

# Orbit Life

Building thriving communities...

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# An introduction from our guest resident editor, **Hannah Reeves**

We would like to introduce you to Hannah, our guest resident editor of this edition of Orbit Life. Hannah has lived in an Orbit home for 17 years now and shares with us her personal experience of managing her mental health challenges and how she's used her love of gardening and animals to create something that's truly special for her family as well as her local community.



*Hello and welcome to your Spring edition of Orbit Life magazine. The cost of living continues to affect us all, so we have an update on the current support that's available to households, particularly those people who receive benefits (see page five). I've also written a piece on mental health and wellbeing as it's something I'm passionate about. I have battled with my own mental health for many years and have learned a lot from my own experiences about how to manage it in a positive way. My love of gardening and rescuing animals has become my therapy. See page nine to read more.*

Meet Hannah...

If you would like to be a guest editor of Orbit Life, we would love to hear from you. Just email [campaigns@orbit.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@orbit.org.uk).

We hope you enjoy the magazine. If you have any feedback then please let us know by emailing [campaigns@orbit.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@orbit.org.uk). We'd love to hear from you!

If you'd like to find out more about becoming an Engaged Customer, then please get in touch. Engaged Customers are those residents who get involved in reviewing the way we work and make suggestions for improvements from a customer perspective. Just visit our Get involved webpage:

[CLICK HERE >](#)

# Recognising your loyalty with our brand-new **customer engagement rewards scheme**



Are you passionate about excellent customer service? Would you be interested in earning some Love2shop shopping vouchers?

They include things such as attending focus groups, completing surveys, taking part in online forums and much more. Best of all, you can work it around your own schedule and take part in the activities that interest you most. It's completely up to you!

If so and you have the time to share your experiences with us, then you've come to the right place. To recognise the value of contributions, time and commitment customers put into customer engagement activities, we have launched a brand-new reward scheme to say a big thank you to those customers who share their experiences with us – both good and bad.

You may know the famous game show saying, 'points mean prizes.' By taking part in activities that you get to choose, you can build points that can be redeemed for Love2Shop shopping vouchers.

[CLICK HERE >](#)

to find out more.



# Customer Engagement Strategic Committee update

The Customer Engagement Strategic Committee has now recruited eight new members, bringing in the total to 10. This diverse formal committee will use their wide experience as Orbit customers to support the development and delivery of Orbit's overall Customer Engagement programme. The committee also allows customers to come together to influence future decisions and drive positive change.

"I'm really looking forward to joining the committee and being a frontline voice for customers to help shape Orbit's future in affordable and specialist housing" says AnneMarie Groves, a new Customer Engagement Strategic Committee member.



# Did you see our **Good Neighbour** campaign?

We've been sharing some great tips from your community and ideas about how you can be the neighbour that you would like to live next door to.

We also included some advice to deal with those tricky situations that we can all find ourselves in from time to time. Now that our campaign is live, we wanted to round up some of the best bits to share with you (just in case you missed it)...



## Our Good Neighbour Hub

The Good Neighbour Hub on our customer website is host to some fantastic resources, tips and handy downloadable documents such as our Good Neighbour leaflet and welcome postcard. It also includes information on how to make your community safer, more friendly and free from rubbish.

The hub will continue to host to any future good neighbour competitions, awards and updates – so make sure you bookmark it!

Visit our Good Neighbour Hub:



## Good Neighbour Award update

Thank you for all your amazing nominations! We have had an overwhelming response to our Good Neighbour Awards, demonstrating how much good happens in the community and how many of you would like to acknowledge those who go above and beyond.

We are currently working through the nominations and will be working with our Engaged Customers to narrow this down and select your winner. Keep your eyes peeled on social media (**@OrbitHelp on Twitter and Facebook**) and the Summer edition of Orbit Life to see who the winner of our Spring Good Neighbour award is.

Here's what one customer had to say in their nomination:

"They've been nothing but helpful since I've moved in. They've been so kind and considerate. I cannot rave about them enough!"

# Update on **cost of living support** for households



## Energy Price Guarantee changes

The Government introduced the Energy Price Guarantee (EPG) to help manage the increase in energy costs by limiting the amount of money energy suppliers can charge you for the amount of energy you use. It was expected to rise by 20% on 1 April 2023, however the Government has announced that this won't happen now. Wholesale energy prices (the prices energy suppliers buy energy for) have also dropped and it's expected that the prices will decrease by 20% in July and stay at that level until the end of the year.

## Extra help for those who receive benefits

If you receive benefits such as Universal Credit, Income-based Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support, Tax Credits, Pension Credit and/or Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance, you should receive an additional £900 cost of living payment from the Government. You can expect to receive the first payment of £301 from the 25 April, with most payments made by 17 May. This will be followed by a £300 payment in the Autumn and a final payment of £299 next Spring (2024).

If you're eligible for disability benefit, you will be paid an extra £150 this Summer (2023). If you're aged 66 or over and eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment, you should have already received an additional £300 payment direct to your bank or energy account. The Government has also announced that this payment will continue next Winter (2023-24). For more information, please visit the [Government's Help for Households website](#).

## Prepayment meter update

It's just been announced that households on prepayment meters will no longer pay more than customers paying by Direct Debit. The 'prepayment meter penalty' will end in July, saving those households around £45 a year. There are also some changes to how energy suppliers can forcibly switch someone to a prepayment meter too. Find out more [here](#).

## Saving on your internet and mobile phone costs

Some providers offer cheaper or what they call 'social tariffs' on mobile phone and broadband packages to customers that are on benefits. [Learn more](#).

# Managing damp, mould and condensation



Condensation is common in many homes, especially during colder weather, and is usually manageable. However, if condensation and damp are left unchecked, it can lead to wider issues, such as mould growth.

We've updated our customer website to offer a range of advice around dealing with damp and mould, as well as managing condensation levels in your home to reduce the chance of mould growth. However, if you're concerned about damp and mould in your home, we're here to help you.

## How can I report a case of damp and mould?

If you're concerned about damp and mould in your home, you can report it online via myAccount or the form on our website (just scan the QR code below) or you can call us on **0800 678 1221**.

## What happens next?

We'll aim to review your report within five working days and contact you to let you know what the next steps will be. We're currently receiving high numbers of reports but are prioritising urgent cases and responding to these as quickly as possible.

We always want to hear about cases of damp and mould, so we can address them as soon as possible. Just report them to us in the usual way, either via myAccount or on our customer website:

[CLICK HERE >](#)

## I've been offered a mould wash and treatment. What is this?

Our three-stage mould treatment (wash, barrier and seal) will remove any potential risk to the health of anyone in your household. After the treatment, additional work may be needed if we discover any underlying issues.

## How can I find out more about preventing damp, mould and condensation in my home?

We've created a set of four leaflets which offer advice on dealing with condensation, damp and mould in your home.

Download the leaflets:

[CLICK HERE >](#)

# Loving Orbit Life?

## Let us know you'd like to keep receiving it



In the Autumn edition of Orbit Life, we told you about a project we're working on to update your communications preferences. This is so that we send you information that's relevant to you, your home and your community – in the format that works best for you.

If you're joint tenants, we'll be looking to gather this information for both of you – rather than having one set of communications preferences for your household.

To find out more, visit the 'frequently asked questions' section on our customer website:

[CLICK HERE >](#)

Would you like to read real life stories about other customers? Do you want to know more about community events happening in your area? Would you like to hear from us about the support available through our Better Days programme? If you're clear with us on what information you would like to receive, we'll be able to provide you with more personalised communications.

## How to update your preferences

If you'd like to keep receiving Orbit Life, just let us know by updating your communications preferences. You can do this quickly and easily anytime either in myAccount or via the form on our [customer website](#).



# Connect with your community!

Join us on social media where we are always sharing valuable tips and hints on how to save money on food, bills, as well as opportunities to WIN vouchers and freebies!

Our social media community is a safe space for understanding more about the FREE services that are available to you, including mental health, financial and digital support, as well as up-to-date information on the increased cost of living.

Follow us by searching @OrbitHelp:



# Security and peace of mind for thousands of Orbit customers

We want you to feel safe and secure in your home, so that you can put down roots, become a part of your community and be able to plan for the future, without worrying you'll have to move out of your home at the end of your tenancy (usually five years for fixed term tenancies).

For these reasons, we've started to introduce lifetime tenancies, so that you can be secure in the knowledge that providing you're up-to-date with your rent payments and haven't breached the terms of your tenancy, you'll be able to remain in your home for as long as you wish.

We've been working hard to achieve this, and at the end of February, we had 22,000 customers on lifetime tenancies. We expect this to increase to around 30,000 customers over the next three years.

## How it works for existing customers

We will review the tenancies of those on existing fixed term contracts. If there are no outstanding issues or rent arrears, we will send a notice which switches the current agreement to a lifetime tenancy.

Most of these customers will receive a notice from us before the end of their current agreement. At the moment, we're sending notices to customers who are in the fourth and fifth year of their fixed-term tenancies. As we switch more tenancies, our aim is to contact customers even earlier to see if this is something they would like to do.

## How it works for new customers

Most new customers are automatically given a lifetime tenancy at sign up. However, there can be exceptions due to a local reason such as a restriction related to planning permission for example. Wherever possible, we will offer lifetime tenancy as standard.

*"It's really great to see so many customers have been moved onto lifetime tenancies, which offers us real security and peace of mind. We look forward to seeing those that are currently still on fixed term tenancies being moved over onto lifetime tenancies, so they can enjoy the same benefits we have."*

David Glover, Orbit customer and Interim Chair of Orbit's Customer Engagement Strategic Committee



# Hannah's advice for helping manage your wellbeing

My name is Hannah and I'm a wife, mother and a full-time carer to my son, who has autism and complex needs.

I'm studying psychology and counselling at the Open University as it's something I'm really passionate about. I have a history of mental health issues and spent my teenage years managing anorexia/bulimia, self-harm and more. I was told I'd never have children due to the damage to my body, however I was lucky enough to have two wonderful boys who gave me the strength I needed to fight back.

Due to my son struggling in school with his autism and mental health, my husband and I built a calming environment at home where he could cope more easily and we could educate and care for him. We are also keen gardeners and have nurtured a beautiful allotment where we grow our own fruit and vegetables. We've rescued animals that needed our help too and as we provide them with care, they provide us with therapy and comfort. This has allowed us to provide not only a healing space for our son, but a special place we can all share as a family.

I would recommend to anyone out there struggling with their mental health to not only seek help if you need it, but to also embrace the outdoors.

To find out more about the additional wellbeing support we offer, just visit our [help and support page](#)



Here are a few of my top inexpensive tips on wellbeing, just in time for the warmer weather!

- 1. Connect with the earth** – Standing or walking barefoot in the soil or lying on the grass can improve sleep, decrease stress levels and improve wellbeing. It helps reduce inflammation and help prevent disease in our bodies. It just feels nice too.
- 2. Animal therapy** – Spending time with animals is good for the soul. Whether it's dog walking, companionship or animal care, spending time with our furry friends helps improve our wellbeing.
- 3. Build a sensory garden** – even plants on your windowsill can allow you to benefit from the different smells, colours and textures of flowers and herbs, just in time for Summer!
- 4. Get some fresh air and exercise** – it increases the serotonin in our brains. That's the stuff that improves our mood and makes us feel good.



# A celebration fit for a King!

The Coronation of King Charles and Queen Camilla took place at Westminster Abbey on Saturday 6 May – and customers living in some of our Independent Living schemes took part in the celebrations!

At Queensway Court in Leamington Spa, residents were joined by children from St Patrick's Catholic Primary School to join in royal-themed activities including decorating cupcakes, making union jack paper chains and taking turns sitting on King Charles' throne!



Josie, one of our residents, comments; "I really enjoyed the occasion as I knew some of the children and it was lovely to see them having fun, decorating cakes and making us all smile."

(L-R) Back row – Resident, Chris Plummer and Deborah Linster-Ali, Scheme Assistant at Orbit. Front row – Hollie Dorman Activities Coordinator at Orbit, with children from St Patrick's Catholic Primary School.

To read more about how customers celebrated the Coronation, just visit our [news page](#)

At Lawrence Mackie House in Wellesbourne, residents and staff held a royal themed afternoon tea. Connie, a resident who at the scheme, says; "I thoroughly enjoyed myself at our afternoon tea celebration. I don't go out much due to my mobility, however it was a great day and lovely that my sister could come along too. I will be getting involved in communal activities more often now!"

(L-R) Nick and Tracy Benbow from Fabulous Suppers, Connie Robbins, resident at Lawrence Mackie House and Sian Morris, Independent Living Scheme Officer at Orbit.

Olivia shared her memories from Queen Elizabeth's Coronation in 1953 with fellow residents at Culworth House in Leamington Spa. As a 12-year-old girl, Olivia was asked to be part of the Warwickshire Coronation Pageant at Warwick Castle. She recalls; "I really loved it – I had an amazing costume with peacock feathers!"

Olivia Ogilvie-Stewart holding a newspaper clipping of her at the Warwickshire Coronation Pageant in 1953.



# Would you like to give us 'Your view'?

Would you like to share your views on the issues that matter to you?

We're looking for customers to get involved in our monthly blog 'Your View'. Published on our customer website, 'Your View' is written by people like you about what it's like to live in one of our communities. Have you worked with other residents to make something better? Is there a Community Champion you want to share a story about?

How are people in your community supporting each other? You can read our blogs by visiting our [news page](#)

If you're interested in getting involved, please [email us](#)



# Introducing the new regulatory Tenant Satisfaction Measures

From 1 April 2023, registered housing providers in England are being asked by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) to report on a standard set of measures known as 'Tenant Satisfaction Measures'. Its aim is to measure how well landlords provide good quality homes and services.

As part of our Customer Promise, we're committed to delivering an excellent customer experience by providing high-quality, safe and sustainable homes. We welcome this new regulation which is designed to:

- Allow you to see how we perform on delivering services to you

- Give insights where we can improve our services
- Provide information to the RSH on how we're meeting the regulatory standards.

22 measures will be collected, 12 of these will be through direct feedback from customers covering views on:

- Our repairs service
- The way we handle complaints
- Whether we keep customers well informed.

To help us collect this information, we've asked Opinion Research Services Ltd (an independent market research company accredited by the Market Research Society) to carry out phone surveys to about 3,000 customers each year on our behalf.

The first surveys will start in mid-May. If you receive a call from Opinion Research (their phone number is 02476 997501), we encourage you to share your experiences with them, both the good and the not so good. Read more on the Regulator on [Social Housing website](#)

# Kieran's journey to sobriety



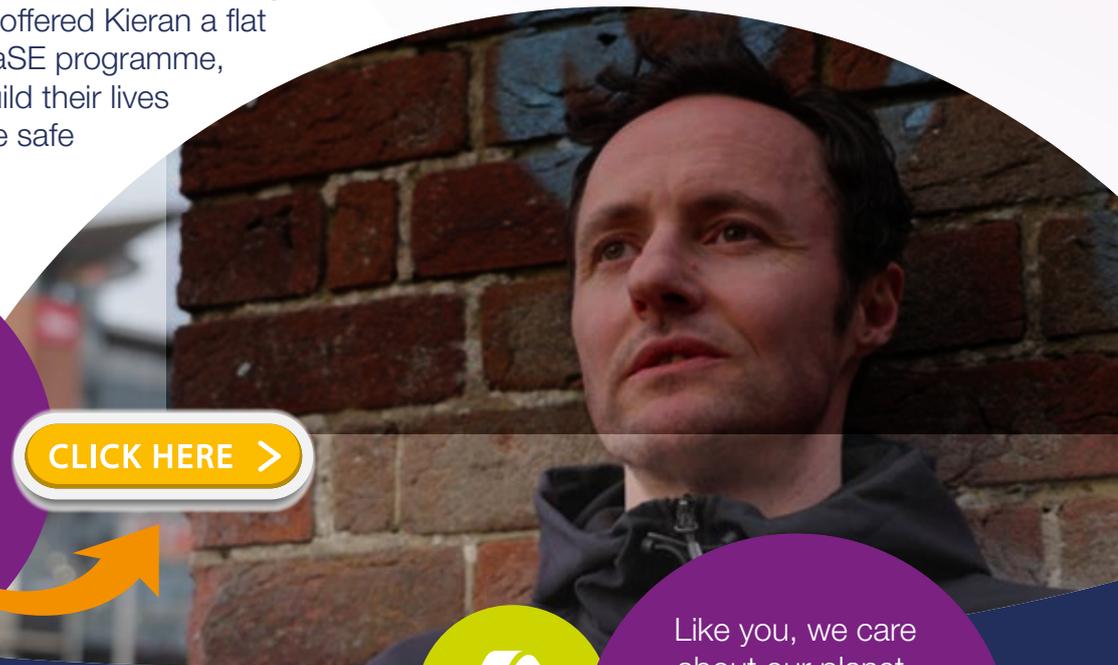
When Kieran was 11 years old he started playing drums and by the time he turned 16, he was in a band that played in live music venues.

He started misusing alcohol as it was just 'something to do' and soon it became his way of life. In 2019, he was arrested because of his drinking and met a mental health nurse through the custody health care team. Once released, he met with her to get help as he wanted to change the direction of his life. We offered Kieran a flat of his own through the PHaSE programme, which helps people to rebuild their lives in a scheme where they are safe and supported 24/7.

In partnership with Bridge, we continued to support him to get his life back on track as he'd never had a home of his own before. He's now sober, getting married to the love of his life and is happy and excited for his future.

Hear Kieran's story in his own words by viewing his video.

[CLICK HERE >](#)



Like you, we care about our planet. The plastic bag that this magazine came in is fully recyclable, so be sure to include it in your soft plastic recycling

## Get in touch:

You can visit our website:  
[orbitcustomerhub.org.uk](http://orbitcustomerhub.org.uk)

For more information, please contact us at:  
[orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/contact-us](http://orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/contact-us)

Or to talk to us, please call: **0800 678 1221**

Textphone: **18001 0800 678 1221**

Take a look on  
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 /OrbitHelp  @OrbitHelp

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If you need information in a different format please contact us on **0800 678 1221**



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