

Summer 2024

Orbit Life



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The latest winning photo of our 'Love your community' photography competition sent in by Tanya Shepherd. See page 4 for more!

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Meet **Barry Slasberg**, our guest resident editor

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


Like the song goes, my mantra for life is to 'accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative.'

When I first moved into my Orbit home, it was during the pandemic. It was a challenging time and my morale wasn't always at its best, but we carried on and supported each other along the way. It was during this time that I decided I wanted to improve our community spirit and get involved both at the scheme where I live and more widely as an Engaged Customer. It's helped me get to know my neighbours better and I now host bingo and quiz sessions at my scheme. I've also



been able to meet fellow Engaged Customers and work with them to help improve services for all Orbit customers. If you have views you'd like to share, we'd love you to join us! In this edition of Orbit Life, learn how you can save money on sending the kids back to school (see page seven).

On page five, find out about another Engaged Customer, AnneMarie, who was nominated for a Women in Housing award. She really cares for her community and always brings a positive energy to everything she does, so we were thrilled to hear of her nomination. Finally, on the opposite page, you can read about a charity wing walk I recently completed to raise money for charity.

If you want to use your voice to make a difference, please get in touch with Orbit by visiting their **'Share your views'**  page.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition. If you have any stories you'd like to share, 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** 

Free as a bird!

Barry Slasberg, our customer guest editor, has been busy! Last month, he stood on a Boeing Stearman biplane, flying at 80 to 100mph at 500ft, all to raise over £3,000 for charity. We met with Barry to find out why he took on this daring challenge...



Hi Barry, what a show! How are you feeling?

I'm pretty chuffed with myself! It was brilliant! Once I got up onto the wing, all I had to do was sit there. The takeoff was bumpy, but as soon as I was in the air with the 80mph wind in my face... believe it or not, it was quite peaceful.

What made you organise this wing walk?

I've done a few 'crazy' activities in my life, such as a parachute jump to raise money for meningitis. Also, Judi, my wife, always encouraged me to try different activities, so I'm here today for her. It's been a year since she passed, and I know she watched down on me giggling whilst I was in the sky.

Why did you choose to raise money for three charities?

I have Parkinson's and Judi lived with it too. The charity has always been supportive, so I want to say thank you.

My grandson has haemophilia and before my wife passed, she raised money for the society which supported him throughout his childhood. I didn't think he could make it today, but he surprised me and is here cheering me on.

I'm also fundraising for the Reach for Health Centre, Daventry as they've supported me since Judi passed.

If you'd like to donate to Barry's worthy causes, please visit his [fundraising page](#) 🖱️

How long have you been an Orbit customer?

Four years ago, my wife and I moved into Riverside Court in Weedon, Northamptonshire, one of Orbit's Independent Living schemes. We were both diagnosed with Parkinson's and didn't want to go into a care home, so this was a great option. I love it here and know my Judi did too. I just need a little extra support sometimes, so thanks to Orbit and my gorgeous daughter Emma, I can live independently, in a safe and friendly community.


Do you love your community? Send in your photos!

We launched our 'love your community' photography competition in February and asked you to send us photos of the people and places that mean something to you.

You continue to send in some great photos and we had a tough time shortlisting them. Luckily, customer volunteers were on hand to help select our winners through the Your Voice Facebook group. Your latest winner is...

Tanya Shepherd and her photo of a handsome grey squirrel at Ellington Park in Ramsgate, Kent. Tanya enjoys taking photos with her son and one day, he hopes to become a photographer. Tanya's photo received so many votes, that in addition to being our 'Love your community' photo competition winner, we've decided to award her the prize for our special 'Wildlife outside your window' category too. Congratulations Tanya, your Love2Shop vouchers are on their way!



You still have a chance to win our next quarterly prize of a £50 Love2Shop shopping voucher. The deadline for entering is Friday 25 October. Complete your entry form and upload your photos **here** . Quarterly winners will be entered into our grand prize of a £250 Love2Shop voucher when we announce the overall winner in February 2025.

Be sure to check out the free kids' activity sheets on our **website** . We've got puzzles, colouring sheets and more!



Congratulations to customer, AnneMarie, on her Women in Housing award nomination

We're delighted that AnneMarie Groves, a member of our Customer Engagement Strategic Committee and Engaged Customer since 2023, was shortlisted in the 'Board/Committee Member of the Year' category at the annual Women in Housing Awards. One of only nine people shortlisted across the country, AnneMarie has been a strong voice for customers and supported us to make meaningful change. Never afraid to challenge or question, her approach is always well-balanced and constructive. Congratulations AnneMarie, your shortlisting is well deserved!

Here's what some of AnneMarie's fellow Engaged Customers had to say about her nomination:

Ron Tredwell

Well done need more like you

2w Like Reply

2  

Roz Merali-Hosiene

Well done AnneMarie. Thanks for encouraging us and so well deserved. So happy for you

2w Like Reply

Philip Coldicott

Well done

2w Like Reply



Are you passionate about sharing your views and making a difference?

Then we have the perfect opportunity for you! Welcome to our Your Voice Facebook group, an exclusive closed Facebook group for Orbit customers where your voice matters.

You can take part in surveys, polls and live streams by providing your suggestions for improvement. You earn points for each activity you complete! Just like AnneMarie, you can exchange those points for Love2Shop vouchers:



How to get started:

1. Join our **Your Voice Facebook group** to view our current activities or email customer.engagement@orbit.org.uk saying you are interested and we'll contact you
2. View and sign up to the activities you would like to get involved in
3. Complete an activity and start earning reward points
4. Exchange your points for your Love2Shop vouchers.



AnneMarie Groves

After saving up the reward points for the year, I was able to redeem them for Love2Shop vouchers that I put towards a new computer. I attended a couple of online meetings a week and replied to all the polls and surveys on the YourVoice Facebook group, along with my Customer Engagement Strategic Committee commitments. I was finally able to pension off my 11 year old iMac for one that runs quicker than I do!

2w Like Reply



A helping hand: customers share their Better Days experiences

Our Better Days programme supports thousands of customers every year, people just like you.

Whether you're looking for new job opportunities, wanting to upskill, would like help managing your money or just need someone to talk to, our free Better Days programme is here to offer you a friendly, helping hand. It's one of the many benefits of being an Orbit customer.

In our new Better Days video, residents share their first-hand experiences of our Better Days services and how they've made a difference to their lives. Each story shows how Better Days has supported customers in different ways. There's truly something for everyone.

Take a look for yourself...

[CLICK HERE >](#)


"They had the insight to show me there is a way forward, they'll never know what they've done for me,"

said a customer who received Better Days myMoney and myWellbeing support.

**BETTER
DAYS®**

If you're facing challenges or just need some simple, honest advice or guidance, Better Days is here for you. Our programme and partners offer free advice tailored to your needs. With easy, self-service options, accessing the support you need is simple and easier than ever.

Ready to start your Better Days journey?

Visit our **Help and Support page**  today to learn more about the many free services that are available for you and your family.

We hold regular free events in our communities where you can come along and find out more about the different ways we can help and support you. Meet your local team and get to know your neighbours through regular activities and events. Find out more by visiting our **Better Days events page**. 

Save money on going back to school

It's that time of year again! Costs for buying new items for the school year can add up, so it's good to have a plan.

We've got some great tips to help make those essentials more affordable, so students can have a fresh start without breaking the bank:

Cost
of living
feature

- **Buy second-hand clothing where you can.** Did you know that schools must ensure second-hand uniforms are available? Some schools and communities offer uniform banks where you can buy pre-loved uniforms at a fraction of the price; some even offer branded school clothing for free. Uniform banks are a great place to look too, click [here](#) for a list
- **You can also shop for non-branded clothing in supermarkets, which are often cheaper.** For families with more than one child, opt for gender-neutral clothing that can be passed down
- **Search online for the best back to school deals and look out for sales and discount codes.** Cash back websites like [Quidco](#) or [TopCashback](#) can offer extra savings
- **Buy refurbished tech.** Consider refurbished laptops or mobile phones from trustworthy sites like [Amazon Renewed](#) and [Dell Refurbished](#). Make sure they come with a good warranty. If you're on certain benefits, you may qualify for a discounted rate for your internet and mobile phone, find out more [here](#)
- **If you're claiming benefits, you could check to see if your child qualifies for free school meals and other additional support.** You may also be eligible for help with home to school transport. Visit the [Government's website](#) for more information
- **Do you really need to buy brand-new stationery? If you already have rucksacks, pencil cases and calculators, avoid buying more.** Label everything to prevent it from getting lost
- **Plan packed lunches in advance.** Decide on lunches for the week before you shop to manage your budget better. Bulk buying ingredients can help keep costs down.

For even more tips, check out our full back to school blog [here](#). 



Meet our new Repairs team

A HOME
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PROUD OF

We've caught up with Sinead Fitzpatrick, our Customer Support Repairs Manager. Sinead explains why improving our training and support systems, plus a new team of 'Repairs Technicians' is helping us to deliver a better repairs service to you – and bringing benefits to our colleagues too.

What does a Repairs Technician do?

A Repairs Technician manages a repair and sees it through to completion. Their day-to-day duties include providing customers with regular updates, communicating with contractors to make sure repairs are completed, arranging further works if they're needed, and chasing up outstanding repairs.

What's the best part of the role?

My team have found that because this role has a central view of a repair, it helps to create a much smoother process for everyone involved. The repairs technician can keep the customer better updated, and communication with our contractor partners is more accurate and up to date.

How does the Repairs team help customers?

The new systems and structure give us a better chance of getting repairs right the first-time a customer contacts us. Our advisors can get to the heart of a repair quicker and better understand the specific needs of an individual and their home (including discussing any existing repair queries).

Thanks to more specialist, technical knowledge, our technicians can then find solutions to complex repair problems.

Having detailed conversations with customers about the repairs in their home can sometimes highlight other areas of support or additional services that are needed. This gives us more opportunities to make sure our customers get the help they need when they contact us.

What does great customer service mean to you?

It's about treating all customers with respect. It's about fully understanding customers' needs, preferences and requirements so that we can find the best solution to the issue. Where possible, we try to provide a first time or an early resolution to a problem – we know that for many of our customers this is the best outcome.

You can find out more about our repairs service and how to raise a repair **here**. 




Save time, do it online!

Have you signed up to **myAccount**? 
It is the simplest way to manage your Orbit account, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Accessing our services and your personal information online is quick, safe and convenient. myAccount gives you full control, with online tools to help you:

- Raise all non-urgent repairs to your home and communal spaces
- Follow up on open repairs
- View your rent balance
- Make payments and manage your Direct Debit
- View rent statements and payment history
- Send service requests directly to the right teams
- Set or update your communication preferences
- Let us know if your contact details have changed
- Request support if something isn't quite right.



To get started and join over 27,000 customers already benefiting from our online portal, register for myAccount **here**. 

Frequently asked questions

Q: How do I register for myAccount?

A: You can register for myAccount **here** by entering your tenancy reference number and personal details. The email address used must match the one listed on our system. If this has changed or you haven't given us your email address yet, please contact us.

Q: I can't remember my username/ password, what do I do?

A: You can reset your password **here** or request a username reminder **here**.

Q: Can I raise repairs on myAccount?

A: Yes, all non-urgent repairs can be raised on myAccount by selecting the 'raise a repair' button on the homepage. To raise an

emergency repair, please contact us directly.

Q: Can I raise service requests on myAccount?

A: Yes, you can raise requests on myAccount by visiting the 'raise a request' page. You can use this page to send requests straight to the relevant team, such as adding someone to your tenancy or reporting anti-social behaviour.

Q: What can I do if I need more support using myAccount?

A: Support guides can be found **here**.



Make your voice heard and tell us what's important to you

We want to make a positive difference to our communities and as we've set out in our new **2030 Strategy**, deliver on our ambition of providing amongst the best customer experience of any housing provider in the country. However, we can only do that if we truly understand what is most important to you.

To help us better appreciate your priorities, we're creating an annual survey that we'll carry out each year on a wide variety of topics. It could include the cost of living and your views about our environment, your wellbeing, our free Better Days services – and more. By comparing yearly results, we'll be able to build a more detailed picture of what matters most to you, so that we can understand how this changes over time and adapt our services to support you.

The first survey launches this October and a company called The Leadership Factor will be phoning about 1,200 customers. If you receive


one of these calls, we ask that you please share your honest views. All of the information will be fed back to us anonymously and will help shape services for all customers.

Last year, we told you about the new 'Tenant Satisfaction Measures' and how all registered providers like us, must now report on a standard set of measures. Its aim is to measure how well landlords provide good quality homes and services and share that information with you. To find out more, visit our [website](#).


Coming soon! Your 2023-24 customer annual report

Find out how we delivered on our services to you and how we've performed alongside the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures, in our all-new customer annual report, coming out on 30 September. The report is being produced in partnership with Engaged Customers and covers the areas you told us were most

important to you. We'll tell you more in the Autumn edition of Orbit Life, coming out at the end of November. In the meantime, you can read previous customer annual reports and the new customer annual report from 30 September by visiting our [website](#).



What to do if you receive a **Migration Notice letter** regarding Universal Credit

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has announced that **Universal Credit**  in the UK is replacing a range of existing means-tested benefits and tax credits often called ‘legacy benefits’ for working-age households. Universal Credit has been available across the UK since December 2013, for people who make **new benefit claims**, who claim because their circumstances change (‘**natural migration**’) or who choose to move from legacy benefits to Universal Credit (‘**voluntary migration**’). Eventually, all remaining legacy benefit claimants will be contacted by the DWP and told they must claim Universal Credit to continue to receive means-tested support (‘**managed migration**’). When this stage is complete, legacy benefits and tax credits for people of working age will no longer exist.

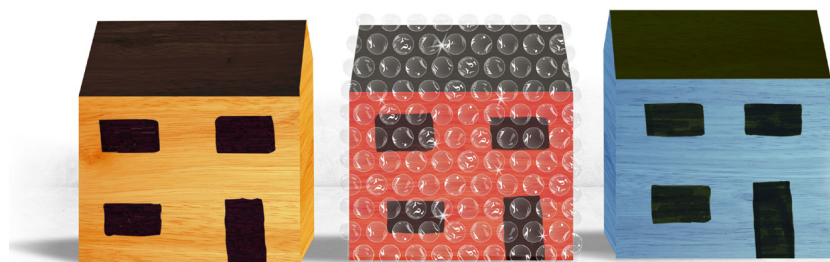
I’ve received a Migration Notice letter, what do I do?

When you need to move to Universal Credit, you will be sent a Migration Notice letter from the DWP telling you that your legacy benefit awards will end and that you must make a claim for Universal Credit. You will be given a deadline for claiming which will be three months from the date of the Migration Notice letter. If you don’t think you can make a claim within the required timeframe, please contact the **Universal Credit Migration Notice Helpline**.

The DWP sends reminder letters, and support is available from the **migration notice helpline, online guidance**, and the **Help to Claim service**. We can also support you through our free Better Days programme, where we can offer you practical financial or debt advice. Simply visit our help and support page to find out more or visit our **myMoney page**.

For more advice on what to do if you receive a Migration Notice letter, please visit our **website**. 

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.

- Pay-as-you-go
- Choice of payment methods paying monthly

Call: 01962 892086
orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/homecontentsinsurance

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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Get in touch:

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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**

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 /OrbitHelp

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