

Orbit Life

Building thriving communities...



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In this issue...

The increased cost of living and free support that's available: **Page 4**

Greener Together – working together towards a greener future: **Page 8**

Free wildlife seeds as part of our 'Wildlife outside your window' campaign: **Page 6**



Orbit Life reader survey results



A big congrats to Jackie from Margate, Kent, who won the £100 shopping voucher for completing her survey!

In the Autumn edition, we asked you to share your opinion with us about Orbit Life – and what improvements we could make to ensure it is more engaging and relevant to you. Thank you to those people who took the time to share their feedback, we really appreciate it.

Orbit Life is our main customer publication. However, your recent feedback told us just how essential it really is to you. More than half our readership (around 18,000 households) get all their news about Orbit through the magazine. From real life stories to community news, we'll continue to bring you updates about customers from all our schemes.

You also told us you got value from our economic coverage and advice, to understanding Government updates and caring for our environment through Orbit Earth. We'll also share the latest news with you and keep you up-to-date on the wide range of support that's available to you exclusively as an Orbit customer.

You said, we did, bringing positive change...



As part of our Customer Promise, we look to provide high quality homes and bring positive change to our communities. Through the survey, you also told us that you have two concerns:

Firstly, you said that you wanted us to improve the ease of reporting and completing repairs. Although there are continued challenges around materials and labour resulting from the pandemic, we are completing about 2,000 repairs a week. We've also been working hard with our contractors to reduce customer waiting

times and are aiming to restore normal services by the end of June.



Some of you also raised concerns about your neighbours and your local community. We've fed this back to the experts in our frontline teams who are reviewing the wider topics you've identified. In the meantime, you can help keep your community free from anti-social behaviour by reporting incidents to us: orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/reportASB

An introduction from our guest editor, **Samir Araffa**



Meet Samir, one of our Engaged Customers, who we invited to be the guest editor for Orbit Life this Spring. Samir shares what it's like to be part of Your

Voice and working with our Customer Engagement team. He also helped us to pull together this issue, ensuring we include relevant information, share what is happening across our communities and also tell you about our Orbit services and partner support. So, without further ado... An introduction from Samir...

I first got involved with Orbit 12 years ago because I wanted to make a difference to people like me who were living in an Orbit home. It's important to me to use my voice for positive change and when the opportunity to get involved presented itself, I decided to volunteer. I was pleased to meet other residents, as well as employees from Orbit. Everyone was friendly and keen to listen to customer views, to understand what's most important and make improvements where they were needed.

If you want to get involved, training is provided, so don't worry if you haven't had any experience – it's more about your view of their services and how they can be improved for every resident. You can attend meetings in person, or if it suits you better, you can contribute online – it's entirely up to you. Your voice really does matter and your opinions will be taken seriously, so I encourage you to get involved today.

Samir Araffa

If you'd like to find out more about becoming an Engaged Customer, then we'd love to hear from you.

Visit orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/getinvolved to find out more. You don't need any experience and can give as much or as little time as you like. Everyone is welcome!



on your QR code reader on your phone!

Customer Promise

Last year we introduced our new Customer Promise and since that time, we've been working hard to deliver it to all our residents. Throughout this edition of Orbit Life, we've included icons alongside those articles that demonstrate how we've delivered it for you.

Helping you and your community to thrive



The increased cost of living and **free support** available

It seems like the cost of everything is going up these days and it's affecting all of us. We want you to know that you're not alone and we're in this together.

As an Orbit customer, you have exclusive, free access to a range of help and support services. Our 'Better Days' support provides expert advice and services working with a range of well-known partners. To find out more, visit our website at: orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/help-support.



Food and household essentials

If you're having a tough time paying for groceries or other essentials, there are a couple of things you can do:

If you're really struggling to afford food and household items, there are local food banks that can support you. The Trussell Trust manages a list of food banks across the country. To find out more, visit: trusselltrust.org/get-help or call **0800 208 2138**.

Apps like 'Too Good to Go' allow you to buy food from manufacturers, restaurants and shops at a significant discount to make sure it doesn't go to waste. You can also visit lovefoodhatewaste.com to find out on how you can save money on your groceries.

Energy and utilities

If you're struggling with your energy and/or water bills, many companies offer schemes or grants to help with home heating, energy and water costs. Some are open to anyone, and you don't always need to be a customer. Visit orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/help-support/your-energy-our-support to find out more. You can also call your energy and water suppliers directly to find out what help they have available.

We're here to help. If you're feeling the pressure and need some extra support, please just visit our website at orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/help-support. If you don't have access to the internet, just call us on **0800 678 1221** and we can put you in touch with the right team who can help you.



Need a helping hand? **We've got you!**

Better Days is our help and support programme enabling thousands of people every year to manage everything from mental health and finances to getting back into work. Our expert team and independent partners offer free information, advice and guidance on the following:

myMoney

Get advice on debt and money management. Last year we supported 1,043 customers with their money, helping to manage an average debt of £2,391 resulting in an average increase of £1,840 additional income.

"After paying bills, I've saved £150 and still have £60 shopping money to play with."

"I'm managing my budget much better and haven't been this 'on-top' of my finances since before the pandemic."

myWork

Last year, Better Days helped:

239
volunteering positions

94
people into work

482
people into training opportunities

"I have been able to gain the knowledge and skills needed to be able to progress my career. I am more confident that I will be able to grow my career now that I have those tools."



BETTERDAYS®

"Fantastic support from the start. I can now show my kids how to work a tablet!"

"Shopping online is easier than I thought. Not only can I save money by comparing prices online, I only buy exactly what I need as I'm not tempted by in-store offers. Plus, I'm saving money on petrol too!"

myDigital

Supporting digital learning and getting online. We supported 185 customers to get online last year and 100% were satisfied with the training.

myWellbeing

Everyone wants to live long, happy, healthy lives and we want to help you along the way. Last year, 1,400 customers said their wellbeing had improved after their support.

"I finally feel like I am making progress with my mental health, I know I will always have mental health challenges, but I have learnt that there are things I can do to feel better and cope better."

"You have given me coping strategies to cope with everyday life and signposted me to support agencies. I feel like a person for once instead of being invisible and not being heard."

Greener Together

– working together towards a greener future



We're working to create a better society, building affordable homes and communities, and doing so in more socially responsible and sustainable ways – so what does this mean for you? Well, we are running our first ever net zero carbon project in Stratford-upon-Avon which is seeing us making energy saving improvements to some of the older homes in our community. You can read more about it in our 'Making our homes more sustainable for the future' article on page seven.

However, there are also things that we can all do as individuals to live a more sustainable life. We can take steps to becoming more energy efficient, reduce our waste food, use apps to shop on a budget and learn about outlets that provide food for a reduced cost. We can also find out more about re-purposing household items in our homes as well as becoming recycling pros! Finally, as a society we've become more aware of caring for our wellbeing and through our partnership with Mind, we've got information on combating loneliness and how nature can benefit your mental health. **See page 10 for more details.**

We've also created an all new 'Eco-hub' on our website where you can access all sorts of information about how to live a greener lifestyle. You'll find:

- **Your journey to becoming green** – Learn how to reduce and re-use, how to become more energy efficient, simple switches to become greener, how to become more eco-friendly, details about our environmental strategy and information about Orbit Earth, our environmental programme.
- **Your journey to a more energy efficient home** – Find out more about our net zero carbon project in Stratford-upon-Avon and the benefits of retrofitting a home. Plus, our net zero carbon roadmap which details our commitment to achieving net zero carbon across our business by 2030 and becoming net zero carbon in our customer homes and with our suppliers before 2050.

Visit **orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/ecohub** to check out everything our Eco-hub has to offer! Loving it so far? For even more green tips and advice, be sure to follow us on Facebook and Twitter by searching **@OrbitHelp**.



Star in our Greener Together campaign video and you could receive a £50 supermarket voucher! Have you been on a journey to become more environmentally friendly? Do you have some green tips to share with other residents? Or maybe you'd like to try out some of our advice? We'd love to hear from you! If you are interested or would like to know more information about the filming, please fill-out the form on our website and we'll be in touch: **orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/greenerTogetherform**



#GreenerTogether

Making our homes more sustainable for the future

One of the key themes of our Customer Promise is to provide high quality, safe and sustainable homes.

We do this by continually investing in your homes to make sure they are regularly updated and maintained to a modern standard. In Stratford-upon-Avon, we've kicked off our first ever decarbonisation project, where we're retrofitting 69 older homes with a range of features to help reduce carbon emissions as well as the amount of energy needed to run them.

The work being done on the homes includes external and internal wall insulation, loft insulation, ventilation, energy efficient doors and windows, as well as smart thermostats. This will reduce the amount of energy needed to heat them, providing residents with warmer, more comfortable homes in the winter and better ventilation in the summer.

We are working with Lovell Partnerships to carry out the work and energy conservation charity, Act on Energy, to provide customers with energy advice and support. The lessons we learn as part of this work will help to inform how we continue to make homes more energy efficient.

It's estimated that carbon dioxide from housing makes up about 20% of the total carbon dioxide released into the environment in the UK, so we can all play a role in reducing it. Around 80% of homes that will be available to us by 2050 have already been built, which means retrofitting will continue to be an important part of cutting emissions in the future.



What exactly is 'decarbonisation'?

Put simply, decarbonisation means the reduction of carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide causes greenhouse gases and is the leading cause of global warming - and that's what's hurting our planet. By decarbonising our homes, we make them more energy efficient and comfortable, and less expensive for customers to run. Win - win!



June is Pride month



HouseProud
Pledge Pioneer

Pride month is dedicated to celebrating LGBTQ+ communities all around the world.

Engaged Customer, John Bennett, has been working with us to promote equality, diversity and inclusion, with a focus on LGBTQ+ residents. Home is our safe space and should be a place where people can be themselves without the fear of prejudice, regardless of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Last year, we signed up for the HouseProud Pledge Scheme to demonstrate our commitment to achieving that aim. We're now working towards our first

HouseProud accreditation that will give LGBTQ+ customers a greater voice so we can understand how they're affected by housing issues and learn to better support them. Education and training are key in changing ignorance and prejudice, so we will be working closely with John and other Engaged Customers to co-design projects that will help us bring positive change to all our communities.

John said

"Research has been conducted which shows that older LGBT persons face higher rates of loneliness and ill health, as well as prejudice and misunderstanding. This is particularly true with those who have transitioned. I'll be looking to the [LGBTQ+ customer engagement] group to work with Orbit to understand the issues that might arise, initially in Independent Living schemes and then more generally across our wider communities."



Wildlife outside your window

Orbit Earth is our environmental sustainability programme, detailing how we are going to improve the environment, creating and improving places and spaces in which your community can thrive.

One of the ways we are doing this is through our partnership with The Wildlife Trusts, the conservation charity. Working with them, we have produced a 'Wildlife outside your window' booklet that's chock full of helpful advice and information about how you can improve your local outdoor space. You can access a digital version of the booklet by visiting our website at orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/eco-hub/wildlife.



We've also got a limited number of free hard copy booklets available to the first 750 customers who order them via our website at the address above.

Just like The Wildlife Trusts, we want to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to experience wildlife in their daily lives. To help get you started; we've included a free pack of wildflower seeds! So, whether you have a window ledge or outdoor space, we hope you enjoy planting them and increasing the biodiversity in your community. We'd love to see your flowers once they get growing, so please share them with us on Facebook or Twitter by searching **@OrbitHelp** and using **#GreenerTogether**.

Love your home – love your independence

We offer a wide range of housing solutions to suit a diverse range of people and now with sustainable tenancy agreements in place, you could stay in your Orbit home for life. It's just one of the many things that differentiates us from traditional landlords.

We believe that having a sense of community unites us. We all want peace of mind, especially as we grow older. We also want to live in quality housing that is safe, easy to access, maintain and affordable, all whilst enabling us to live life to the full. Our Independent Living communities provide you with the opportunity to connect with other people and improve your wellbeing by giving you a safe and secure, serviced home. Communal living for older adults gives residents a sense physical, emotional and economic security, as well as reduced social isolation.

Our new Independent Living mini-brochure

If you are over the age of 55 and looking to downsize or would benefit from living as part of a wider community, our Independent Living schemes might be just what you're looking for. View the new leaflet by visiting our customer website at: orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/independentliving. If you don't have access to the internet, you may also call the following teams:

Midlands – 02476 614363

South – 01843 292517

East – 01502 574506

Extra Care – 01842 819666



Jean is a customer who was living in one of our rented homes in Leamington Spa. Her home was getting to be too much for her with three flights of stairs, plus she had become lonely and isolated during the pandemic.

In December, her Property Manager, Barry, paid her a visit and could see the impact her living conditions were having on her. He told her about one of our local Independent Living schemes, Queensway Court. It has a great community and plenty of on-site facilities. Jean took a tour of Queensway and after meeting Emma and her team at the scheme, she soon moved in.

Jean said *“On first entering Queensway, I was so surprised - it opened my eyes to what is available. It was like a different world! I'm still independent, it's like living again and has completely changed my life for the better. I feel more relaxed and no longer feel alone because I can go downstairs to have a coffee and talk to people. I can also attend activities like skittles and 'knit and natter'. I feel so happy now. My apartment is lovely and cosy - without stairs and I feel safe. I wish I had moved in years ago!”*



Feeling lonely? We are here for you

We've all felt lonely at some time and for most of us, it's a temporary feeling we eventually overcome. It's not like that for everyone though and for some, long-term loneliness can develop into a mental health condition like anxiety or depression.

Loneliness can sometimes be difficult to admit to, and even embarrassing, but like feeling happy, loneliness is a normal emotion. The issue with the emotion of being lonely is that it's a negative feeling and most of us are uncomfortable with experiencing difficult emotions.

Loneliness has a lot to do with the quality and quantity of your relationships and social connections. You can feel lonely if you feel like you are not being understood by those around you. You can even feel a bit lost when your children have left home. There is no one-size-fits-all feeling, just like there is more than one solution to help manage loneliness.



Here are a few suggestions that may help:

Make new connections:

Visit your local community hubs – they offer a range of activities and services that are used by lots of different people. You can form new friendships, join a book club, walking group, exercise class or maybe a lunch club.

Peer support:

Try signing up for a befriending service or online community support such as togetherall.com/joinnow/orbit, our free mental health support service.



If you're over the age of 60, why not sign up to the free 'Call in Time' telephone friendship service run by Age UK? Just visit ageuk.org.uk/services/befriending-services to find out more or call **0800 470 8090**.



Spend some time outdoors: Get out into the fresh air and sunshine. You can spend time in the garden or even go to a local park. Nature has a wonderful way of lifting our spirits by connecting us to the world around us.

If you think that loneliness is starting to affect your daily life and mental health, we can help you find the support and help you need. Just visit orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/help-support to learn more or call **0800 678 1221**.

A Day in the Life of...a Customer Service Advisor

As part of our Customer Promise to deliver an excellent customer experience, our frontline teams often work with residents to help with issues that affect their home.

In our most recent 'Day in the Life' video, we hear from Rebecca, one of our Customer Service Advisors. Rebecca works to assist residents who come through to the Customer Service Centre and helps to resolve queries and complaints.

In her own words Rebecca tells us; *"We know that completing repairs is important to customers, so we work hard to make sure that they are completed correctly. I really enjoy being able to help our residents – it's the best part of my job."*

So, find out what our Customer Service Centre team do to help residents in our brand-new video on the news section of our website: orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/news



Paying by Direct Debit

Setting up a Direct Debit gives you more control over your budget, and with the rising cost of living, it not only gives you flexibility with regards to how and when you make payments relating to your tenancy it helps you to budget for the things you want as well as the things you need. If you don't currently pay your rent via Direct Debit, there are many benefits to changing:

Saves you time

It takes away the hassle associated with paying bills and means that you can spend more time doing the things you want to. You'll find it easier to stay on top of your bills and you'll know exactly how much money is going out each month.

Free and simple

It costs nothing to set up a Direct Debit and is easy to do. Once your Direct Debit has been authorised, money is deducted automatically on the payment date you have chosen, with no further action needed from you.

Safe and secure

Your payments are covered by the Direct Debit Guarantee.

Confidence

You can be sure that your rent and other monies owed are paid on time and in full, every time.

Setting up an account is easy, head to orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/directdebit to get started!



Having home contents insurance can't prevent floods, thefts or fires from happening, but it can help you get back on your feet.

Find out more about protecting your furniture and personal possessions.

Call: 01962 892086

orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/homecontentsinsurance



£1.52 a month for £4,000 standard cover**.

Terms and conditions apply, contact above.

**Price includes Insurance Premium Tax (IPT) charged at the appropriate rate.

The policy is underwritten by Aviva Insurance Limited and administered by Wessex Administration Services Limited who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. You must review the Important Notice and Declaration in the application pack before calling to apply.

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Get in touch:

You can visit our website:

orbitcustomerhub.org.uk

For more information, please contact us at:

orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/contact-us

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

Textphone: **18001 0800 678 1221**

Take a look on
social media:

/OrbitHelp @OrbitGroupUK

Our postal address:

Orbit, PO Box 6406, Coventry, CV3 9NB

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



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