

Orbit Life

Building thriving communities...

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An introduction from our guest resident editor, **Sylvie Corlett**



Meet Sylvie, one of our Engaged Customers, who we invited to be the guest editor for this edition of Orbit Life magazine. Sylvie shares some information about the increased cost of living and how you can access information and support over the coming months. She's also included some details on how you can become an Engaged Customer and use your voice to make positive changes to our services. It's our pleasure to introduce Sylvie to you...

We're all aware of the challenges ahead regarding the increased cost of living and as an Engaged Customer, I wanted to let you know that a helping hand is there should you need it.

There's a lot of information to take in and Orbit has helped break it down so that you can find the information and support you need, when you want it. They have just introduced a 'Cost of living' hub to the customer website which I am sure you will find useful. It has information about support towards energy bills including links to relevant websites as well as how to save money on your food bill whilst still eating well. There's also free wellbeing and debt advice available if you or someone you know needs it. Be sure to bookmark the page so you can check back regularly.

Click here to learn more



To find out more, see pages 4 and 5 for our special '**Cost of living**' feature. You can also visit the 'cost of living hub' by clicking on the button to the left

Your voice does matter and can really help make changes to the way Orbit delivers their services. If you'd like to find out more about becoming an Engaged Customer, then we'd love to hear from you. Visit our [website](#)  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!



Customer Promise

Last year we made a promise to you, to provide safe, sustainable homes and communities and improve your experience in dealing with us ensuring we provide a better day, every day.

To highlight how we are delivering on this promise, we have included the icons shown here throughout our magazine alongside articles that demonstrate our commitment to you.

Helping you and your community to thrive



Improving our repairs service for you



We would like to thank you for your patience and understanding as we have worked through material and supply chain shortages that have impacted a number of sectors UK wide, including housing.

This has meant that some repairs and home improvements have taken longer than we would like, and we introduced a 90-day completion period for all routine repairs to ensure we established our service commitment with you.

Our teams and contractors have been working hard to reduce the number of people whose homes needed essential repairs and we are delighted to let you know that we've now reintroduced a 28-day completion timescale for routine repairs.

How we respond to different types of repairs

We categorise repairs as either emergency, essential, routine or major works repairs, and respond differently to each type.

Learn more about what you can expect from us, depending on the type of repair you report:

Click here to learn more



How to raise a repair

It's quick and easy to raise a non-urgent repair using **myAccount** . You can fill in the details of your repair and one of our contractors will be in touch to book an appointment with you.

If you have an emergency repair, we advise that you call us on

0800 678 1221

so we can help resolve your situation as quickly as possible.

"I have found raising a repair online easy to do and my repairs have been fixed quickly and without delay"
– Phil Coldicott, a customer who recently completed a repair request online via myAccount

Investing in your homes

Keeping you safe and comfortable in your home is important to us. Over the last year, we invested just under £30m in home improvements - from kitchen and bathroom replacements to roofing, heating and insulation installations. We've also completed a record 120,000 repairs to keep your homes maintained to a good standard.



Introducing our new Cost of living hub



The increases for food, fuel, energy and general costs are having a massive impact on us all. With so much information being shared, keeping on top of it all can be an additional challenge.

We've trawled the net for the most relevant and well sourced information and put it all in our brand new 'Cost of living hub'.

We have a lot of 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 – all in one handy, easy-to-access place.

We'll regularly update the Cost of living hub with all the latest information as it becomes available, so be sure to bookmark it in your browser so that you don't miss out! You can also get regular updates on our Facebook and Twitter pages by searching **@OrbitHelp**.

Helping you manage your money

We've got debt advice, tips on how to effectively manage your money, plus an online benefits tracker to calculate what benefits you may be eligible for (it's free and anonymous!)

If you don't have enough to live on, we've got advice on how you might be able to get help from the Government or your local council to afford essentials like bills and food. This includes the Household Support Fund and Cost of Living payments.

Your energy, our support

Due to the energy price cap, energy costs increased on 1 October. We've pulled together all the latest information on grants that are available, so you can understand if any of these apply to you and what action you may need to take. We've also added tips on how to reduce your energy usage, how to make sure you're running your heating to maximise its efficiency during the colder weather and the benefits of having a smart meter.

If you need help with your energy and/or water bills, many companies offer schemes or grants to help with heating your home, energy bills, 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.



To find out more on how you can save on the cost of feeding your family, check out our **'saving money on food costs' blog** [here](#).

Through PayPlan, our financial advice partner, you can access free confidential and independent advice from their friendly advisors who will work with you to improve your situation - without any judgment.

If you really need someone to talk to, please call **0800 678 1221**

Save money on food and still eat well

We're all feeling the crunch as the cost of living continues to rise and we're looking for ways to cut down on our food bill. Here's how you can reduce yours, starting this week!

Find out about savvy shopping, how to cut down on food waste and put food on the table. We've even rounded up the best food saving resources on the web and put it all in one place to make life just that little bit easier.

[Click here to learn more](#)



"I finally feel like I am making progress with my mental wellbeing. I know I will always have mental health challenges, but I have learnt that there are things I can do to feel and cope better." – a customer who received advice through **Breathing Space, our wellbeing programme**

Your wellbeing

Sometimes we may need extra support, especially when it comes to something as important as our mental health. We have a wide range of free and confidential support services exclusively for you.

Togetherall is our online mental health and wellbeing partner and they can provide you with immediate free access every day of the year. The service is moderated by healthcare professionals around the clock and includes access to a range of online courses, tools, trackers and self-help resources.



You can also access free one-to-one support from Breathing Space, which aims to prevent problems from happening or getting worse by tackling the causes rather than dealing with the outcomes, and supporting you to be in control of your life and build connections, learn new skills and improve your wellbeing.

Government grants

The Government is providing cost of living support through grants and other programmes. Find out how to support your income, get help with energy bills, childcare and transport costs, housing support and help with getting into work. Find out what discounts and offers are available from businesses to help you with the cost of living.



Check out our all new **'Cost of living hub'**

[Click here to learn more](#)



#InItTogether

Finding work

Through Skillzminer (our new, free digital platform), we can help you identify your strengths and work out what job would be perfect for you to apply for. We also have advice to support you in progressing in your current line of work as well.



You can take advantage of free employment skills training and job coaching support, find out about jobs that are in high demand, where there are skill shortages and how we may be able to help you if you want to change jobs or earn more money. **See page 8 to find out more.**

Proud to celebrate Pride

Pride Month each June is a global event which recognises the influence LGBTQ+ people have had around the world. As well as being a month-long celebration including parades, parties, and community events, it's also an opportunity to create more inclusive communities, where people feel safe and comfortable being who they are. We're proud allies to our LGBTQ+ community all year round and we love to share stories from your communities and give you the opportunity to hear from them directly.

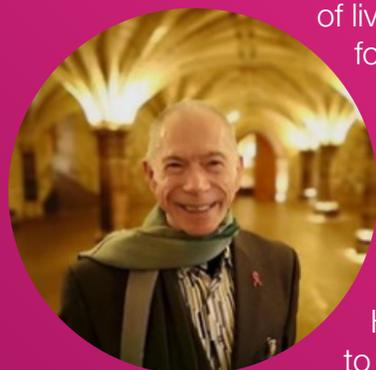
Meet Sandra

Sandra was around eight years old when she felt she was 'different'. At the age of 80 she knew she wasn't living life as her true self and decided to act on it. Learn more about Sandra's inspirational story by [watching her video](#) 



Maurice's story

We caught up with Maurice, a member of an LGBTQ+ charity in Stoke-on-Trent, to chat to him about his life's journey since coming out in the 1980s and his experience of living with HIV. What followed was a remarkable story of strength as he now lives his life as his authentic self, supporting others in the LGBTQ+ and HIV community. Listen to his podcast [here](#) 



Did you spot us at Warwickshire Pride?

In August, Engaged Customers, who are also part of our new LGBTQ+ Customer Engagement Group, took part in the annual Warwickshire Pride Festival in Leamington Spa. The event was a colourful celebration of LGBTQ+ life and culture and provided an opportunity for the community to stand together. Employees from our Thriving Communities team were on hand to lend their support too, meeting with local people and sharing details of our Customer Engagement programme.

We need you!

If you would like to get involved in our LGBTQ+ Customer Engagement Group, or any of the other Engaged Customer Groups, then we'd love to hear from you. Visit our Your Voice page 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!

Click to find out more



Thank you to Her Majesty The Queen



We wish to express our great sadness at the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and pay tribute to her extraordinary service to the UK and the Commonwealth.

The Queen has always brought people and communities together and we share that same aim through our Customer Promise of building thriving communities. Earlier this year, we celebrated The Queen's Diamond Jubilee with events up and down the country. We thought you would like to see some of the photos from those events and join us in celebrating her remarkable life of public service. Thank you for all you have done Ma'am, rest in peace.

A trip back in time...

Pauline at Helgate Court in Norwich shared a 'coronation scrapbook' that she'd created for the Queen's Coronation in 1953. The scrapbook was in immaculate condition and it's fantastic to see the Coronation through the eyes of a 13 year-old in 1953.



Peggy (right) from Sherwood House in Hastings celebrated her 100th birthday this year and was delighted with the card she received from The Queen. She and other residents celebrated the Jubilee with an afternoon tea and quiz.



Young and old come together

Generations old and young were united in celebration at the appropriately named Queensway Court – one of our Independent Living, Extra Care schemes in Leamington Spa. 30 children from St Patrick's Catholic Primary School came along to hear residents' real-life stories about their memories of The Queen's inauguration. They also joined together in royal-themed activities including decorating cupcakes, making paper crowns and singing the national anthem.



Click here
watch



We've produced a video of the Queensway festivities, you can view it here.

Search for job and training opportunities with Skillzminer



skillzminer

Skillzminer is our new, free digital platform that in no time at all, will help match you to potential jobs and training opportunities based on your skills and interests.

It only takes about four minutes to set yourself up and get going – and best of all, it's a free service exclusively for Orbit residents.

By registering, you'll have 24/7 access to free information that has been pulled together specifically for YOU, including:

- Over one million UK-based job vacancies – after answering a few simple questions about your job preferences and interests, we will identify your skills and automatically match you with jobs that you can apply for, including options you may not have considered before

- Details about 15,000 qualifications – we will suggest different qualification and certification programmes that may interest you, as well as free online courses that you can sign up for
- 50,000 free educational resources – we will provide a selection of short videos about the types of jobs available and what you would need to do to get a job that you're interested in. Because you can access this information online, you can watch at a time and place that suits you.

Click here to find out more about Skillzminer



Barclays Digital Wings

If you're looking to brush up on your internet 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.

Sign up now!



In partnership with



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, recognise and avoid scams.



Did you catch our Greener Together campaign?

Over the last few months, we've been sharing our favourite tips and advice to help us all to live a greener lifestyle.

In case you missed it, we've rounded up the best bits!

- Take a look at our new **Eco-hub**  consisting of all things environmental, including:

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.

Keep up with all our campaigns and news by following us on social media – just search **@OrbitHelp** on **Facebook** and **Twitter**.



- Download our **Orbit Earth Eco-pack!**  It is full of sustainable challenges, fun green activities and tasty recipes which are environmentally friendly.
- Check out our website news section **Greener Together blog**  where you'll advice on reducing single-use plastic.





UKCSI survey results –

how we're delivering our Customer Promise to you

Everything we do is linked back to our Customer Promise of helping you and our communities to thrive.

We're constantly looking to improve the ways that we work and the services we provide. In April this year, we teamed up with The Institute of Customer Service (ICS) to help us better understand how you rate our services. They emailed a UK Customer Satisfaction Index (UKCSI) survey out to 15,000 of you - and we're grateful to those of you who took the time to respond.

We've received the results of the survey and our overall customer satisfaction rate is broadly the same at 55.0 from 55.3 (when we last carried out the survey in 2020). Our 2022 score is not where we hoped to be, and we know we can do better.

What we've done well

You told us that it's easy to contact us both in person and over the phone and when dealing with enquiries, specifically around tenancies, service charges and new repairs. We've made improvements to our digital services including a

new customer website and increased functionality on myAccount, our online customer portal.

Our 'to do' list

The survey also revealed that we don't always deliver services in a consistent way. You've told us we need to be more open and proactive with you in communicating delays and service challenges too.

We will use the UKCSI results to support our customer working groups to look more closely at the areas where we need to improve, and this will feed into our exciting service improvements plans. These include looking at how we can get our services 'right first time' more often and how we can improve the customer experience for all our residents.

To find out even more about how we've delivered services for you, be sure to check out this year's customer annual report, **'Customer voices driving positive change - Our annual report to customers 2021 to 2022'** 



Understanding your service charge statements

If you live in a home with the use of a communal area or where annual servicing contracts are in place, you'll be paying a service charge. In February, we issue you with an estimate of those charges and in September, we send out details of the actual costs. If you haven't already, you'll soon be receiving your 'actual' statement (by mid-October).

For additional information about your service charges, what is included and how they are calculated, please visit our **customer website** . You can also view the service charges costs on your account and make payments online by logging in to **myAccount** .

If you have any further questions, please email us directly at **servicechargeteam@orbit.org.uk** . We're here to help.



'An inspiration', why one of our customers is being celebrated for his work to improve men's mental health

Having struggled with his own mental health in the past, Phil Coldicott recognised that there was not much mental health support available within Stratford-upon-Avon, particularly for men, and wanted to contribute to his local community.

He also saw the negative impact that the pandemic was having on everyone, including himself, and decided to do something about it.

Phil founded the first ever Stratford-upon-Avon 'Men's Support Group' who meet regularly at the Lifeways Centre on Albany Road. The group aims to help support men's mental health issues through listening and running wellbeing activities. Although Phil sometimes struggles with his own confidence, he's really pushed himself to promote the group by appearing on a local radio station and in the local news. He reached out to other organisations, arranged for additional support to enable the group to grow and upskilled himself by attending training on a virtual community camp with the Eden Project.

As a result, Phil, who is also one of our Engaged Customers, was shortlisted for a prestigious West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) 'Mental Health Star Award'.

The awards celebrate the ground-breaking work that is being done across the region to improve mental health and wellbeing. He was shortlisted in the 'Individual Warwickshire Above and Beyond Award' category for those people who have gone that extra mile to promote mental health and wellbeing in their area.

Phil has worked with us for many years as an Engaged Customer. Prior to the pandemic, he also volunteered weekly as a Digital Champion in our Greenhill Street location and is a brilliant Orbit ambassador in his local community. Phil was also nominated for Orbit's Thriving Communities Better Days Award, which he won highly commended nominee prize.

Phil said: *"I'm proud of what I've achieved with the group and it shows if you keep trying to do positives things, you can achieve and give back to your community."*

Charley Oulton,
Head of Engagement
and Improvement at Orbit,
said: *"We're really proud of
Phil and the work he's done to
support not only residents in
Stratford, but also the wider
community. We're super
proud of all that he's
accomplished!"*



Are you making the most of myAccount?



Are you among the 18,000 residents who use myAccount to manage their Orbit account?

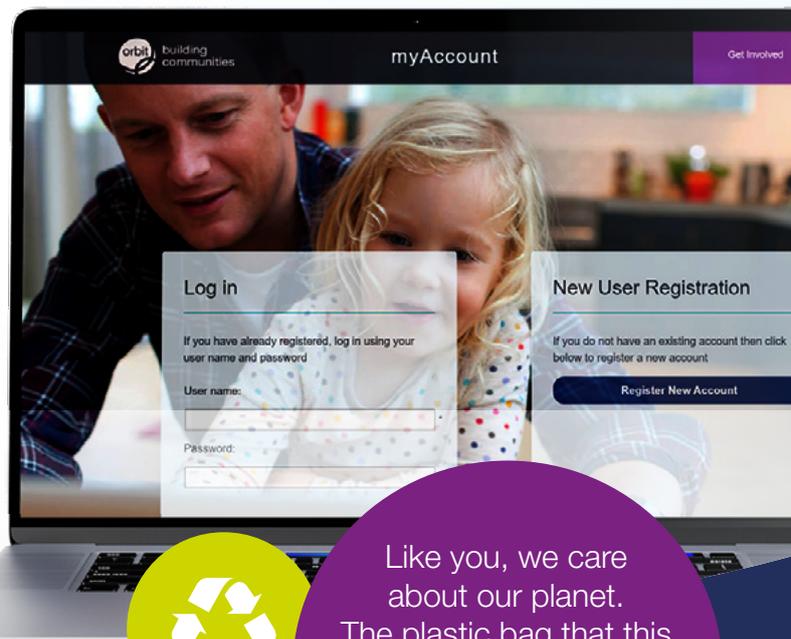
It's all online, so anytime and anywhere you need access, you've got it. You can view your rent balance and transaction history, raise a repair, setup a Direct Debit and even make a payment.

You can also update your contact details without the need to spend any time on the phone and keep on top of how we communicate with you, by selecting 'opt-in for the latest news and offers' from the myAccount homepage. This will keep you updated with the information that you want to receive.

To find out more, just head over to our customer website.



You can also keep up with all of our updates and news by following us on social media – just search **@OrbitHelp** on **Facebook** and **Twitter**.



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

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**



building communities

Orbit Group Ltd and Orbit Housing Association Ltd are registered societies under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 and are exempt charities registered with the Regulator of Social Housing.