

KEY  
NEWS

# HELPING THOSE IN NEED

The range of financial, employment and wellbeing support available to you.

## Investing in services

How we are improving call-handling and repair timescales.

## Tenant takeover

Meet Anita and her canine companion.

ongo



# In this issue

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Contact us

Online



ongo.co.uk  
enquiries@ongo.co.uk

OngoHomes  
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Call us



01724 279900

We record all calls for training and research purposes

My Home



Log in or register at:

**myhome.ongo.co.uk**

Or to download the app, search 'Ongo My Home' in your app store



Throughout Key News we include QR codes. To use them, open the camera on your smart phone or device and point it at the QR code, tap the banner that appears and that will take you to the page.

We know some of you may not have a smart device, so for all links included in this edition, head to: [ongo.co.uk/keynewslinks](https://ongo.co.uk/keynewslinks)



# A message from Chief Exec Steve

## Hi everyone,

Welcome to the first Key News of 2023. I know call-waiting times and the length of time for standard repair appointments needs to improve, so we have recruited extra colleagues in both areas. Check out pages 6 & 7 to learn more.

I want to encourage you to continue giving your feedback so improvements can be made. To do so, visit [ongo.co.uk/involvedwithongo](https://ongo.co.uk/involvedwithongo)

I'm delighted that our first development of carbon neutral homes has been completed, this is one of the first steps on our journey to becoming net zero by 2050. Check out these new homes, plus others we have recently built on pages 12 & 13.

It was great to see over 40 applications from local groups in our latest round of Community Grants. Check out our website and social media for an update soon.

National Apprenticeship Week took place during February where we celebrated our 13 current apprentices, and the hundreds more we've supported over the years. We have a range of personalised guidance and training in place to help increase your skills and boost your confidence. Head to pages 18 & 19 to read more.

Happy reading!

*Steve*



# Recognising my *dreams*

**Areej had been a self-employed childminder for 15 years when she started on our Next Level project in September 2021.**

She signed up for a level two course in Business Admin, and she also attended volunteer training before passing her level one Health and Safety. With earning this qualification she was able to volunteer at The Arc on reception to gain some work experience.

This helped her realise she had a passion for working with people. From here she undertook mental health training to go on and fulfil her dream of becoming a Support Worker.

Areej said: "The support that I received was full of care, compassion and a will to do everything possible to support me. I was given lots of relevant guidance and was shown down the right path in terms of opportunities and training."

"Before, I wasn't anywhere near 100% mentally but I'm in such a better place now."

**// I have learnt and developed so much, and it will really benefit me in the future. //**



Scan the QR code to learn how we can help you too.





# Repairs response

**Pete Stones, our Property Director, said:**

**“We acknowledge that our repairs service has not been up to standard or at all good enough recently.**

“Although we went into winter fully-staffed we had an unprecedented increase in demand for the service, with an average of 200 extra jobs coming in every month and additional resources have been hard to source.

“Despite our team working as hard as possible, including overtime, waiting times are much longer than what we deem acceptable. We want to assure you we are working to improve this, as a matter of urgency.

“In the last two months we have employed seven new repairs staff and reached agreements with two additional contractors. This has allowed us to begin catching up on jobs waiting to be completed, and we are now seeing timescales beginning to reduce. Over the next couple of months, I am confident that you will be able to see a significant difference around availability of appointment times.

“We know that there is still more to be done to get back to the level of service you expect from us, and we expect from ourselves. I want to thank you for your patience during the last few months, and for being so understanding to our teams who are working hard to deliver the repairs and make the necessary changes.

“We will keep you updated in future editions of Key News, on our website and social media channels as work continues. However, if you would like to be more involved in improvements to our services please speak to our Customer Engagement team and sign up to be a part of that.”

**Tenants on our Property Services Panel have recently reviewed repair priorities to ensure improvements in the future.**

The group are looking for more people to join. Scan the QR code to become part of the change.






# Call-waiting times

## Reducing your wait

We recognise that the waiting times for when you contacted us towards the end of last year weren't as good as they should have been. On average there were around 2,000 extra calls per month, with nearly 10,000 calls received in November 2022 alone compared to 7,251 calls in November 2021.

Also, there was an average queue time of 12 minutes and 20 seconds last November, plus a longest wait of one hour and 38 minutes. 31% of calls were answered within 30 seconds during the month.

## We are determined to improve this so we have:

-  Changed the automated message when you ring so that any repair request will go to a specialist advisor
-  Recruited five new, fully-trained members of staff so more contacts can be responded to and resolved quicker
-  Employed a second Property Triage Officer who is a qualified Gas and Heating Engineer and will help to improve resolution at the first point of contact

Call-waiting times have since reduced to an average of five minutes and 45 seconds in February. The longest wait also reduced to 36 minutes, and there was an increase to 45% of calls being answered within 30 seconds throughout the month.

**We will continue to regularly review and improve all our services alongside you to make sure they are the best they can be.**





# Financial support

**We have introduced a number of new initiatives to support you with the cost of living crisis, alongside our free events, activities, employment, training and wellbeing support.**

We want to remind you that we have a specially trained and friendly team to offer guidance and advice, so if you're struggling please let us know – we can help.

## **Warm spaces**

Members of the community can benefit from free hot drinks, food, wi-fi and a welcoming environment to keep warm.

For more information, follow our community hubs on social media.

 **TheArcWestcliff**

 **OngoVikingCentre**

If you are struggling financially, go to [ongo.co.uk/help-with-finances](https://ongo.co.uk/help-with-finances) or call us on **01724 279900**.

## **Mental health support**

We offer free, trusted and confidential counselling, wellbeing calls, confidence building sessions, and social activities including group walks and days out. Once you're ready we also help you to progress both your personal and work life.

## **Citizens Advice: specifically for you**

We've appointed a specialist advisor, Samantha, to help you with guidance on energy suppliers, extra income you may be entitled to, budgeting and debt advice, and making referrals. So far she has helped 130 people to secure over £200,000 in additional funds.





# Home improvements

## Damp & mould progress

We continue to improve our work and add extra resources into resolving damp & mould cases. Here's what we have done recently and what is planned:

- ✓ Continue to use virtual assistance when you contact us leading to more first-time resolution
- ✓ Added a specific option for damp & mould on the automated message when you call so that you speak to a specialist advisor
- ✓ Employed extra repair staff meaning more cases can be dealt with
- ✓ Carried out training so issues are diagnosed and resolved quicker
- ✓ Implemented a damp & mould policy following tenant feedback
- ✓ Using a local contractor to carry out mould washes
- ✓ Put in place recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman's spotlight report into damp & mould

Keep a lookout on our website for further updates.

## Smart home technology pilots

### Smart thermostats

Over 130 devices have been installed which allow tenants to control the indoor environment of the home, detect and resolve a range of issues and reduce wasted energy.

### Portable sensors

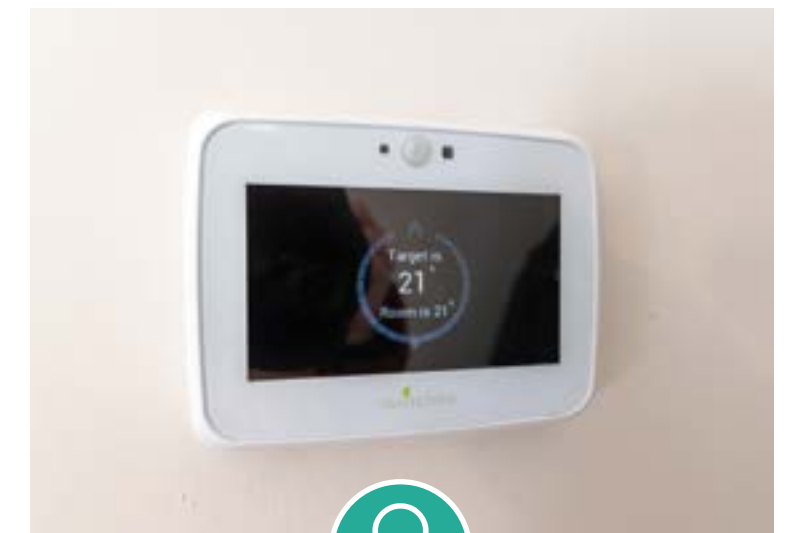
By the end of April we will have fitted 70 Aico devices. They help to prevent temperature and humidity problems, identify risks plus provide tailored guidance. Some additional devices are available for those with damp & mould issues and will be provided on a case-by-case basis.

### Virtual assistance

This method of showing an issue through live image and video-sharing is continuing to help establish and resolve issues at the first point of contact and save any delays. **Learn more about its success here.**



Visit [ongo.co.uk](https://ongo.co.uk) and search 'smart homes' to learn more about the projects.



**After successful sessions last year, we're planning more with tenants involved in the project to get their thoughts, share information and make future improvements.**

## £3.7million project to upgrade existing homes

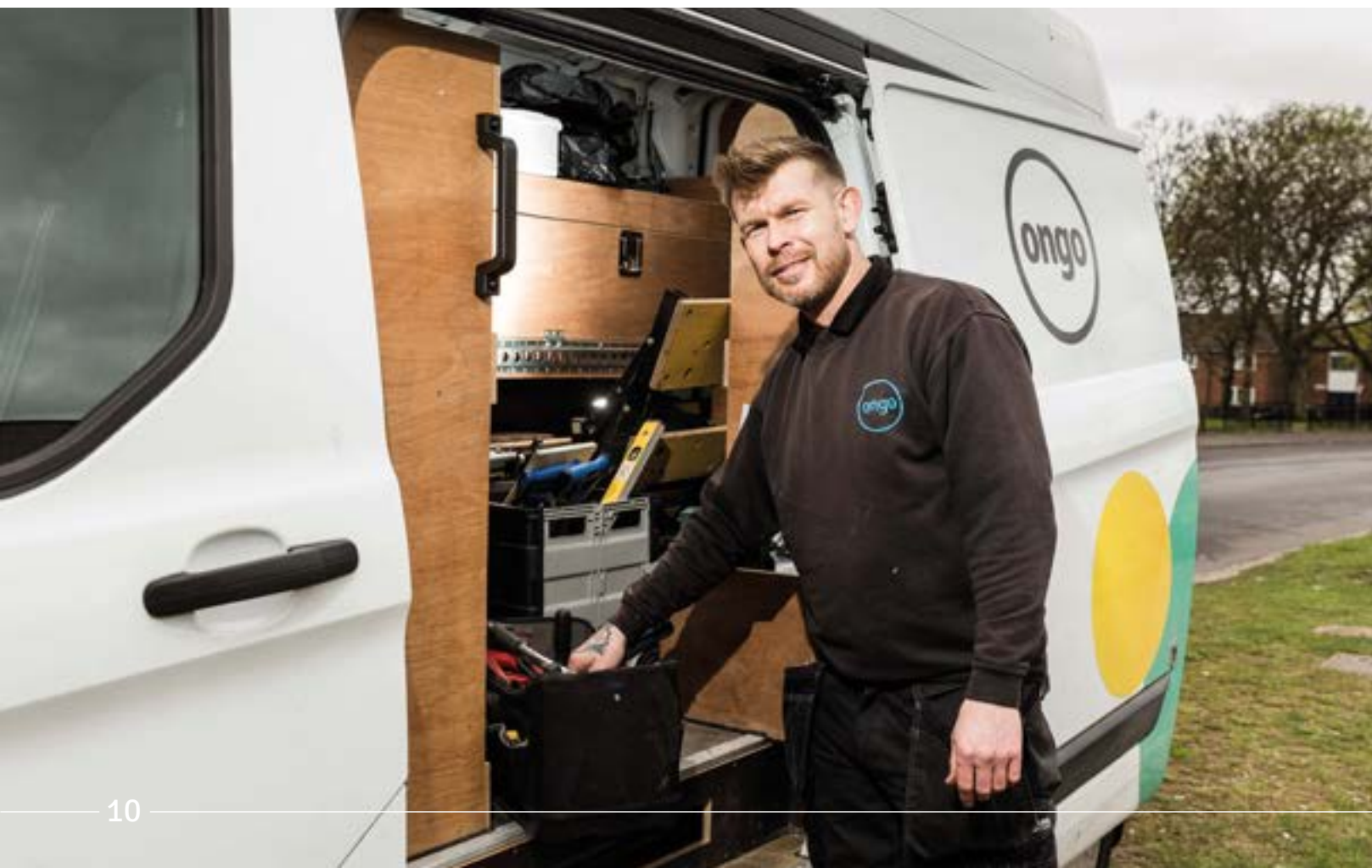
We are continuing work which will see hundreds of tenants benefitting from new kitchens, bathrooms and improvements.

From April last year to March this year, costing in the region of **£1.1million**, **197** kitchens, **77** bathrooms and **47** rewires have been completed.

A new **£2.6million** programme will then launch from April 2023 and will see around **140** bathrooms and **450** kitchens replaced, along with any rewires needed.

We are also carrying out further work valued at **£4million** to redecorate our retirement living homes, upgrade fire doors in high-rise buildings, upgrade car parks, replace roofs, repair structural damage and more over the coming months.

Scan the QR code for further info.





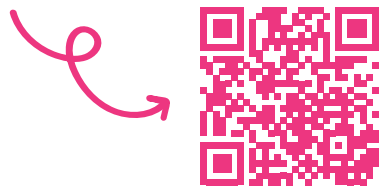
# New homes

## A landmark development

Eight carbon neutral homes have been completed in Scunthorpe, the first of their kind throughout the region.

The three and four-bed homes feature a range of environmentally friendly elements that will reduce energy usage. Tenants and colleagues had the opportunity to tour the homes and discuss what plans we have for similar builds in the future.

Scan the QR code for further details.



## Hatfield completion

35 family homes for affordable rent have finished, with six more due to be completed in April.

Spread across Broadwater Drive, Gold Finch Drive and Wren Drive, the mixture of houses and bungalows are less than five miles away from Doncaster with great transport links and a variety of modern features.

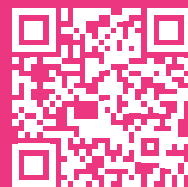
A celebration event will be held on 28 April with new tenants, colleagues and the Mayor of Doncaster.

## Building throughout the region

Work on 25 homes at White's Wood Lane in Gainsborough has completed.

The modern two, three and four-bed homes have spacious surroundings and are built on the site of a former primary school. They are close to Marshall's Yard and Gainsborough town centre featuring a variety of shops, restaurants and leisure facilities in a popular area.

Check out the latest news on all our new developments here.



Featuring brand new carbon neutral homes



“ We’re very proud that we’re able to deliver these homes in a carbon neutral way. This is the future and we’re excited to be a part of that. ”

Amy Schoenmaker, Development Project Manager



# Keeping you safe

The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 came into force in January. They include important fire door safety information for those living in high-rise and low-rise flats plus retirement schemes.

Head to our website for the full information.



## What else is taking place?

Drop-in sessions are being held every three months at our high-rise flats to give tenants the opportunity to ask any building safety questions and receive updates.

We also work closely with partner agencies such as Humberside Fire & Rescue who have been carrying out walkabouts to speak to tenants.



## Did you know?

We have a Residents Building Safety Group where tenant representatives help to ensure where you live is safe. They influence safety on a local and national level and find out the latest updates.

### The group needs tenants from the following areas:

- ✓ 2x from high-rise flats
- ✓ 1x from a low-rise flat
- ✓ 1x who lives in a house
- ✓ 1x leaseholder
- ✓ 1x specialist in health & safety

Sign up at [ongo.co.uk/involvedwithongo](https://ongo.co.uk/involvedwithongo)



We have been installing a carbon monoxide detector in every home to ensure your safety. Please contact us if you haven't had one fitted yet or if there are any issues with your alarm.



# Tenant takeover

## How long have you been a tenant for?

I've been a tenant for nearly 10 years. Before that I was a homeowner, but I had to let it go when me and my husband both had to stop work due to bad health. We then rented privately for a year before I needed an adapted property.

## How have you found your involvement so far?

I've found being a member of Community Voice and Tenant Inspectors very interesting. Everyone has been friendly and helpful. After being out of work for a while it's good to feel useful again and make a difference to the homes we live in, the communities we're a part of and the services that we receive.

## What's the best thing?

Helping to make things better not just for me but others as well. I like how you can give as much or as little time as you are able to. We all have busy lives but, no matter how many other commitments you have, there are ways to have your say.

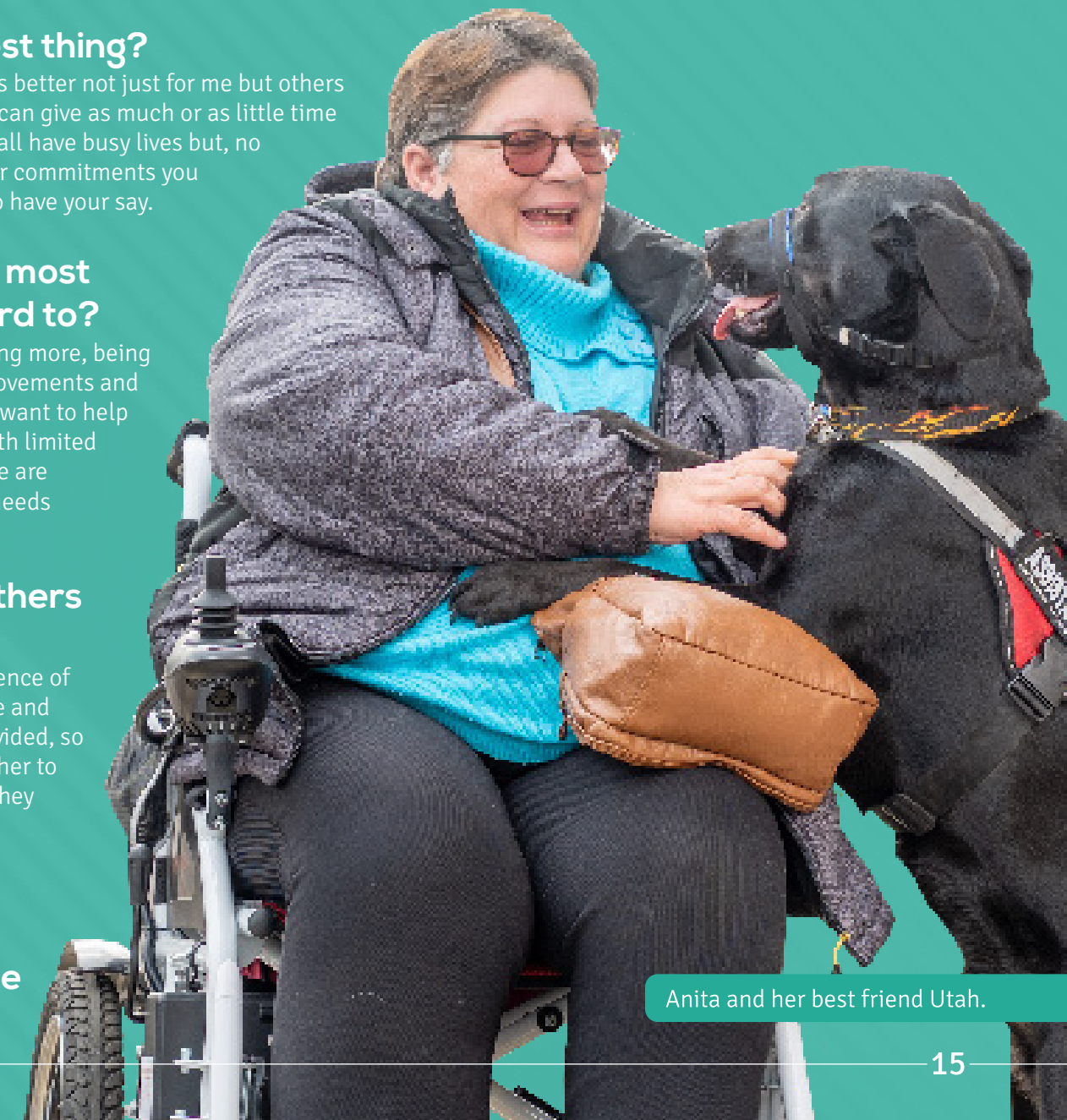
## What are you most looking forward to?

Learning and developing more, being able to influence improvements and make decisions. I also want to help be a voice for those with limited mobility in ensuring we are represented, and our needs are met.

## Why should others get involved?

We all have the experience of living in an Ongo home and using the services provided, so we need to work together to make things the best they can be for all.

Find out how you can get involved on the next page.



Anita and her best friend Utah.



# Involved with Ongo

## You said, we are doing

Sessions have been taking place at each retirement scheme for tenants to have a say and influence changes.

## These have led to several actions and plans including:

- ✓ Joint walkarounds with tenants and colleagues
- ✓ Introducing a suggestion box plus a welcome pack for new residents (Lincoln Court, Scunthorpe)
- ✓ Introducing improved lighting and disabled parking spaces (Day Close, Keadby)
- ✓ Several communal repairs

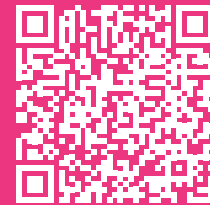
Follow-up meetings are being scheduled for later in 2023 to provide updates on progress.

## Contribute, challenge, change

**Our Resident Scrutiny Panel** look at different service areas to make improvements on behalf of all tenants. Their latest investigation is on anti-social behaviour (ASB), in particular the communication during a case.

**The Complaints Monitoring Panel** influences how complaints are handled which lead to future improvements. They look at recent examples, assess any themes and agree actions that members receive feedback on.

Both tenant groups need new members, join here.



## Do you want your community to be a clean, safe and inviting place to live?

## Then the Tenant Inspectors are the perfect opportunity for you.

The group carry out regular inspections of estates, green-spaces, empty homes, high-rise blocks and retirement schemes to check for any issues and ensure these improvements are completed.

In the last few weeks alone, they have helped to highlight and resolve issues to do with guttering, cleaning and repairs.

Members also get involved in some mystery shop exercises to assess a certain service and make recommendations. Recently they have improved the customer service you receive when you contact us and what is available when you visit one of our community hubs, The Arc.

The great thing is that the group are flexible and can fit in around any commitments that you have. They decide the day and time of their inspections, and all relevant information and training is provided to members.





# Jobs and training



## Building Better Opportunities (BBO)

Since July 2016 we partnered with Voluntary Centre Services and Humber Learning consortium to deliver the BBO project which helped over **330** people, with **88%** progressing into employment, education or an active job search.

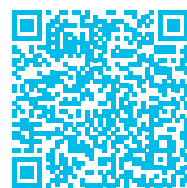
**This project has now ended and we want to thank all those involved. Visit [ongo.co.uk/bbosuccess](https://ongo.co.uk/bbosuccess) to learn more about the lasting impact it will have.**

## Out of work, wanting to upskill or change your career? We can help.

Lena accessed this support to find her dream job. She commented:

**// I thought that at 60 I wouldn't be good enough to find a job, but I was wrong. //**

Read more about Lena's story and how you can access employment support and training.



## Multiply project

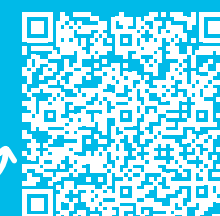
We have launched the Multiply project for adults over the age of 19, based in North Lincolnshire to gain basic numeracy skills.

Funding of **£40,000** has been provided by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, through North Lincolnshire Council, and is set to help over **160** people.

The project involves several sessions to build confidence and understanding, and help participants to use maths in everyday life, at home, and in a work environment.

Sessions will be held at The Arc, The Viking Centre and our Employment Support Centre on Cole Street, Scunthorpe.

Scan the QR code to find out how we can support you.



## Proud to Care

Our partnership with North Lincolnshire Council to deliver their aim of providing quality care across the region, has been extended for a further 12 months.

So far, our Recruitment team has screened over **500** applications, with **72** people now employed full-time and another **10-20** trained every month and ready to be placed in organisations across the region.

Proud to Care now also gives employment opportunities to those unable to work full-time. A brand-new agency bank has been created to offer part-time hours, as well as relief work to cover holidays and sickness. This means there will be options suitable for more people looking to get into work.

**Want to work in the care sector?**  
Call the team on 01724 844848 or email [recruitment@ongo.co.uk](mailto:recruitment@ongo.co.uk)







# Feed a family of six for £10

## Easy chicken curry

### What will I need?

- ¼ cup olive oil or low calorie cooking spray
- 2 large onions, diced
- 5 teaspoons of curry powder
- 1 can of tinned tomatoes
- 2 handfuls of spinach (fresh or frozen)
- 4 diced chicken breasts (swap the chicken for tinned lentils, chickpeas or potatoes to make it veggie)
- Coriander (optional)
- 1 packet of rice (follow serving suggestions)

### How can I make it?

1. Heat oil or cooking spray in a large pan over a medium heat.
2. Add your chicken and cook for 5 minutes, turning occasionally until sealed.
3. Add the onion and sauté for 5 to 8 minutes until soft and golden brown.
4. Slowly stir in the curry powder until well blended and cook for a further minute.
5. Add the tinned tomatoes and simmer gently for around 20 minutes until the chicken is thoroughly cooked through.
6. Stir in spinach and turn off the heat.
7. Serve with boiled rice and top with fresh coriander.

Send us pics of your family enjoying the meal for your chance to win a slow cooker.



OngoHomes



@OngoUK



# A community coming together

Since opening Myos House, our first specialist dementia care scheme, tenants, families and carers have achieved so much.

From starting a tenant committee to holding regular get-togethers and fundraising, the tight-knit community knows no bounds.

Eileen Salmon, tenant, said: “I love living here. Everybody is really friendly and here for each other, we have plenty of opportunities and there’s lots of exciting plans that we’re working on as well including an Easter Fayre and a party for the King’s Coronation.”

In recent months, they have successfully fundraised for a defibrillator, additions to their communal garden area to make it brighter and for events which included a Christmas party with a choir. They also teamed up with Scunthorpe United’s Foundation Trust to host activities aimed at reducing social isolation.

Tenants have currently raised over £3,500 for a permanent structure outside their communal lounge. This will allow extra space, more outdoor events and even further opportunities for the community to be together.

### Eileen, pays a special tribute to Denise:

“Our Wellbeing Officer, Denise, provided an incredible amount of dedication and support for us all, but she tragically passed away just over a month ago.

“She will always be remembered, and we will do everything possible to carry on the inspiring legacy that she has left behind.”

### Fran Rhodes, Tenancy Services Manager, added:

“Denise started in our Tenancy Support team in 2011, and she helped so many people through the years with her kind and caring nature. We have been offering support to all who knew her, she will be greatly missed and we will ensure that her memory will always live on.”



Denise (left) at the Ongo Carnival.

Let us know if you have an inspiring community story so we can feature it!

# Wordsearch



Mr and Mrs Ongo Bear support our aim of reducing carbon emissions, achieving net zero by 2050 and helping the environment. Can you help remind them what this will include?

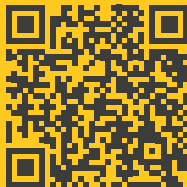
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ENERGY
EFFICIENCY
LIGHTING
SOLAR PANELS
INSULATION
CHARGE POINTS
TREES
GREEN SPACES
RECYCLING
BIODIVERSE
REDUCTION
HEAT PUMPS

Head to [ongo.co.uk/environmental](https://ongo.co.uk/environmental) to discover more about the net zero journey.



We are reviewing Key News and need your views. Scan the QR code to complete the survey and be in with a chance of winning a £40 Love to Shop voucher.





# Offers



## FREE TEA OR COFFEE

The Arc, Lichfield Avenue,  
Scunthorpe, DN17 1QX

Get a **free** tea or standard  
coffee with any set  
breakfast purchased.



## FREE BREAKFAST BUTTY

The Viking Centre  
Fairfield Drive, Barton, DN18 6ER

Get one **free** breakfast butty.  
Please note that the café is only open on  
Thursday 10am-1pm.

Find out about more  
offers here:



The above offers are valid from Friday 31 March to Friday 28 April and can be redeemed by presenting the voucher. Visit [ongo.co.uk](http://ongo.co.uk) for the full terms & conditions.

# My Home

## Managing your tenancy has never been easier

### On the My Home app you can:

- Book, track and manage repairs
- Pay your rent or check your balance
- Manage your account
- Report anti-social behaviour
- Get money management support
- Set up a direct debit
- Find out more about the things that matter to you, like employment support, home alterations, opportunities to get involved and more.

Available for **FREE** on all devices online and as an app.  
Registering only takes a few minutes!

### Want to find out more?

Visit our website:

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

