

# Key News

May 2020



**Our response to Coronavirus**  
pages 4 & 5



**Community spirit**  
pages 6 & 7



**Mental health support**  
page 20



# Welcome

from Chief Exec Steve



I could not be prouder of how our tenants and staff have responded to the huge Coronavirus (COVID-19) challenge we have all faced, and continue to face, to keep each other safe and well.

We have been following government and public health advice whilst maintaining essential services. We want to reassure all tenants that we are still here for you, and we'll continue to offer much needed support – from just being there at the end of the phone to delivering vital food parcels and carrying out essential repairs to keep you safe.

We have contacted all tenants to update them that we're only doing essential repairs for the foreseeable future, to encourage anyone worried about their rent to get in touch with us as soon as possible, and to urge everyone to keep checking our website and social media for updates. You can find out more about the changes we've made on pages four and five, and check out our latest updates at **[ongo.co.uk/coronavirus](https://ongo.co.uk/coronavirus)**

At the end of March, we began to carry out safe and well calls to over 3,000 of our most vulnerable tenants. These calls focused on personal wellbeing and any additional support requirements, as well as connecting people to other voluntary and community based services. We soon completed all the calls, thanks to a team of around 100 staff volunteers. As well as keeping in touch with those tenants who want regular contact, we have text and called all our remaining tenants to check on their welfare.

Also, we identified that over 500 tenants were really struggling with basic necessities so we started a 'helping hand' initiative. This is a weekly food parcel to tenants struggling without family or friends to support them, and the deliveries include essentials such as bread, milk, cereal, eggs and tinned products. We are funding this with no extra cost to tenants, and we are ensuring the parcels are prepared correctly and delivered with no contact required.

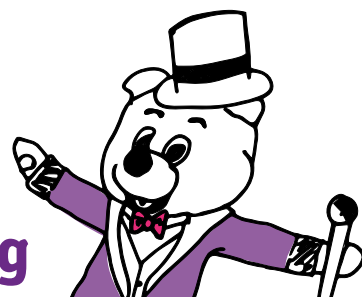
I think it's truly inspiring and heart-warming how so many communities have become even more united by these difficult circumstances, and how they've been showing their support for one another. You'll find lots of examples throughout this edition.

I'd like to thank all our tenants for your continued patience and understanding in recent months. It's by maintaining strong relationships, and encouraging staff and tenants to come together through this challenging time, how we'll stand strong to provide our services and rebuild once it is over.

Steve



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## What's trending



If you would like Key News in another language, call 01724 279900.

Jeśli chcesz tę ulotkę w języku polskim, zadzwoń na 01724 279900

Jei norėtumėte šio lapelio, savo kalbą, susisiekite su mumis 01724 279900

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## Get in touch

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OngoHomes  
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My Home app  
[myhome.ongo.co.uk](https://myhome.ongo.co.uk)

Also available in the Android  
 and Apple app stores

Call us  
 01724 279900

We record all calls for training  
 and research purposes

Visit us

Unfortunately, you cannot  
 visit our main offices for the  
 foreseeable future due to  
 the COVID-19 situation



# Our response to Coronavirus

**Our priorities in this difficult time are:**

- Safeguarding the health and safety of our tenants and staff
- Providing essential services that keep tenants, homes and communities safe
- Protecting our business operations so that we can recover quickly once the current situation is over

We continue to monitor government and public health advice, and we have set up a small team for regular meetings to ensure we carry on with essential services, but in different ways if required.

## Office closures

We have closed all our offices, including our headquarters Ongo House, to public access for the foreseeable future.

The post office at The Arc remains open between 9am – 3pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and Ashbridge Roofing/Hales & Coultas are operating as usual.



## Repairs and safety checks

Following government advice, we are only currently carrying out essential repairs to make sure that your home is safe to live in. At the moment non-essential repairs have been postponed, as we want to keep interactions as minimal as possible to reduce the risk of infection.

Essential safety work such as fire, emergency lighting and annual gas checks will continue. It is important to note that our legal responsibilities to do these checks haven't changed. With everyone spending more time at home, making sure that the gas and electrical systems are safe is even more important. We will of course respect where people are self-isolating and will only enter properties in these circumstances, where we decide it is essential.

Our teams that need it have access to the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), and we have designed new safe systems of work. This could mean that we undertake work in a separate room from household members.



## Rent support and advice

We're asking that you please continue to make rent payments, so that your account doesn't build up. If you have found that you're struggling to meet your rent payments, we are here to help you. We have a great team who understand the difficulties you're facing, and want to give you the support and advice you need.

Check out more about this support on page 12.

## Need some help and support?

Visit [ongo.co.uk/coronavirus](https://ongo.co.uk/coronavirus) for further information.

Thank you for all your patience and understanding while these measures are in place. We are still fully available for you to contact us if you need any help or support.

- My Home app: go to [myhome.ongo.co.uk](https://myhome.ongo.co.uk) or search 'Ongo My Home' in the Android and Apple app stores
- Website: [ongo.co.uk](https://ongo.co.uk)
- Social media: [f/OngoHomes](https://facebook.com/OngoHomes) and [t/ongoUK](https://twitter.com/ongoUK)
- Telephone: **01724 279900**

# We're here for you

We have been working closely with the council on their approach to protect and support the most vulnerable households across North Lincolnshire.

However, whilst lots of positive work is happening through local communities and voluntary agencies, we have been really keen to do more than just providing a home.

## Safe and well calls

We have called and text all of our tenants to check how they are and to ask if there is anything we can do to help them.

As of 15 May, we have made 3,445 calls and sent 5,633 texts along with 615 email surveys. We have continued to contact the 2,436 tenants who asked us to get in touch with them on a regular basis during the lockdown.

The feedback so far has been very positive from our tenants and family members, who appreciate that we are looking out for them.

**“Ongo has surpassed expectations again. As well as getting a phone call every week from them to make sure she is ok, my 88 year old mum has had a food parcel delivered this morning, without asking for one. This is above and beyond. Thanks again Ongo!”**

## Reminder of government and health advice

We can all help control the virus if we all stay alert. This means you must:

- Stay at home as much as possible
- Work from home if you can
- Limit contact with other people
- Keep your distance if you go out (two metres apart where possible)
- Wash your hands regularly

**Stay alert > Control the virus > Save lives**



Delivery of essentials

## Food parcels

For those who asked for support, we have been delivering a weekly 'helping hand' food parcel with basics. We have not replaced other support agencies such as foodbanks – rather, we've wanted to offer support to help tenants.

We have so far delivered 2,800 parcels to tenants and will continue to do so until the end of May when we will review our resources.

A further 500 parcels will also be delivered to tenants at our retirement schemes and 50 to our homelessness team in Doncaster. These extra parcels will be called 'With love from Ongo'.

**“What a lovely surprise. Thank you all so much for my food parcel, it was so unexpected but very gratefully received. The young man who delivered it was very pleasant and it was nice to see a fresh face in these difficult days.”**

Find out the latest guidance at [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) and [nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus)



# Coming together to help each other

Despite the difficult times recently, there have been loads of amazing stories about how these circumstances have brought people and communities even closer together.

Check out just a few of the inspirational stories:

## Bringing life to a community garden

Residents at Riverside Flats, West Butterwick, have been working together to get their community garden ready to grow vegetables.

The garden had not been used for a long time so the tenants decided to start digging, raking and planting vegetables for them to enjoy later in the year, and to help brighten their small community of 10 flats.

It has been dedicated to a former resident who sadly passed away last year.

Col Cranidge, one of the tenants involved in the project, said: “This is the very first year we’re doing this. We’ve been going out at different times to work on it, and we’ve all really enjoyed having something to focus on together in times like this.

“We’re going to carry on with this for years to come. It’s allowed us to get to know each other even better, and it’s definitely brought us all in the community even closer together.”

Col also explained how the residents have been looking out for one another in other ways.

He explained: “Whenever one of us is going out to the shops, we’ve been checking with each other to see if they need anything and bringing it back to leave on their doorstep.

“We’ve just wanted to help one another in these difficult circumstances.”



## Helping with necessities

The Westcliff (and surrounding areas) Association recently donated food for people most in need in the local area.

The community group bought almost £70 worth of essentials which helped 25 people who needed help and support during these difficult times.

They also supplied 50 activity packs for children and families in the neighbourhood.

Ann Elliott, a member of the group, said: “We’re here to help the community in any way we can, and so it was great to give something back.”



## Spreading some Easter joy

Last month, a local community group delivered a number of craft bags and Easter eggs to children and families in their neighbourhood.

Grangefield Committee, with support from Winterton 2022, had arranged to do a children's craft session in the Easter holidays, as part of their weekly coffee morning. That was until the COVID-19 situation struck.

However, they decided to make up and deliver the bags, which also included some educational work sheets, so local children could still get involved. One of the bags also contained a yellow sticker which saw the lucky recipient win an Easter egg.

In the same week, they arranged with local company Cherpy Cheaps Mobile Disco for superhero Spider-Man and two Paw Patrol characters to visit the neighbourhood. They safely walked round with the group to wave at children in their homes, and to leave sweets for them.

The group also delivered 36 Easter eggs that had been donated by the local Methodist church to children in the area.

Lisa Hall, Chair of the group, said: "We've had so much amazing and overwhelmingly positive feedback from everybody in the community.

"It's only right that we try and help to keep the neighbourhood's spirits up during this time. I've struggled with mental health issues in the past and loneliness was my peak – we don't want others to struggle.

**“We want to try and still bring some fun, plenty of spirit, and loads of smiles to the community.”**

## Local support groups

Lots of local communities have set up online support groups to help residents in their area.

For example, Our North Lincolnshire: Virtual Community Group on Facebook has just under 9,000 members. They're helping people, especially those who are elderly, vulnerable and/or disabled, to access food and other necessities.

The Isle of Axholme Covid-19 Support Group on Facebook, with over 2,000 members, has also been helping people in their community. As part of the Epworth and Belton Good Neighbour Scheme, they have also been posting local and national government guidance and updates to keep residents informed.

As they state, 'collectively we can make a difference to those at risk but also bring a community together when it's most needed'.

Visit [northlincs.gov.uk/coronavirus](https://northlincs.gov.uk/coronavirus) to see how you can support your community.



Bringing a smile  
to faces



## #ClapForCarers

Every Thursday at 8pm, people have been clapping from their doorsteps, balconies, gardens and front rooms to give thanks to our frontline workers and NHS heroes.

Check out [clapforourcarers.co.uk](https://clapforourcarers.co.uk) to find out more and to download window, family and social media packs to get further involved.

Think you have the loudest and most supportive street? Send your videos to us so we can help spread the positivity.

These are just a few of the inspiring examples of how you've all been helping and supporting each other. We'd love to hear more of your stories – let us know on our social media pages.



# #InvolvedWithOngo

**Do you want to help make a difference and to influence improvements to your homes, communities and services that affect you?**

**Do you wish to boost your CV to help make it stand out to potential employers?**

**Would you like to meet like-minded people and to work together to make all tenants' lives the very best they can be?**

We have a brand new #InvolvedWithOngo postcard that you can complete online at [ongoco.uk/customerengagement](https://ongoco.uk/customerengagement)

## Community Voice

They are the main tenant group that represents the views of all residents. They discuss and decide on Ongo customer-facing issues that help drive improvements to your homes, services and local communities.

The involved tenants simply want to make a difference – they genuinely feel that being involved allows them to have a voice.

Meetings usually take place on a monthly basis, and our staff attend to provide information on services that directly impacts tenants - like our kitchen supplier or how we're reinvesting our profit. This is a great way to learn more about us at Ongo.

The group are also involved digitally. They have their own Facebook group, and they have been receiving a monthly digital magazine to keep them updated whilst they are unable to meet face-to-face. They have then had the opportunity to directly ask Chief Exec Steve any questions about the information.

Membership for the group is open to any Ongo Homes tenant and leaseholder, and they are always keen for new people to join.

Keith Lumbers has been a member of the group for nearly five years: "I realised from my very first meeting that this group was a fantastic concept, and that I could make a difference.

"Being involved with Community Voice gives you the chance to directly influence and make decisions on homes, communities, and services that affect us all as tenants.

"It also allows you to gain new skills such as higher confidence, to make friends with fellow tenants who want the best for everyone, and to attend conferences to learn more about everything that impacts us.

"There are no limits to the group."



At a tenant conference





Before



After

## Inspectors impact

## Tenant Inspectors

This group carry out inspections on neighbourhoods, homes, green spaces and they do mystery shopping too. They help to highlight issues from a customer perspective and influence the improvements we make, based on their feedback.

They meet every two months to discuss what they've found, any changes they've helped to make and what they're looking at next. The involved tenants schedule inspections for a day and time that suits them, and they're able to ask staff any questions they have.

In the last year, the group have done several mystery shop exercises to ensure the delivery of each service was fair and consistent for all. They looked into repairs for vulnerable customers, and then focused on Rent First calls into our Customer Service team. They also visited some retirement living schemes to check they were fit for purpose, and checked the COVID-19 information on our website was clear and easy to find.

Alan Gouldthorpe, Chair of the group, said: "I joined soon after I was made redundant at work due to ill health. I wanted something to do, and I soon found out that this group allowed us to offer another set of eyes and ears whilst helping to thoroughly inspect different areas and services.

"The difference the group makes was shown when I spotted a potential fire risk on an inspection, and I raised my concerns at Ongo House. Chief Exec Steve was passing through reception at the time, and he took control of the situation. I was then contacted later on to thank me for my work, and to notify me that the risk had been put right that same day.

"Being part of the group, and becoming Chair in the last year, has helped me to develop new skills of managing meetings, and becoming more confident."



Alan inspecting

**“It’s a great way to get out in the fresh air, to meet new people, and to add to your CV if you’re looking for work.”**



There's still loads of ways that tenants are getting involved despite the current situation so, to find out more about one of these opportunities or the many groups we support, email [customer.engagement@ongo.co.uk](mailto:customer.engagement@ongo.co.uk)

# A life-changing difference

“I was homeless, sometimes staying with friends or family and then spending some nights in a local park. My anxiety levels were really high, my mental health wasn’t in a good place, and my mind was in a constant state of negativity. It got so bad that I even tried to take my own life twice.”

Just under a year ago, John was at rock-bottom and didn’t know where to turn for help.

However, support was soon there. He was referred to our counselling and life-coaching service Ongo Talk. This is when he started to have weekly meetings with Pete from our Employment Support team.

John said: “I was so nervous before, but the whole team made me feel settled and welcome there immediately. I felt really comfortable and happy – everybody was so nice and polite, and I could tell straight away how they just wanted the very best for me.”

He was quickly helped into supported housing, and he then completed a number of mental health and employment courses to improve his state of mind, and to enhance his skills. John explained how this training was ‘absolutely fantastic’.

He added: “The instructors were excellent, and they tailored each course to make it suitable for us all. I would recommend the training available there to anybody.”

To add further good news, John has enrolled on a Business Management degree with the support of the Building Better Opportunities programme, available through our Communities team.

The degree is part of John’s aim to set up his own landscape gardening company, which will use the help of volunteers whilst also aiming to improve their mental health.

He said: “It all started when a friend asked me to look at their garden, and I soon found that gardening really helped my mental state. I’ve known people who have suffered with their mental health and who aren’t here today unfortunately.

“That’s why I want to do this – the more people I can help with their mental health and their work skills, the better. Because I have been through dark times myself, I know what they may be going through and can do everything I can to support them.”



John with his young son

John hopes to have his own business set up within the next year, and has already begun talking to a local enterprise company about his idea.

A home, new skills, a degree to look forward to, and a clear business plan in mind - all in less than a year.

John explained: “I can’t begin to explain how much things have changed for the better. I no longer have any thoughts of suicide, I’m so much more confident and have peace of mind now, and things couldn’t be better.

“None of this would have been possible without Pete and his team’s help and support – I can’t thank them all enough.”

To find out more about the support available, visit [ongo.co.uk/employmentsupport](https://ongo.co.uk/employmentsupport) or email [employmentsupport@ongo.co.uk](mailto:employmentsupport@ongo.co.uk)



# Tenants talk

Despite the current circumstances, you've still helped to make a real difference to some of services in the last few months. Check out a couple of examples:

## New kitchens

We've got a new and improved kitchen supplier, thanks to you.

The main benefits are that the new supplier is 38% cheaper, meaning we can reinvest more in homes and communities, and they offer a wider range of features and colours to choose from.

So how were tenants involved?

- **Community Voice** – two members visited different suppliers with staff, and helped to agree the new supplier.
- **Digital survey** – 469 tenants gave their thoughts on the proposed colour ranges. Over 80% liked the choices, and felt they covered a range of colours and designs.
- **Drop-in sessions** – Two sessions were held for tenants to take a look at the physical and visual kitchen samples. Nearly 90% said they were happy with the range as it is.

Keith Riley, Community Voice Vice-Chair who was involved, described the whole process as 'absolutely superb'.

He said: "I was very impressed from start to finish. We were listened to throughout, and I feel like we made a real difference."

The new kitchens will now be available for all our new homes and as part of our regeneration programme.

If you would like to be involved, email [customer.engagement@ongo.co.uk](mailto:customer.engagement@ongo.co.uk) or message us on Facebook and Twitter.



## My Home improvements

We have a group of Digital Tenants that will take part in regular feedback sessions about their experiences of using our online services, and how we can improve them.

The first feedback session focused on booking a repair through My Home. The group came up with these recommendations:

- Make the current list of repairs clearer and easy to understand
- Add more repairs you can book
- Introduce an option to reschedule repair appointments
- Bring in other sections such as information about our additional services

Digital Tenant Loran Williams said: "I use My Home for just about everything to do with my tenancy because I can use it when and where I want at any time.

"It was nice to influence improvements to the repairs section, and I'm already looking forward to the next feedback session."

All the feedback has been collated, and will be incorporated into an upcoming My Home update.



# Struggling to pay your rent?

We understand that, with the Coronavirus situation, times have been very difficult for everybody. Many things have been impacted, and that could include your income and rent payments.

We are currently asking everyone to make payments as usual towards your rent account - as per your tenancy agreement, rent is due payable in advance based on your payment frequency (so, if you pay weekly, you should be one week in credit).

However, if you are worried about your rent, you are not on your own - we are here to help you. If you are worried about your payments, if you have had a change of circumstances which has had a financial impact, or if you would like to find out what benefits may be available to you, our Income Collection team can offer advice and guidance.

When you contact us you will speak to real people that live and work in the area, who understand what you're going through, and who want to provide the support you may need. We take everybody's personal circumstances into account, and we will work with you to set up a plan that is suitable for you in this challenging time.



Real people working in your community



Here to help and support

## Contact us on:

- My Home: [myhome.ongo.co.uk](https://myhome.ongo.co.uk) or via the app on your smart device
- Our website: [ongo.co.uk](https://ongo.co.uk)
- Social media: [/OngoHomes](https://facebook.com/OngoHomes) and [/ongoUK](https://twitter.com/ongoUK)
- Email: [enquiries@ongo.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@ongo.co.uk)
- Telephone: 01724 279900

To be kept up-to-date with the latest rent and benefits updates, check out [ongo.co.uk/support](https://ongo.co.uk/support) and [understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk](https://understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk)



**We want to say a huge, heartfelt thank you to each and every one of our tenants for your patience, understanding and commitment during this difficult time.**





# Paying your rent online

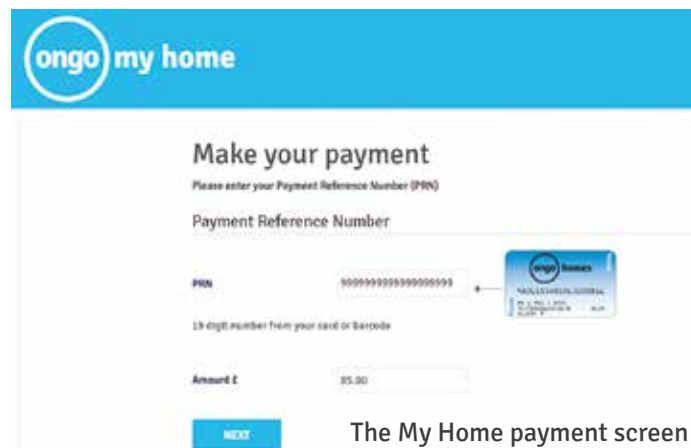
Due to the Coronavirus situation and the temporary closing of our main offices, digital channels such as My Home are even more crucial and mean you can still access our services anytime, anywhere.

Your rent allows us to reinvest in your homes and communities, and to improve our services for you. That's why we've made it really simple to pay your rent in the way which suits you best.

The quickest and easiest way is to set up a direct debit, that way you have peace of mind that your rent is paid in full and on time. Head to [myhome.ongo.co.uk/direct-debit](https://myhome.ongo.co.uk/direct-debit) to set up a direct debit online.

You can also pay your rent easily by logging onto your online account. All you'll need is a My Home account and a credit or debit card. You no longer need your AllPay reference number to hand as we'll put that in for you automatically once you've logged onto My Home.

Payments via My Home are at a continued high, on average seeing us process £282,000 per month made up by 1,577 individual transactions. Why not join these tenants paying their rent online?



The My Home payment screen



If you haven't got an account yet, registering is really simple. Just head to [myhome.ongo.co.uk](https://myhome.ongo.co.uk) or download the My Home app on [Google Play](#) or the [Apple app store](#).



# New homes



In March, the majority of our construction sites made the decision to close temporarily due to COVID-19. Following updated government guidance, all work on our development sites has since resumed. They are all observing government guidelines and safe systems of working.

## First dementia care scheme in the region

Lots of work took place at the beginning of this year on a brand new specialist dementia care scheme on Warwick Road, Scunthorpe.

The development, which will be the first of its kind in North Lincolnshire, is made up of 25 two-bed apartments. Work first started on the homes last September.

Specialist features will include safe and secure landscaped gardens, CCTV, and staff on hand 24 hours a day. This will support families to live together for as long as possible, and will help them to lead a safe and comfortable life.

We have invested over £3m in the scheme. £1m was granted from Homes England, and North Lincolnshire Council has contributed around £300,000. The homes are due to be completed next year.

Georgie McGuire, Development Project Manager, said: “We are committed to building homes for specific needs as well as general needs and, with no other such scheme available in the local area, this project is vitally important.

“It will have a huge impact on the residents’ lives, and we can’t wait for it to be completed.”



Visit [ongo.co.uk/developments](https://ongo.co.uk/developments) to find out more.

## Rent to Buy homes completed

Our first Rent to Buy scheme was recently completed.

The development, on Collum Avenue in Ashby, Scunthorpe, contains 13 three-bed and one two-bed home. They are close to shops, schools and parks, and are an ideal way for people looking to make their first step towards becoming a homeowner.

Rent to Buy is a scheme that allows you to rent the home from us at around 20% less than market rent. This allows you to save the remainder as a deposit and, after five years, you then have the option to buy the home.

We currently are building two other Rent to Buy schemes. The first are 16 homes on Rochdale and Lancaster Road in Scunthorpe, which are a mix of two-bed and three-bed houses. The second development is on Rowland Road, Scunthorpe, and contains four three-bed homes. There will also be two three-bed properties for shared ownership as part of the build.



These are due to be completed later this year dependant on the COVID-19 situation.

Find out more about Rent to Buy, and our other schemes, at [ongo.co.uk/renttobuy](https://ongo.co.uk/renttobuy)



With the majority of work just starting again on our new developments, we wanted to take a look back at some of those we've built over the last year.

**Albert Marson Court redevelopment**

**What?** 23 three-bed and four four-bed homes  
**Where?** Spread across Beck Road, Cemetery Road and Fairmont Crescent in Scunthorpe

**Care and supported housing**

**What?** Seven one-bed flats for people with learning disabilities, and three fully wheelchair-accessible homes  
**Where?** At Cherry Grove in Ashby, and Scunthorpe

**First homes for outright sale**

**What?** 14 homes which are a mixture of two, three and four-bed houses and bungalows  
**Where?** Owllet Mews in Blyton

**New retirement scheme**

**What?** 24 brand new one and two-bed flats for people over the age of 55  
**Where?** Chesleigh House in Gainsborough

**Shared ownership**

**What?** Three two-bed houses, and one three-bed home, for shared ownership  
**Where?** Willow Farm in Hibaldstow



115 new homes built in 2019/20



216 homes being built on site that will be completed in 2020/21



57 further new homes also being worked on



We're working on some exciting new carbon neutral homes for the coming year as part of our committed stance on carbon reduction.

Make sure to check out future editions of Key News, as well as our website and social media channels, for more details.

# Tenant takeover

In each edition, we talk to a tenant volunteer to find out what they do in their community. This time we talk to Greg who is part of our pool of Tenant Testers, and who will soon be getting involved in further opportunities.

## My first involvement with Ongo was...

*"...through the Growing and Learning project. This offered volunteering opportunities for people seeking work, and encouraged us to grow our own produce at allotments and growing projects in Scunthorpe and Barton. I thoroughly enjoyed it and learnt a lot along the way, and I was able to pass on a lot of experience to other people on the project."*

*"After that, I was looking for something else to do when an opportunity to join the Tenant Testers came up. This is a group of tenants who can be called upon to test certain Ongo services to influence improvements, and to make the services the very best that they can be."*

*"For example, in the last nine months there have been workshops to improve the navigation and layout of the Ongo website, to test a chatbot that is now available online, and to look at the re-designing of the rent statement."*

## Being part of this group has...

*"...helped me to have a purpose and to feel like I'm being useful in helping to make a difference. The workshops have really helped my anxiety in building my confidence, and it's given me different things to look forward to."*

*"The workshops have been very insightful and have allowed me to learn so much that I didn't know before. What I've also liked is how everybody has been able to contribute and to have a say in each of the sessions. Everyone has been listened to, and it's been nice to see the feedback acted upon to make the services even better for all tenants."*

*"It's a group that any tenant can sign up for. It's not too much of a time commitment at all, and it feels great to be able to give something back. It's made me feel really positive about myself."*



Greg in a Tenant Testers workshop

## This has led me to...

*"...finding out more about, and expressing an interest in, several other involvement opportunities available to us tenants. This includes Community Voice, Tenant Inspectors and the Maintenance Panel, and I am looking forward to going to their next meetings as an observer to learn more."*

## One of the main things I've learnt is...

*"...that there's no barrier at all to getting involved. I have medical needs, I suffer from my anxiety, I've been through a lot, but there's still loads of ways in which I can have a say and improve homes, communities and fellow tenants' lives in a way that suits me."*

*"I'm just taking one day at a time, but I'm looking forward to seeing how things develop."*



Like Greg, you can make a difference to yours and tenants' lives by influencing decisions that affect you, your home and community.

We have a new #InvolvedWithOngo postcard that you can complete to let us know how you would like to get involved. You can find this on our website or on the My Home app.

Find out more about our involvement opportunities by visiting [ongo.co.uk/customerengagement](https://ongo.co.uk/customerengagement), or by emailing [customer.engagement@ongo.co.uk](mailto:customer.engagement@ongo.co.uk)



# Help you into work

Rhys, 18, had quit college early and spent the next six months mainly indoors, not having the confidence to leave the house. He felt he had no prospects, and nothing to aspire to.

But that all changed when he started receiving support from us.

Lindsey, one of our youth mentors, encouraged him to attend some regular youth events at The Arc, and soon Rhys began volunteering for Westcliff Community Works.

He said: “Volunteering gave me a reason to leave the house. I really enjoyed it from the moment I started, and it felt rewarding to help others.”

That’s how Rhys met another of our youth mentors, Jemma, and he told her about wanting to get an apprenticeship. Before he knew it, he was meeting with her on a regular basis to develop his CV, learn interview techniques, search for jobs and ultimately build his confidence.

Rhys explains how Jemma went ‘the extra mile’ in her support.

He explained: “It never felt like a strict appointment with her – it was more like one person just wanting to help another. I wasn’t treated as a mere number and then just left to it, Jemma’s support had a real caring and personal quality to it.

“For example I got an interview for a local garage and, having never had a proper interview before, I was really nervous. Jemma went out of her way to go to the bus station and wait with me, to message me before the interview to help settle my nerves, and to call me afterwards to see how it had gone. I was extremely grateful for that.”

Rhys didn’t get that job in the end but, with his new-found confidence, he refused to let his head drop. He enhanced his skills by doing courses such as safeguarding through our Employment Support team. Then an apprenticeship came up at a local outdoor activity centre.

Rhys said: “The apprenticeship was as an activity leader and, because I’d worked with other young people at The Arc and through Westcliff Community Works, I had the confidence and experience to apply.”

Soon, he found out he had been successful for the 15-month apprenticeship that began in January. Even though the centre is currently closed due to the Coronavirus situation, Rhys explained how he has been ‘loving every minute of it’.



Improved confidence

“I used to be really self-conscious and hated public speaking but, now, I feel completely at home with leading sessions and it’s coming naturally to me. I try to make sure visitors have a good time, even if that means doing silly things like singing and dancing – if it puts a smile on their face, then that’s all that matters.”

Rhys dedicates the recent good news to the support that he has received along the way.

He said: “I’m a totally different person – I wasn’t in the best mindset a year ago but now I’m much more confident.

“Without everything that Jemma and everybody else did for me, I wouldn’t be anywhere near where I am today.”

We provide a range of support from helping people into work and one-to-one mentoring, to training courses to improve your skills. Check out our website [ongo.co.uk](https://www.ongo.co.uk) to find out how we could help you.

# Being fair and respectful to all

At Ongo, we are committed to being FREDIE in everything that we do. This means Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement.

For us, embracing this means looking further than the Equality Act 2010 and the protected characteristics it sets out.

We are a recognised 'Leader in Diversity' through the National Centre for Diversity, and we also have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) steering group made up of tenants, staff and board members. This group ensures all are treated fairly and appropriately, and that everyone has equal access to quality services and engagement.

Check out what being FREDIE means to Colin, a tenant on the group, and his EDI journey:

"FREDIE is at the heart and centre of my very being – my moral ethos.

"When I first arrived in this country, it didn't take me long to become 'different' as I soon lost my sight. If that wasn't hard enough, I experienced judgement for being an immigrant.

"I have been a disability campaigner for many years now. Because of my experience, I felt it was imperative to become a tenant spokesperson for disabled and vulnerable people by drawing attention to the barriers and restrictions tenants had.

"An example of this was raising concerns at the Maintenance Panel on how some tenants struggled to identify staff and



tradespeople knocking on the door for a home visit or repair appointment.

"I recommended the staff member phone calling ahead giving their name, estimated time of arrival and the reason for the call and visit. The tenant could then confirm if the voice on the phone belonged to the person standing at the door, and could also check their ID badge to know they were who they said they were.

"The suggestion was adopted immediately, and this alternative method of staff identification has generally been working well.

"As my sight has deteriorated and growing older has reduced my agility, FREDIE has become more even more relevant to me. I am constantly looking for opportunities to champion it, and to implement changes to allow the disabled and vulnerable to lead a more independent, inclusive, fairer and stress-free life.

"As far as I am concerned, without FREDIE, people who are different will be treated differently and discriminated against so it is our duty to change this whenever it happens."

Find out more about the group, and the other involvement opportunities, by visiting [ongo.co.uk/customerengagement](https://ongo.co.uk/customerengagement)



The EDI steering group

# A day in the life of...

## Jo Sylvester, Tenancy Enforcement Officer

### How did you start working for Ongo?

I started as a Housing Officer for six years. I then moved across to the Tenancy Enforcement team as I wanted to increase my knowledge and experience, and I've always had a passion for law.

### What does your job involve?

Mainly trying to resolve anti-social behaviour (ASB) without having to resort to legal resolutions such as court action – this is always a last resort. I am also the lead on the team's cuckooing project which began in April 2019.

### What is your favourite part of the role?

What gives me the greatest satisfaction is when I have worked with tenants to prevent further ASB or breaches of tenancy, and where we've not had to take court action to resolve the issues. I love engaging with tenants and trying to help them the best I can.

### What is cuckooing, and what is the project that you're involved with?

Cuckooing is the taking over of a vulnerable person's property by drug gangs to enable them to deal drugs from that home. Cases of cuckooing by sex workers are also frequent – this is where a relationship is built with a vulnerable male to gain their trust and co-operation. Requests for sums of money then begin to be made, and drugs start to be used at and dealt from the property too.

As part of this project, I give presentations to organisations and other internal teams about the work I'm doing and to help raise awareness. I also work closely in partnership with other organisations such as Humberside Police, Safer Neighbourhoods and Adult Social Services to work together to protect vulnerable people in the local area.

### How can readers report any suspected cuckooing?

If something doesn't feel right, then please report it to the police by calling 101. If the property/tenant is covered by us, then I can look into the case. You can contact me at [jo.sylvester@ongo.co.uk](mailto:jo.sylvester@ongo.co.uk) or [tenancyenquiries@ongo.co.uk](mailto:tenancyenquiries@ongo.co.uk)

### You have been shortlisted in the 'Best Project' category at the National Resolve ASB awards later this year. How did it feel to be recognised?

I was over the moon and incredibly excited, but my main purpose is to highlight the good work that the whole team is doing on cuckooing and to educate other housing providers on what has worked for us in tackling the problem.

I am a great believer in sharing information and experiences. If I can help others, then I've won in my eyes.



### What is something you've learnt so far this year?

I've embraced the use of digital technology in these difficult times – for example, my partner and I recently did a virtual pub quiz and it was great fun. I've also learnt how to cook macaroni cheese from scratch!

**If you could be a member of a fictional family, who would it be?** I love the works of Jane Austen so I would choose to be a part of the Bennett family (from *Pride and Prejudice*).

**If you wished to paint one scene of where you've been before, what would you paint?** One of the most touching scenes was standing on the beaches at Normandy and seeing some World War II platforms still there. It was a very humbling and emotional experience.



# Mental health support



During difficult times like these, we understand that people’s mental health and wellbeing can suffer.

That’s why Ongo Talk, our life-coaching and emotional wellbeing service, is still available if you would like to improve your mental health and to help see a brighter future.

The project helps to develop your confidence, build your emotional resilience and improve your emotional wellbeing ready to have a new, positive outlook on life. We can also help you access fully accredited training, and help build your CV ready for employment.

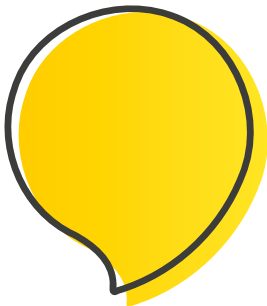
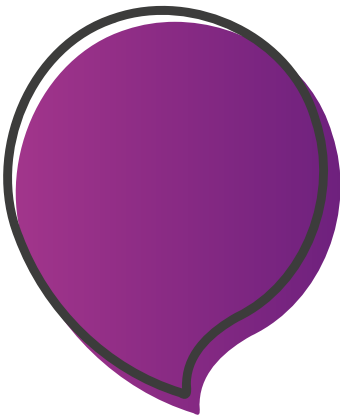


Mental Health Awareness Day last year

Kelly, who has been on the project, said: “I went into it lacking confidence, struggling with negative thoughts, and generally feeling low. I was supported at a level that suited me and, before I knew it, I felt like a new person.

“It really helped me to change my perspective and attitude towards my life.”

**Think you’d benefit from the support?**  
**Email [OngoTalk@ongo.co.uk](mailto:OngoTalk@ongo.co.uk) or visit our website [ongo.co.uk](http://ongo.co.uk) to find out more and how to sign up.**



With a national increase in the amount of calls to the National Domestic Abuse Helpline, Humberside Police have compiled a list of agencies for people to contact if they are suffering domestic abuse.

## Useful Domestic Abuse helplines:

<b>National Domestic Abuse Helpline*</b> 0808 2000 247	<b>Hull Domestic Abuse Partnership</b> 01482 318 759
<b>Women’s Aid Online Chat</b> <a href="http://chat.womensaid.org.uk">chat.womensaid.org.uk</a>	<b>North &amp; North East Lincs support, The Blue Door</b> 0800 197 47 87
<b>The Men’s Advice Line</b> 0808 801 0327	<b>East Riding Support</b> 01482 396 330
<b>Mankind Initiative</b> 01823 33 244	<b>Respect - Helpline for offenders</b> 0845 122 86 09
<b>Childline</b> 0800 111 111	<b>Samaritans*</b> 116 123

**\*(24/7)**

# Funding for the community

Despite the current situation, several local community groups and good causes have still received funding in our latest round of community grants.

In total, **£10,155** has been given to support groups doing amazing things in the local area. The successful groups were:

- Well Minds Project
- 1st Kirton Scouts
- Gooch Judo Kwai
- Starlight Arts
- Changing Lives CIC
- Riddings Brigade
- Scunthorpe Samaritans

The grants will help the successful groups to offer even more support, host more activities, support improvement of their facilities, and help them give even more back to the community.

A digital panel of Ongo staff, board members and tenants looked at each submission at the end of April before agreeing on the successful groups.

A representative from Scunthorpe Samaritans said: “We will use this funding to further promote the support we offer to people, communities, schools and colleges in the local area.

“It will help to promote emotional health and wellbeing, and encourage people who are struggling to talk and access support especially during this difficult time.”

The Community Grants panel would normally host a celebration event to showcase the great work that our local groups are doing. Due to current restrictions, it is likely that this event will be held virtually so the groups can still celebrate their achievements.



# Showing solidarity

Loads of you have been creating rainbow pictures to show support and solidarity in the fight against Coronavirus.

We think it's a great way to keep people's spirits up, to raise a smile and to show that nobody is alone in these difficult times. Therefore, we recently held a social media competition for you to share your rainbows with us for a chance to be featured in this edition.

We received loads of inspiring and heart-warming entries:









# What you're grateful for

The last few months have helped us all realise the things, no matter how big or small, that we are grateful for in our lives. Given the current circumstances, it can be easy to have lost sight of those things that have still made us smile – those moments that we have appreciated, those times that have helped to put a spring in our step.

We want you to write down the five things that you have been most grateful for especially in the last few months.



1.

2.

3.

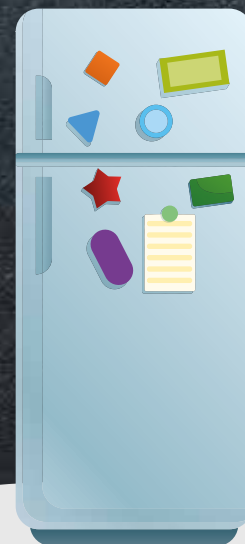
4.

5.

Why not cut out your five things and stick them on your wall? Put them on your fridge door? Have them next to your bed? Fold them up in your pocket?

That way, you'll always be reminded of at least five reasons for you to smile and be positive during this challenging time.

Spread the positivity and share your reasons to be grateful on our Facebook and Twitter pages.





# Cooking up a treat

Check out some quick and easy recipes for you to try.

## Easy-peasy pizza

### Ingredients

- Pizza bases, a French stick cut into pieces or a tortilla wrap
- Tinned tomatoes or tomato puree
- Grated cheese
- Any topping you want – this could be onion, mushrooms, peppers, a meat or fish of your choice. Be creative!

### Method

1. Wash your hands thoroughly before preparation
2. Pre-heat your oven to 180 Celsius/gas mark four
3. Cut up all your toppings and place into bowls
4. Open the tin of tomatoes or puree, and then spread the tomato on top of the pizza base
5. Sprinkle the grated cheese on
6. Add the yummy toppings of your choice
7. Place into the oven and bake for around 15 minutes until the cheese starts to melt and bubble
8. Allow to cool and enjoy!

## Tasty chicken

### Ingredients

- 2 chicken breasts
- Olive oil (or a healthier fry light type spray)
- Ready-made breadcrumbs
- Herbs & spices of your choice – for example paprika, cayenne, curry and chilli powder, katsu

### Method

1. Wash your hands thoroughly before preparation
2. Pre-heat your oven to 180 Celsius/gas mark four
3. On a small plate mix breadcrumbs with the herbs/spices you'd like to use
4. Cut the chicken into strips (as big or small as you like)
5. Roll the chicken in the oil, and then roll in the bread crumb/spice mixture
6. Place on a baking tray and into the oven
7. Cook for 25 minutes until crispy on the outside and chicken is cooked through

Don't forget  
to have a  
grown-up  
helper!

## Irresistible cookies

### Ingredients

- 275g plain flour
- 225g butter
- 110g caster sugar
- 75g white or milk chocolate chips (optional)

### Method

1. Wash your hands thoroughly before preparation
2. Pre-heat your oven to 190 Celsius/gas mark five
3. Cream the butter in a large bowl with a wooden spoon, or in a food mixer, until it is soft. Add the sugar to the bowl, and keep beating until the mixture is light and fluffy
4. Sift in the flour and add in the optional ingredients (if you're using them)
5. Bring the mixture together with your hands in a figure-of-eight motion until it forms a dough
6. Roll the dough into walnut-sized balls and place slightly apart on a baking tray
7. Flatten the balls a little with the palm of your hand, and place them in the oven
8. Cook for around 10 – 12 minutes until they are golden brown and slightly crispy on top
9. Leave them on a cooling rack for around 15 minutes before serving

Why not try different cutters and decorate them with coloured icing and sweets/treats of your own?

If you have any tasty recipes, we'd love to include them in future editions. Email your ideas to [editor@ongo.co.uk](mailto:editor@ongo.co.uk)



# Fun and games

## Wordsearch



Like you, Ongo Bear has been keeping himself safe and well during these difficult times. He can't wait for things to get back to normal, can you help find what he's most looking forward to?

- Spot the following words...
- SUMMER  
BONFIRE NIGHT  
NEW YEAR  
SPORTS  
FAMILY  
SUN  
HAPPY

HALLOWEEN  
CHRISTMAS  
CELEBRATING  
PLAYING  
FRIENDS  
HOLIDAY  
GAMES

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

If you have an idea for a game we could include in the next edition, email [editor@ongo.co.uk](mailto:editor@ongo.co.uk)

# Word scramble

Mr and Mrs Ongo Bear have been listening closely to government and medical advice in these current times. Can you help them to re-arrange the letters to spell what they've been doing?

1. **hagwisdhsna** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Hint: regularly cleaning a part of the body with soap and water, or hand sanitiser gel, for at least 20 seconds)
2. **aoilscnniadgseti** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Hint: keeping at least two metres away from other people)
3. **iecrxsee** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Hint: going out for a walk, run or jog each day)
4. **yntgsia ta moeh** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Hint: remaining indoors as much as possible)
5. **lcpa ofr rcrsae** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Hint: applauding all key workers, every Thursday at 8pm, to show appreciation for everything they are doing)

## Where's Ongo Bear?

You may have noticed Mr and Mrs Ongo Bear popping up on different pages in the magazine. Can you count how many times you've seen them?

Answer:

## Get creative

We'd love you to send us pictures of your colourings and Ongo Bear in your window! To be in with a chance of being featured in the next edition, send them to: [f OngoHomes](#) [@ongoUK](#)

Colour in Ongo Bear and the rainbow below! Why not then cut it out and stick it in your window to show your support, spirit and solidarity in these difficult times?



# Fancy winning a £30 Love to Shop voucher?

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

Your feedback is important to influence future editions. If you'd like to be in with a chance of winning a £30 Love to Shop voucher, please complete the survey online at [surveymonkey.com/r/keynewsmay2020](https://surveymonkey.com/r/keynewsmay2020). However, if you can't do it online, then you can complete the survey below:

### 1. How would you rate the edition in terms of how much you felt informed, and how relevant the articles were to you? (1 is poor, 5 is great)

1 2 3 4 5

### 2. What was your favourite part of this issue?

### 3. How satisfied are you with how your Key News currently is? (layout, content, length of the edition etc.)

Very satisfied Satisfied Dissatisfied Very dissatisfied

### 4. Is there anything in particular that you would like to see in your next Key News? Yes/No

### 5. If you currently don't receive your Key News via email, you will only get two Key News a year. If you would like to receive five copies a year, please provide your email address below to be added to the mailing list:

We normally ask you to post your completed survey to us but, due to the COVID-19 situation and the importance of staying at home, there are alternative ways to send it.

You can take a photo of it and send it to [customer.engagement@ongo.co.uk](mailto:customer.engagement@ongo.co.uk) or our Facebook page along with your name and contact details. If you are unable to do that, keep a hold of the survey until the current measures are over and then send it to Editor, Key News, Ongo House, High Street, Scunthorpe, DN15 6AT. Your feedback will still be important, and you will be entered into a future prize draw for a shopping voucher.

Entries to be considered for this prize draw must be in by Friday 26 June 2020. The winner will be drawn from all completed surveys. The Editor's decision is final.

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