

Spring 2024

# Orbit Life

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YOUR HANDY  
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*The winning photo  
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Phil Coldicott*

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[orbitcustomerhub.org.uk](https://orbitcustomerhub.org.uk)


# Meet our guest resident editor, Roz Hosiene

**We'd like to introduce you to Roz Hosiene, an Engaged Customer and our guest editor of this edition of Orbit Life...**

*Orbit offered me my first home after I struggled to find a place to rent as a single parent with three children. Once I moved in, they taught me how to manage a budget as I'd never had to do anything like it before, it was all so new. I was able to speak with someone who understood what I was going through and they helped get me settled. In time, I was able to build my confidence, make friends and create a good life for my children and I.*

*Because of the help I received, I wanted to give back and decided to get involved as an Engaged Customer. It sounds like a lot, but it's simply sharing my personal feedback of what it's like to be an Orbit customer and offering my views on how a customer would see things. This is so that the teams at Orbit can better understand*



*how their services affect customers and find ways to make improvements for everyone based on real life customer experience. It's helped me too. I've received free training, developed my own personal skills and met new people. If you're thinking about getting involved, please get in touch by visiting Orbit's '**Get involved**'  page. We'd love you to join us!*

*In this edition of Orbit Life, you can learn about improvements Orbit is making to the repairs service so customers have a home they're proud to live in. Engaged Customers worked closely with Orbit on these improvements and helped shape a quicker and easier booking system to report your repairs. You can read all about it on page three.*

*Don't forget to download your free recipe book on page four. It's full of quick and easy recipes, along with some top tips on how you can save on your weekly shop. To help you connect with nature this summer, we've also got a free 'Wildlife outside your window' booklet – find out more on page eight.*

We hope you enjoy reading the magazine. If you have any comments or suggestions for articles, we'd love to hear from you. We're always looking for customers to be guest editors too, so just get in touch if you're interested. It's a fun way to learn more about how we pull the magazine together, plus it won't take a lot of your time. Just email [campaigns@orbit.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@orbit.org.uk) 



# A home to be proud of: about your repairs service

We know how important repairs are to you, and we want to work with you to make sure you have a home you can be proud of. We know we don't always get it right when it comes to repairs, so we've listened to your feedback and we've been working hard to deliver a better service for our customers.

You may notice some differences when you raise a repair with us, including:

- A quicker, easier system booking system
- Better diagnosis of repairs when they're reported, so we understand what's happening from the start and send the right person to fix it, first time
- Training our people to give them more specialist, technical knowledge, so they can provide the solution to complex issues
- Working more closely with our contractors to make sure repairs are done to the right standard

## What you can expect from us when you raise a repair

When something goes wrong in your home, you want to know how soon it can be fixed. Here's what you can expect from us:

**Emergency repair (within four or 24 hours, depending on the type of repair)** – any repair that's needed to protect your immediate health, safety or security, or to keep the structure of your building safe. For example, an uncontrollable leak in your home.

### Routine repair

**(within 28 calendar days)** – any routine repair that's not an emergency. For example, replacement of cracked tiles in your bathroom.

**Major repair (within 90 calendar days)** – any repair that will take longer than four hours to complete, may need several different types of trades, a specialist contractor or needs scaffolding. For example, fitting new windows in your home.

A HOME  
TO BE  
PROUD OF

*"We've been working closely with Orbit to improve customer satisfaction with their repairs service. They're making significant changes to how repairs are handled and delivered, with a keen focus on getting it right the first time"*

said John Bennett, Interim Chair of our **Customer Engagement Strategic Committee**

- Where major repairs have been done, carrying out inspections afterwards to make sure the issue is fully resolved.

You Said...

We Did..

There's more to do and we'll continue to work on improving our repairs service, so keep telling us how we're doing – every piece of feedback is a chance for us to learn and improve.

You can find out more about our repairs service and how to raise a repair by visiting our website.

[CLICK HERE >](#)





Cost  
of living  
feature

# Aprons at the ready!

Spring is in the air and it's the perfect time to change things up at mealtimes, while improving your cooking skills and keeping costs down. What's not to love? We've rounded up a range of scrumptious recipes and put them in one handy place – a FREE handy recipe pack. The pack is full of easy to follow recipes and some top tips on how you can save on your weekly shop.

Recipes range from toasties for one to a classic spaghetti bolognese for the family, with some tasty vegan choices too. We've even thrown in details of some popular food apps and batch cooking advice, which will come in handy when you have limited time to whip something up. To get you started, why not try our tasty Thai basil chicken recipe below?

## THAI BASIL CHICKEN

Serves one

### Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- ½ onion, sliced
- 3 cloves garlic, sliced
- 1 large skinless, boneless chicken breast, cut into 1-inch pieces
- ¼ cup oyster sauce
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 pinch of white sugar
- 2 small chilli peppers, sliced (optional)
- ⅓ cup water
- ½ cup of fresh basil leaves

### Method

#### Step one

Heat oil in a wok or large skillet over medium heat. Add onion and garlic; cook and stir until fragrant, about 30 seconds.

#### Step two

Add chicken; cook and stir until no longer pink, about 5 minutes. Stir in oyster sauce, soy sauce, and sugar. Stir in chilli peppers. Pour in water.

#### Step three

Cook until slightly thickened, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in basil before serving.

### YOUR HANDY RECIPE PACK

Get your **FREE**  
handy recipe pack

Download your free copy of our recipe book by visiting our website. Our Thriving Communities team will also be giving away free copies at events this summer. Keep an eye out!

[CLICK HERE >](#)

### Make it veggie!

If you would rather not add chicken to the dish, simply substitute for tofu, or extra veg (potato, chickpeas, sweet potato).




# Upcoming Your Voice Conference

Last year, we hosted our annual Your Voice Conference for customers, where we met with customers to discuss our services and how we can make changes to improve them for everyone.

We had residents from around the country attend, as well as team members from our Customer Support Hub and Repairs, Orbit Earth and Thriving Communities teams. Many new customers took part, and some have continued to engage with us by joining our focus and scrutiny groups.

We're excited to be working with customers to plan the 2024 conference and will be announcing a date and venue soon. If you're interested in attending, be sure to join our Your Voice Facebook group so that you can be the first to find out the details (learn more on how to do that below). Whether it's your first time at a conference, you're new to engagement or you've been to a conference before, there will be something there for everyone!

## Did you know?

By participating in our Your Voice activities, you can earn reward points that can be exchanged for Love2Shop vouchers? To find out more about the reward scheme visit our **'Get involved'** webpage. 



Check out our film to find out what we got up to at last year's **Your Voice conference!** 



## Join our Your Voice Facebook Group

If you're interested in attending the conference or taking part in our engagement activities, we invite you to join our Your Voice Facebook Group. Here you have the opportunity to take part in a range of activities such as completing surveys, polls and attending live streams and focus groups. You're completely in control, it's up to you how often you participate and you can choose the areas that interest you most. If you need a helping hand, please email our Customer Engagement team at **customer.engagement@orbit.org.uk** and we'll be happy to help set you up. Just visit us on Facebook to find out more.





**CLICK HERE** 

# Meet our new partner to help you with debt, money and energy advice



We're delighted to announce that as part of our Better Days support programme, we've just entered into a new partnership with Citizens Advice to offer you free money management and energy advice.

Citizens Advice Mid Mercia can provide you with free debt and budgeting advice and help you maximise your income by supporting you to claim any grants you may be eligible for. It doesn't matter where in the country you live, they can also provide free, independent energy advice including how to switch providers to save money and help with submitting applications for the Warm Home Discount.

To find out more, please visit our **myMoney**  page. To arrange an appointment to speak with someone, complete our simple **'advice and support'**  form and we'll get in touch to arrange a time and date to suit you.

[CLICK HERE >](#)

**citizens  
advice**

**Mid Mercia**

## A customer who received support from Citizens Advice said:

*"Citizens Advice has helped me massively with my debts. I can't thank them enough for all of their help. They spoke with me and discussed all the options to sort my debt out. They advised on the best option, but it was ultimately up to me. I chose to go down the route of token offers so now I pay each creditor £2 a month which is affordable for me. I now have more money to myself and don't have to worry about large payments to creditors which used to leave me with no money."*

## Helen Gleadell, our Better Days Manager, said:

*"Whilst we've seen a welcome reduction in both inflation and energy prices this year, we know that the reality for many of you is that managing the everyday cost of living is still a challenge. This new, professional and confidential service can help empower you to manage your money more effectively and give you the tools to make financial decisions independently in the future. We're delighted to partner with a trusted charity many of you already know and recognise."*



# Free support to help improve your mental health

**BETTER  
DAYS**®

*"You helped me so much, I don't know how I would have got through this without your support,"*

said a customer who received help through our free Better Days myWellbeing programme.

Your wellbeing is important to us, that's why we've just renewed our partnership with Togetherall, our Better Days mental health support partner, for the fifth year running.



Togetherall offers you free, round-the-clock mental health support through an online peer support community.

They provide a safe and anonymous online space where you can connect with a global community of others through shared lived experiences. It's available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and moderated by real, live, licensed professionals.

You can find out more by visiting our **myWellbeing**  page or by watching our short film **here**. 


You can also register for Togetherall for free by visiting our 'Togetherall sign up' page. Click on the 'join' button and 'I'd like to search for my organisation' from the drop down menu, then select 'Orbit'. Any information you share within the community will not be shared with us.

**CLICK HERE** >

One of the best ways to look after your wellbeing is to spend time outdoors and with nature. We've got a free 'Wildlife outside your window' booklet full of fun activities you can do on your own or with your family to bring you closer to nature. Find out more on page eight.



## Did you know that gardening outdoors can help with children's development?

It encourages healthier eating through understanding where food comes from and it teaches patience and responsibility. It's fun too! National Children's Gardening Week starts 30 May, read **our blog**  to find out more.

# Get your free 'Wildlife outside your window' booklet

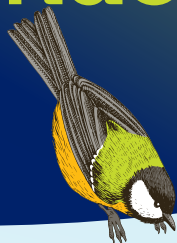


Photo  
taken by  
customer  
Eadie



Orbit Earth is our programme for protecting and improving our environment. We look for ways to create and help green places and spaces, so that 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 free 'Wildlife outside your window' gardening booklet that's full of helpful advice and information on how you can improve your local outdoor space. With ideas from how to build a mini pond to spotting some common insects, this handy little booklet covers year-round tips to ensure you have a thriving outside nature space no matter how big or small it is.

Just like The Wildlife Trusts, we want to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to experience

Download  
your free '**Wildlife  
outside your window**'  
booklet by visiting our  
'Wildlife outside your window'  
webpage.

[CLICK HERE >](#)



wildlife in their everyday lives, this is why we have made a commitment to enhancing your outdoor spaces to improve their quality, as well as the diversity of plants and animals that make them their home. By improving these spaces, we aim to have a positive impact on your health and wellbeing, as well as the environment.



## Did you know?

Over the past year we have planted 6,000 UK native hedge plants, 19 UK native fruit trees, 800 spring/summer flowering bulbs and created over 6,000m<sup>2</sup> of wildflower areas all to help boost nature's recovery. Although we have made a great start on helping nature to recover, we need you to get involved as well.



Watching the wildlife in your area can help you connect with your community, so we'd like to announce a special 'Love your community' photo category for the summer. Please send us your photos of the wildlife outside your window! An additional winner will be selected to win a £50 Love2Shop voucher.





# Loving your community!

In the winter edition of Orbit Life, we launched our new 'Love your community' photography competition where we're asking you to send us your photos of the people and places in your neighbourhood that mean something to you. We received a terrific response! Customer volunteers helped us narrow the entries down to a shortlist of five that we put to a customer vote on our Your Voice Facebook group. Our winner is...

Phil Coldicott, from Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire. Phil sent in a photograph of his friend, Rob, a local busker who was once living in his van before he moved into one of our sheltered housing schemes in Wellesbourne.


Phil says; "Rob used to busk on the bridge in Stratford. He was a real character, had some great stories and absolutely loved this photo!"

Phil, your £50 Love2Shop voucher will be on its way to you shortly! Phil's photo will be put forward for the overall £250 Love2Shop winner that we'll announce here in Orbit Life in February next year.

*A special thank you to Natalie Barnham, Nerys Sanders and Sarah Barker for their marvellous photos that made our shortlist.*

## It's easy to enter!

Would you like to be in with a chance of winning a £50 or even a £250 Love2Shop shopping voucher? Through photos, we want you to tell us what you love about your community, whether it's the people around you or the places that you feel the most welcome, comfortable and happy.

Just head to our website, complete your **entry form**  and upload your photos. The deadline for entering is **Friday 21 June** and our next winner will be announced in the summer edition of Orbit Life.

The competition is open to Orbit residents only, full details can be found on our '**Love your community**' photo competition page.

[CLICK HERE >](#)

# Are you receiving all the help you're eligible for?

If you're currently over State Pension age and receiving a lower income, did you know that Pension Credit gives you extra money to help with your living costs?

Separate from your State Pension, Pension Credit can top up your State Pension in a number of different ways. It can help with housing costs such as grounds maintenance or service charges. You might also get extra help if you're a carer, severely disabled or responsible for a child or young person. You may be eligible for Pension Credit even if you have other income or savings.

Sometimes called a 'Passport benefit', Pension Credit can also unlock other support including:

- Housing Benefit if you rent the property you live in
- Cost of living payments
- A Council Tax discount
- A free TV licence if you're aged 75 or over
- Help with NHS dental treatment, glasses and transport costs for hospital appointments (if you get a certain type of Pension Credit)
- Help with your heating costs through the Warm Home Discount Scheme
- A discount on the Royal Mail redirection service if you're moving house.

If you'd like to help checking what you're eligible for, we can help. Complete our handy form **here** and we'll get in touch.

To find out more, visit **[gov.uk/pensioncredit](https://gov.uk/pensioncredit)**. You can also read **our blog**.

# Are you ready to vote?

2024 is an important year for UK politics, with the general election expected to take place this Autumn. Our Government plays an important role in shaping the future of housing and issues which directly affect you as a customer. Your vote is your voice, so make sure yours is heard!

Whether it's a local issue, such as housing waiting lists, school places, getting a GP appointment or having your bin emptied regularly; or bigger national subjects, such as the cost of living, rent increases and interest rate rises, immigration, or investment in the NHS; if a topic comes up that you care about and want to have a say on, you must be registered to vote to have a voice when it really matters.

We've pulled together some handy advice to help you get ready to vote. From registering to vote to finding your nearest polling station, we've got everything you need to get you ready for the polls this year. Check out our election blog **here**.





# What to lookout for with **disrepair claims companies**



We are aware that some customers are being contacted directly by companies who say they specialise in disrepair claims, by offering to make claims to housing providers for repairs that haven't been completed or have been completed poorly. Many of them are targeting people who may be at risk, using a variety of methods to convince customers to make a claim. They may not always be acting with your best interests at heart, and quite often they will take most of any compensation won.

## **What are the risks of using a disrepair claims management company?**

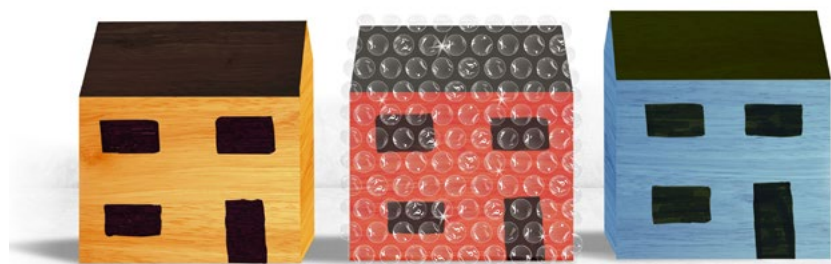
- Some will charge a lump sum up-front to take out an insurance policy for your case. Any potential money you may receive will be reduced to cover solicitor's fees and legal costs
- Once you have put forward a claim and signed the documentation, they usually won't allow you to stop the claim without having to pay (sometimes costly) legal fees
- Some claims can take years to resolve and you may have to appear in court to give evidence
- They may advise you to refuse us access to your home to do any repairs. This could lead to delays in any repairs being completed in your home, potentially putting you and your family at risk.

**We want you to feel safe and comfortable in your home, so if you have any repair issues, please report them to us directly.**

If you would like to raise a complaint with us, the easiest way to do so is through myAccount.

**CLICK HERE >**

# Contents insurance all wrapped up



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

## Insure your belongings

It's our responsibility as your housing provider to insure the structure of your home, however this doesn't include what's inside, like your furniture, clothing and personal possessions.

As our customer, you are eligible for an exclusive home contents insurance scheme, starting from just £1.98 a month for £4,000 standard cover. There's no long-term commitment and you can cancel at any time.

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. Aviva Insurance Limited, Registered in Scotland Number 2116. Registered Office: Pitheavlis, Perth PH2 0NH. Authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority.

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

Textphone: **18001 0800 678 1221**

**Take a look on  
social media:**

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



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