our staff planted trees on Bull's Field in Scunthorpe.



Andy McFadden, Neighbourhood Services Team Leader, said: "You told us that you want us to enhance the areas you live in, and planting these trees is one way we do that."

"It's brilliant to see that so many of our tenants want to do their bit for the environment and have signed up to receive their rent statements digitally, which has significantly reduced the amount of paper we use."

We will continue to plant trees in your local community. We could be planting another 61 trees this way, so if you haven't already signed up to My Home, then make sure you do! Find out on the next page how to register.

# Doing it your way on My Home

Here at Ongo, we want to make managing your tenancy as easy as possible. Did you know you can do this on **My Home**?



My Home is your online account, giving you unlimited access to:



You can access My Home via the **website** and by downloading the app from the **Apple app store** or **Google Play**.

Registering takes just a few minutes and all you need is your postcode and a few personal details, or if you have it to hand, your tenancy number. You'll be able to log on straight away.

**If you need help, or want to find out more, drop us a message on **live chat**.**



# Be a Digital Tenant

## An opportunity to receive a free tablet

We are always exploring new ways of gathering feedback, and so we are looking for tenants to participate in our Digital Tenant programme to help us develop our digital channels.

If you become an Ongo Digital Tenant, you will receive a tablet free of charge which you can use if you want to know something about, or do something with, your home and your Ongo tenancy.

In exchange, we want to hear from you on a quarterly basis about your experience using our online channels and how you think we could improve them. This could be through online surveys, chat groups, Facebook groups, and face-to-face focus groups.

## Be a Digital Tenant



As a Digital Tenant, we would expect you to use any of our digital channels as your first point of call when you need to contact us. The online Ongo channels you would use would include My Home, our website, social media, live chat, and email.

We only have a limited amount of spaces available on the programme, and all applications will be subject to a criteria check. Applications close on Sunday 5 January 2020.

**For further information and to register your interest, visit our [website](#). You can keep updated through our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages.**

# Here to help

## "The support made a real difference to me."

Earlier this year, a tenant (who wished to remain nameless) approached our Benefits Advice team for support. He wished for **help with a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claim**, and he had no idea where to turn until he found out online about the financial support available to all tenants.

After attending one of the weekly drop-in sessions at The Arc, he had several follow-up appointments with Chris (one of our Benefits Advice Officers). Despite the process taking some time, the tenant ended up having their PIP claim approved.

He now gets weekly payments, he received a backdated amount of almost £2,500, and it has produced a beneficial change to his Employment Support Allowance (ESA). Not only that, the tenant was also supported to apply for a free bus pass, a free railcard, and for a blue disability badge too.

Overall, the tenant was **'so thankful'** for the help he received.

He said: "I first went into one of the Benefits Advice drop-in sessions on the off-chance, and I was lucky enough to see Chris. She was such a massive help throughout the process, and it's **made a real difference to my life.**"

He also mentioned how **'very easy'** everything was made for him.

He explained: "Chris made things so easy for me to understand, and I can't thank her enough.

**"Things have been made just that bit easier for me now."**



Chris from our Benefits Advice team

Find out more about the support available.

# In the spotlight

## Take a look at some events in the community

### Christmas lunches for the community

On 18 and 19 December, The Westcliff (and surrounding areas) Association held a Christmas lunch for lonely and vulnerable people in the local area.

The community group secured £300 funding from Ideal Boilers to host the event that featured a two-course lunch, a Christmas card and presents for everyone. It aimed to reduce social isolation, and to give some local people the opportunity to enjoy some collective community and festive spirit.

Rachel Woodliffe, chair of the group, said: "It was lovely to see so many people who may not always get the chance to go out.

"We have many more events planned like this where we can bring the community together and where everyone can have a great time."



**Check out the various ways in which you can get involved:**

[customer.engagement@ongo.co.uk](mailto:customer.engagement@ongo.co.uk)

[ongo.co.uk/customerengagement](https://ongo.co.uk/customerengagement)

### Crowle community awarded funding

In October, the Crowle Community Action Group secured a total of £1,100 of funding from Ideal Boilers to install benches and improve well-being in the area.

The grant was made available through Ideal Boilers' promise to donate £5 from every boiler installed in one of our homes to projects that benefit our tenants.

The first bench at Manor Gardens was fitted in October, with the second due to be in place on Eastoft Road by March 2020.

It's hoped that the two brand new benches will help tackle social isolation and encourage conversation.

John Jackson, a tenant and member of the community group, said: "I think the bench at Manor Gardens looks marvellous. It's great to watch people interacting and putting it to good use.

"The location is perfect for events we hold and we can't thank Ongo and Ideal Boilers enough."



Members of the community group enjoying the new bench



**Tell us your stories of what's happening in your community:**

OngoHomes

@OngoUK

# Fancy winning a £30 shopping voucher?

## We hope you enjoyed this edition of Key News.

Your feedback is really important in shaping how your future Key News look.

We had over 120 responses in the survey competition to the October edition - this helped to influence the content and layout of this issue.

Congratulations to Joao Fonseca from Scunthorpe who was selected at random as the winner of a Love to Shop voucher.

If you would like to be in with a chance of winning a £30 Love to Shop voucher, **complete this survey** and include your email address at the end to be entered into the prize draw.

Alternatively, you can complete the survey at [surveymonkey.co.uk/r/decemberkeynews](https://surveymonkey.co.uk/r/decemberkeynews)

Any personal information you provide to us will be treated in accordance with current UK data protection law and our data protection policies, procedures and privacy notices in place from time to time. For full details visit our website.

Entries must be in by Friday 17 January 2020.

The winner will be drawn from all completed surveys. The Editor's decision is final.

You can find terms and conditions on our website.

**The next digital edition of Key News will be out on:**

28 February 2020

**Merry Christmas and a happy New Year!**

