

Orbit Life

Building thriving communities...

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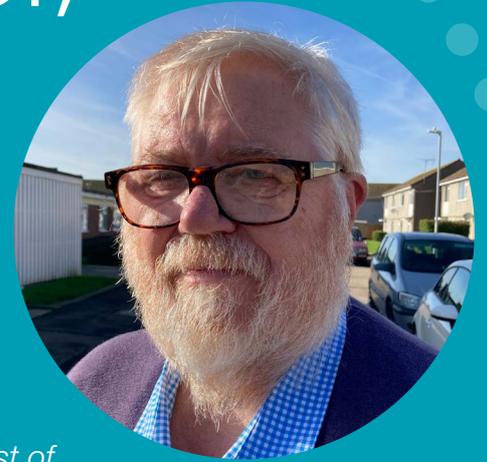
The increased cost of living, we're here to help: Pages 4 to 7

Special pullout!

Customer voices driving positive change – your customer annual report summary



An introduction from our guest resident editor, David Glover



Meet David, one of our Engaged Customers, who we invited to be the guest editor of this edition of Orbit Life. David shares some information about the increased cost of living and how you can access free information and support this Winter. He's also provided an update on our new Customer Engagement Strategic Committee with details on how you can become an Engaged Customer and use your voice to make positive changes for all residents. Meet David...

Hello and welcome to your Autumn edition of Orbit Life magazine. Once again, this edition features the increased cost of living, as it affects all of us and will continue to do so for the months to come. Orbit has created a helpful 'Cost of living hub' on the customer website that contains tips on saving money, becoming more energy efficient, cutting costs on food and clothing and advice for managing your wellbeing. It's being updated regularly so please go have a look, there's lots of helpful information available.



New customer annual report

You can find out how Orbit delivered services over the last year by reading the all-new **customer annual report**, which was produced with residents. You can also view a short highlight film on Orbit's **website**. If you receive the print edition, a summary is enclosed. Hope you enjoy it!

Winter wellbeing events

Starting this month, Orbit teams are coming to communities near you with face-to-face 'Winter wellbeing' events. You'll be able to learn more about **Orbit's Better Days support** and receive free expert energy advice from Orbit's new partner, **National Energy Action (NEA)**.

They will be on hand to support customers who may need extra help with energy bills through the winter months. Residents attending will also receive a free 'Winter warmth support pack' worth around £50 (see page five for more information). Keep an eye out in your letterbox or on your scheme noticeboard for details about an event coming to your community soon!

Your health and wellbeing are important. Orbit also has a wide range of support services that are free to you as an Orbit customer. If you need any help at all, please just reach out. They're here to help. We hope you enjoy the contents of the report and this magazine - and if you have any comments then please feed them back to us. We love to hear our residents' thoughts!

Customer voices driving positive change



I became an Orbit resident over 12 years ago and got involved with Orbit as an 'Engaged Customer' to make a difference for all customers by reviewing the way Orbit works and feeding back from a customer's point of view.

I'm passionate about championing customer voices and joined the Orbit Board as a resident member to do just that. Along with other Engaged Customers, we've recently formed a new resident run Customer Engagement Strategic Committee, which I chair. Our mission is 'Customer voices driving positive change.'

Orbit, like all housing providers, is delivering services to you alongside the new Social Housing Regulation Bill (which comes from the Government's Social Housing White Paper and is intended to change the way social housing is run by being more transparent and accountable). For Orbit to embrace this and support the creation of the Customer Engagement Strategic Committee, is a huge step forward in making sure you have the opportunity to have your say in how services are delivered. I encourage you to do just that.



There are a variety of ways for you to give feedback on your experiences; this includes completing surveys or polls online or joining a question-and-answer session. These can be done over the phone or sometimes face-to-face; it depends on you and your available time. Orbit will provide training and other assistance if you need it and no experience is necessary. We want to listen to people from a variety of backgrounds too. Everyone's voice matters, so if you have an opinion to share, we would love to hear from you. You can email Customerengagement@orbit.org.uk or email me directly at CESC@orbit.org.uk. You can also call **0800 678 1221**.

David Glover

– Chair, Customer Engagement Strategic Committee



If you'd like to find out more about becoming an Engaged Customer, then please get in touch. Engaged Customers are those customers who get involved in reviewing the way we work and make suggestions for improvements from a customer perspective. Visit our [website](#) to find out more.

Share 'Your View'

Would you like the opportunity 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 [here](#). If you're interested in getting involved, please email: media@orbit.org.uk or give us a call.

Helping you manage the increased cost of living

The increased costs for food, fuel and energy continue to affect us all. We want you to know that we're here to help.

We've got plenty of free support available through our **Better Days services**, advice on energy and how to access Government grants, plus tips on how to save money and still eat well. You can also find out more about how to take care of your wellbeing and access free mental health support if you need it through our partner, Togetherall. We've got debt and employment advice too. We're in this together and we're here to help.

BETTERDAYS[®]

We've found the most relevant and well sourced information and put it into our brand new 'Cost of living hub' on the customer website. You can also get regular updates on our **Facebook** and **Twitter** pages by searching **@OrbitHelp**.

Check out our all new 'Cost of living hub'

#InItTogether



Winter wellbeing events

If you're not online (or even if you are!) we invite you to come along to one of our **50 free 'Winter wellbeing' events**.

We'll be holding them at communities all across the country between now and the end of March. Not only will you be able to find out more about the free support we have available through our Better Days programme, you'll also receive free expert energy advice from our new partner, National Energy Action (NEA). We'll be sending invites out in the post, or you can check our customer website to find out when we'll be in your community. Just visit orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/winterwellbeing

Residents who attend a 'Winter wellbeing' event will receive a free 'Winter warmth support pack' worth around £50 containing*:

- advice on how to manage increased energy bills and tips on how you can reduce them
- a thermos flask, to help you keep your tea, coffee or even soup warm, and reduce the number of times you need to heat your kettle or use your cooking appliances
- an energy saving LED lightbulb, which costs less to use than a standard lightbulb
- packets of soup and hot chocolate, it is important to have a hot meal/drink to help maintain body temperature and a form of nutrition
- a thermocard, to help identify areas of your house which may be colder
- a wearable blanket, to keep you cosy and maintain your core body temperature
- a windup torch, to keep in a safe place in case of power cuts this winter and;
- a draughtproofing strip/reflective radiator panel, which provides low cost measures to save energy and money by reducing home heat loss.

*Some items may need to be changed due to availability

Five ways to spend less this Christmas

Christmas can be an expensive time, and this year in particular a lot of us will be looking for ways to cut down on our spending.

We've come up with some tips to help you spend less:

- Get cashback on your shopping by using cashback sites like Quidco or TopCashBack, just be sure to use the site link before making your purchase, or else it won't be registered.
- There are loads of holiday decorations in the shops, however you can save money by making them yourself. You can create garland out of popcorn or dry your own orange slices for your tree, handmade holiday wreaths and centrepieces. There are endless ideas on Pinterest!
- Enjoying food together makes the holidays even more special, although once you start adding up the price of a starter, main, dessert and drinks – it can soon add up. If you've got guests coming over, why not ask them to bring something along? Not only will it save on costs, it will also reduce pressure in the kitchen!
- Who doesn't love a homemade card? Not only can they save you some money, but they're fun to make – especially if you do so with family or friends. It also gets everyone away from their phones and devices for a few hours.
- Plan your Christmas meals around traditional veggies that are in-season, as they often cost less. This includes Brussels sprouts, green beans, cabbage, carrots and parsnips. You can also buy frozen or canned veggies, as they're often cheaper too. Traditional meats such as beef, ham or turkey can cost more. Why not try roast chicken with some homemade sauce and stuffing? There are also cheaper meat-free options too, such as a nut-roast.



Check out our 'Festive family fun' webpage!

To help you enjoy the holiday season, we've created a bumper selection of games, quizzes and recipes so that you can get the most of out of the cosy indoor evenings. Just visit our customer website to find out more!



Making sense of the energy support available

There's a lot of information out there about the support available to help us all manage our increased energy bills.

It can be a bit confusing, so we've pulled together the details to help you understand it more easily:

Energy Price Guarantee

From October, the Government's 'Energy Price Cap' was replaced by the 'Energy Price Guarantee'. What this means is that the Government is limiting the average annual household energy bill to £2,500 for the next six months, well below the previously announced cap of £3,549 per year.

£400 energy bill discount

Also starting in October, households across the UK started to see a £400 reduction in energy bills to help heat our homes in the coming Winter months. The discount is being made in instalments of £66 in both October and November, then £67 in December, January, February and March 2023. You don't have to do anything, it will show automatically on your energy bill – and you won't have to pay it back either. Direct Debit customers will receive the discount automatically as a deduction each month or as a refund to your bank account following Direct Debit collection each month. If you're a prepay customer, you'll receive vouchers that need to be redeemed within 90 days.

Changes to the Government's Warm Home Discount Scheme

The Government is making changes to the Warm Home Discount Scheme, where depending upon your eligibility, you could qualify for a one-off £150 discount this Winter to help with your energy bills. The biggest change is that you no longer need to apply for the discount on a first come, first served basis. The Government has now set eligibility criteria and if your household meets the criteria, the discount will be applied automatically through your energy provider. If you're eligible, you'll receive a letter between now and the end of January 2023.

To find out more about the discounts and schemes above, just visit the news section of our customer website or scan our handy QR code!



Did you know?

Paying by Direct Debit is around 6% cheaper than paying when the bill arrives, so if you don't currently pay by Direct Debit, it could save you some money.

Bringing you expert energy advice



We want to make sure that the energy advice we give you comes from people who know it best.

That's why we've appointed a new Energy and Environment Lead, Dan Welch. Dan joins us from another housing provider, Anchor, where he was responsible for providing energy and water saving advice to residents. He's also worked for energy and water companies, so he really knows his stuff! Dan is helping us prep for our free Winter wellbeing events and has provided loads of energy advice on our new **cost of living hub**!

Dan says: *"The increased cost of living is affecting all of us and there's a lot of information to take in. We're holding Winter wellbeing events so that we can visit your communities and share information that could help save you money on your energy bills. I'll be attending some of the events, so please come along if you can."*

We've also just announced a new partnership with **National Energy Action (NEA)**, the fuel poverty charity. They support people with energy and income advice, with the aim of helping people to afford to heat their homes. NEA will be joining us at the free Winter wellbeing events and will be giving away free 'Winter warmth support pack' worth around £50 to all residents who attend.



"What you have done here for me, it's been fantastic. It's the best thing I ever got done, because if I hadn't got it done, I'd be sitting here freezing now. I'd have no money in the bank, and I would probably owe (my energy supplier) a fortune. You've been fantastic. It's made my life a whole lot better," says a resident who received advice and support from NEA.



Check out the **NEA** website to learn how to better understand your energy use at home and get a free home energy checklist, to help guide you through financial help available and practical steps you can take to help keep your home feeling warmer this winter. You can also get free advice by visiting the advice section of their **website**.



Action for Warm Homes

You can also follow them on **Facebook, Twitter or Instagram**.

Working together to keep communities clean and tidy



We want everyone to live in a community that is green, safe, tidy - and free from fly tipping. Help care for your community by knowing how to manage bulky waste and what to do if you see someone else disposing of it illegally.

What is fly tipping?

Fly tipping, the illegal dumping of waste, is a crime. It can include household appliances like fridges and washing machines, waste from building and demolition work and vehicle parts, like tyres.



Elizabeth and her partner, Clifford

At Dinsdale Court, an estate consisting of 33 flats in Felixstowe, there were issues with illegal fly tipping and residents wanted it stopped.

If there are issues in your community that you want to speak with us about, come along to your next estate inspection, reach out to your local Property Manager or give us a call. We're here to help.

What should I do with my bulky waste?

For items that can't be disposed of with your normal recycling or rubbish, contact your local authority as most have disposal schemes in place. You can also contact the **Environment Agency** for free advice. We can step in and remove fly tipped bulky waste, however there is a cost involved, which is charged back as a shared cost between all residents via your service charges.

What should I do if I witness illegal fly tipping?

Report it to us directly via our **online form** or by calling us on 0800 678 1221. We will need to know what has been dumped, where it has been dumped, and if possible, by whom.



Elizabeth, who lives at the scheme, spoke with fellow customers and then came to us to see how we could help. We then met with residents to agree a solution together. We replaced the bin stores and made them more secure, increased the ventilation around them, improved the lighting in the area and even added a bicycle rack.

Customers are much happier. Elizabeth said; *"These changes have had a positive effect. By increasing the ventilation, it's eliminated the smell - especially during the hot weather."*

Fly tipping has been drastically reduced and bulky waste removal costs have decreased too!

Tell us what you want to hear from us about



We're updating our systems to make sure we're sending you information that is relevant to you, your home and your community – in the format that works best for you.

It's important that we understand what you want to hear from us about. For example, 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? Would you like to find out about customer engagement opportunities?

If you're clear with us on what information you would like to receive from us, we'll be able to provide you with more personalised communications.

We are currently contacting a number of customers to update your communications preferences, as part of an initial project to help us understand the best ways of us gathering this information from you. You might receive an email, text message or letter – or you might hear about this from your scheme manager if you are an Independent Living customer.

In the meantime, if you want to update your communications preferences, you can do this quickly and easily anytime either in **myAccount**, via our **webform**, or by calling us on 0800 678 1221.

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

If you want to find out more, the **'frequently asked questions'** on our customer website is a great first port of call.

Did you know?

One of the best ways to keep up with everything Orbit is by following us on **Facebook** and **Twitter**. Just search @OrbitHelp!



Go digital with Barclays Digital Wings



Are you getting the most out of using the internet? Perhaps you could use a helping hand to improve your skills?

- Stay in touch with family and friends
- Save money by searching for the best deals online
- Save time by ordering your shopping online
- Manage your household bills
- Explore your hobbies (such as watching online tutorials on YouTube or listening to podcasts)
- Stream your favourite tv programmes or films.

If you are already online and looking to brush up on the basics, Barclays is offering a new, free online tool, 'Digital Wings' that provides you with easy-to-use tutorials so that you can maximise the benefits of your smartphone, tablet or computer. It includes things like:

- How to set up a device
- Explore the internet
- Shop online
- Use social media
- Learn how to keep you and others safe online
- Control your personal data and recognise and avoid scams.



Sign up now by visiting our [website](#) or scan our QR code. People who have used Digital Eagles have said;

"Great hands on and practical tips that need to be seen by everyone!" and "The site is well put together and has some great learning modules."



Did you know?

Free support with basic digital skills is available – call us today to find out more. If you live in an Independent Living scheme, just ask your scheme manager.

In partnership with



Standing together against hate

Orbit was founded with one clear purpose – to turn inequality into positive action, and this is still true today. It's our mission to build thriving communities where everyone in our communities feel respected, valued and included.

We know that we're stronger and more successful when we support each other and combine the unique perspectives, talents and wisdom that our different life experiences give us. We can all take responsibility to fight inequality every day.

What is a hate crime?

Any criminal offence, typically involving violence, that is perceived by the victim or any other person, motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on someone's disability, faith or beliefs, gender identity, race or sexual orientation - or any other protected characteristic.

To report hate incidents, please contact your local Police in the first instance, then you can let us know too where it's relevant (as not all incidents may be a hate crime). Once reported to us, we'll be in touch to go through your report, discuss any support you may need and create an action plan. We can help you access different support agencies for extra support or if you don't feel confident contacting the Police, we can discuss alternatives with you too. If the report relates to an Orbit customer, we will take it forward and look at what interventions can be used against the perpetrator and help liaise with the Police.

We can all take responsibility to fight inequality - in the everyday conversations that we have, the thoughts that we think, and the actions that we take. We can all be allies to each other. Call out prejudice if you see it, report it if you experience it, talk, share, and educate. Let us stand together and make our communities no place for hate.

Tonia Mihill, one of our Customer Board Members, shares her powerful and inspirational **blog** about her lived experience of hate crime. She calls for us all to choose love, take action and make our neighbourhoods safer for everyone.

"I grew up as a lone mixed heritage child in my white family. It was the sixties and seventies, and I was regularly subjected to hateful, verbal racist abuse."



Customer voices driving positive change – your customer annual report



You can find out how we delivered on our Customer Promise to you by reading the all-new customer annual report, which was produced in partnership with residents just like you.

Want a quick overview? You can view a short highlight film on our website. If you receive the print edition, a summary of the report is enclosed. Hope you enjoy reading it! If you have any feedback we would love to hear from you, just email campaigns@orbit.org.uk.

Scan the QR code to watch our summary report or click [here](#):



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  @OrbitHelp

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



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