

Orbit Life

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All the latest cost of living info

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Learn more about how we're delivering our services to you in our

Customer annual report

See page two



Gemma Parker, at the reopening of our Gorleston-on-Sea Community Hub in Norfolk. **Read more on page five.**



An introduction from our guest resident editor, **Fiona Wilkinson**

Please meet Fiona, an Engaged Customer and our guest editor of this edition of Orbit Life..

20 years ago, an unexpected situation caused my husband and I to become homeless, making us feel insecure and worthless. When we were first offered an Orbit home, we found it overwhelming to have our own front door and a secure place to call home. Life got better though and soon there was light at the end of the tunnel.

My husband wanted to give back and, by becoming an Engaged Customer, he's been able to help improve Orbit's services for all residents. He really enjoyed it, so when I retired, he suggested I do the same. At first I thought it wasn't for me, why would Orbit want to listen to anything I have to say? I soon



discovered that you become part of a team who will always support and respect your views, even if they are different to their own. When it's necessary, we're able to hold Orbit to account for some of their actions too. I find it fulfilling to help shape Orbit's services and make improvements to enhance the lives of all residents.

In this edition of Orbit Life, you'll find advice on how to help manage the cost of living. Read about how you can save on energy and get your home ready for the colder weather on pages six and seven. You'll also find a summary insert of this year's customer annual report 'Customer voices driving positive change'. Produced in partnership with Engaged Customers, it addresses the areas you told us were most important to you and gives you highlights on how Orbit has performed over the last year and delivered on its Customer Promise to residents.

[CLICK HERE >](#)



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 

For highlights of our customer annual report or to read the full version, just head over to our website here:

[CLICK HERE >](#)

Are you part of our new Your Voice Facebook group?



Read our Q&A with resident, AnneMarie, to learn more...

Q: What made you join the Your Voice Facebook group?

A: It's a lovely, informal place to ask a question and see what other Orbit customers are experiencing. You can post something and return later to read the comments at your convenience. Also, you can take time to respond to someone else's query. There's no rush or pressure to action immediately.

Q: What can customers find on the Facebook group?

A: There's a list of up-coming customer engagement meetings you can sign up to and give your feedback on. There are notes of any previous groups and meetings so you can read what's been talked about. Some Engaged Customers post about local community events they've attended and the Better Days team posts details about their events too.

Q: Does Orbit respond and make changes from what customers are saying?

A: Yes, they run regular 'you said, we did' sessions, so you can see the changes they are making from our feedback.

Q: Why do you recommend the group to other customers?

A: I would recommend customers join this online community, see how customer engagement operates, ask your questions, be involved and help make changes. It's a useful tool for seeing how Orbit is involved with its customers. You can look at it whenever you have time available.



Join our **Your Voice Facebook** group today! Don't have a Facebook account? You can learn more about how to **sign up here**



If social media isn't quite for you, there are other ways you can share your views with us including webinars, focus groups or by taking part in one of our customer engagement feedback groups. They cover topics such as complaints, repairs and how we communicate with customers.

Woman using her mobile phone.

To find out more, visit our **Your Voice webpage**

Top tips for saving money on your weekly food shop

We're all looking for ways to save money on our weekly trip to the supermarket. To help make it a bit easier, we've pulled together some top tips to help you make your pounds stretch a little bit further.

- Write your shopping list when you plan your meals and you won't just be less likely to forget anything, you'll also find that you're less likely to make impulse buys
- Sometimes own-brand items are more affordable than the big brands and they normally don't sacrifice much on quality
- Loose fruit and vegetables are often less expensive and some supermarkets also offer seasonal vegetable boxes for a reduced price. Not only do you save money, but you're using less packaging, which is great for the planet
- Most supermarkets breakdown the cost, whether it's the cost per item (for multipacks)

Must-have apps to help with food costs

Prices are continuing to rise and we're all looking for ways to save money. One of the areas we can all make savings is with our food costs. There are numerous apps around that you can download which will help cut down on your food spend, but knowing which ones are worth it can be a challenge.

To help make it easier, we've rounded up the best food apps so that you can make your pounds stretch a little bit further, and they're all in one handy place.

Cost of living feature



or by weight or volume, depending upon the item. Check the label on the shelf or online before you buy to make sure you're getting good value for money. It also helps to be realistic about how much you can use at once – it's not good value if you end up throwing food away

- Towards the end of the day many shops reduce the price of fresh food items as they edge closer to their expiry date. Even if you can't use it straight away, many items are still great for freezing!

For even more useful information on how to manage the cost of living, just visit our '**Cost of living hub**'

[CLICK HERE >](#)



Read the blog on our **website**  to find out more.

Our new Community Hub in Gorleston-on-Sea

Cost of living feature

At the end of September, we officially reopened our Better Days Community Hub in Gorleston-on-Sea in Norfolk. The hub provides the local community with a convenient place to access free face-to-face advice and support on a range of topics including; money management, health and wellbeing, employment, and getting online.

The hub was officially opened by customers and the Mayor of Great Yarmouth, Councillor Penny Carpenter, at a celebration which included free face painting, sports and arts activities, birds of prey handling and more. We partnered with Volunteer It Yourself to re-vamp the community space and recruited young local residents to gain hands-on work experience in trade skills, to give the building and garden a new lease of life. "It was lovely to meet new and long-term residents. It was great to see so many neighbours go beyond smiling and nodding, to sitting and chatting over a coffee and begin to build community unity. There were lots of energetic children using the climbing wall, having their faces painted and playing with new friends!" said AnneMarie, one of our Engaged Customers who lives in a nearby Independent Living scheme. AnneMarie went along to the official opening of our Better Days Community Hub to share with residents the benefits of getting involved in our Customer Engagement opportunities.



Left to right: The Mayor of Great Yarmouth, Councillor Penny Carpenter; local resident Jamie Stapley; PC Joe Pike, Norfolk Police, Rachel Harrington, our Regional Place Manager; Daniel Christmas-Arden, Volunteer it Yourself and customer, AnneMarie Groves.



Giorgio Banthorpe holding on owl from Fritton Owl Sanctuary.

You can also learn more about our free Better Days advice and support programmes by visiting our [website](#)

Have you checked out your local **Better Days Community Hub**?

Meet your local Orbit team, learn more about the support offered by our [Better Days programme](#) and get to know your neighbours through regular activities and events. We've also got a hub open in Newmarket in Suffolk, and we're opening

hubs in Erith in South London, Daventry in Northamptonshire and Norwich in Norfolk. To find out more about what's happening where you live, including details for free upcoming events, just head to the events page on our [website](#)

Free online support



Cost
of living
feature

Energy focus



For even more useful information on how to manage the cost of living, just visit our **'Cost of living hub'**

[CLICK HERE >](#)

Did you know that we offer a variety of free online courses that you can take part in from the comfort of your own home? We offer short, time-friendly courses on the following:

- Life skills, including confidence and self-esteem, motivation, mindfulness and calming anxiety, making a positive change, connecting communities (understanding the impact of anti-social behaviour), navigating the cost of living and keys to a successful tenancy
- Employment skills, including thinking about work, CV writing, interview skills (both preparing and practical interview skills), job search techniques (including training on our free job finding platform, **Skillzminer** ) , how to complete job applications and realistic job goals.

You can take as many of the courses as you like. To find out more, just email:

TrainingEmploymentSkills@orbit.org.uk 

Update on prepayment meters

From 8 November, energy suppliers were banned from forcibly installing prepayment meters for people over 75 with no support in their home and in homes with children aged under the age of two. Also, before the prepayment meter can be installed, the supplier must make at least 10 attempts to contact you and carry out a welfare visit before they can install the meter. If they do forcibly install a meter without doing so, they must give you a £30 credit for each meter installed.

The Government has also introduced rules to make sure prepayment customers are not charged more than Direct Debit customers. This



There is so much advice surrounding energy saving nowadays that it's hard to know what is true and what is, well, a myth. Our in-house expert Dan Welch has checked out some of the popular myths surrounding energy and gives us the facts behind the tales.

Read our blog to find out more 

will save prepayment meter customers about £21 each year.

If you don't have a prepayment meter and you pay your bills when they arrive or you have a standing order set-up, its likely you are paying an extra 6% on your energy bill than those paying by Direct Debit or prepayment meter. Changing your payment method could save you on average £108 each year.

Managing the colder weather

We understand the importance of keeping your home warm, while also keeping your energy usage down. Here are some tips to help you do so:

- Check your tariff. Average annual energy bills fell by 7% on 1 October for most households on standard tariffs. With wholesale prices dropping, there has been a return of some cheaper energy tariffs that could be worth considering
- Draw your curtains at dusk and shut your doors. This will minimise heat escaping through windows and keep the heat in the room you are in
- Make sure your doors and windows are draught free. Block up any gaps that let warm air out, except air vents and 'air bricks' (which are bricks with holes that allow air flow and are important for ventilation)



Energy focus

To find out more, read our **'Caring for your home and keeping safe during colder weather'** leaflet.

[CLICK HERE >](#)

- Never use your oven to heat your home
- Remember to turn any portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.

Did you know?

Some energy suppliers have special deals to help customers with increased energy costs. If you're a customer of British Gas, you may be able to get half price electricity on Sundays. If you're a customer of Octopus Energy, you may be able to take advantage of their 'Plunge Pricing'. Visit their websites or contact them directly to find out more.



Festive shopping and holiday fun

As the festive season approaches, we are all searching for the best Christmas deals on the market. Haven't started your shopping yet? Not to worry, you're in good hands. We have done the hard work for you and pulled together our best saving tips for the holidays. Read more [here](#)

Looking for some festive activities for the family? Visit our [festive fun webpage](#) for holiday entertainment ideas including fun recipes, puzzles and colouring templates!

'Warm spaces' is an online directory of local places you can go to get warm. Some offer free food, pay-it-forward schemes, advice or somewhere to charge your phone - or maybe just somewhere to be comfortable and warm with no judgement. Find out more by visiting warmspaces.org

BETTERDAYS[®]

Do you need extra support to help manage the increased cost of living? We're here to help. Our free Better Days programme helps thousands of you every year. Whether it's managing your money, trying something new, finding happiness with work or improving your digital skills and your overall wellbeing, our expert team and independent partners offer free information, advice and guidance. Find out more on our [Better Days webpage](#).

[CLICK HERE >](#)

Wearing it pink!

At Hayley House, one of our Independent Living schemes in Belvedere, South London, customers helped organise a 'Wear it pink!' fundraising event to help raise money for Breast Cancer Now, the research and support charity.



Left to right: Dee Brand, Val Holland, and Scheme Officer, Claire Griffin.

Everyone at the scheme chipped in to help pull the event together. Residents and staff reached out to shops and partners in the community for donations to be used as prizes and put up posters to promote the event to the public. Dave, one of the residents who lives at the scheme, creates homemade cards and setup a table to display and sell them. Customers even purchased and donated prizes themselves. Greggs provided free cakes and Jane, a local woman who delivers arts and crafts sessions at the scheme, setup her

'Jane's Craft Corner' stall. Val, a friend of one of the residents, also provided a jewellery table and donated the proceeds to the cause.

On the day, everyone dressed up in pink and participated in games including 'play your cards right' and 'guess the weight of the cake'. They also had a tombola and raffle – and a marvellous time! In total, they raised a whopping £500 for Breast Cancer Now.

Left to right: Mary Beadle, Pam Wood, Trish Scudder and Rena Bright.



Julie Feeney, one of the scheme's 30 residents said; "The event was excellent, amazing! It was a pleasure to be a part of it! The best bit was bringing the community together and into Hayley House."

"It was a great day and I'm glad to be a part of Hayley House. I love our scheme and how the community comes together", said Stephen McCann, another resident.

Residents, local people and staff at Hayley House, enjoying their 'Wear it pink' event.

Have you got events happening in your community or scheme that you would like to see featured in Orbit Life? We'd love to hear from you! Just email campaigns@orbit.org.uk

A perfect recipe for a **shiny new kitchen**

You deserve to live in a place you can be proud of, so we invest in your homes to ensure they're comfortable, safe and maintained to a modern standard. Babina, a customer who lives in Broadstairs, Kent recently spoke with us about her experience of having a brand-new kitchen fitted as part of our home improvement programme.

"I was contacted by Tanya in the Property Improvement team in April about having a new kitchen fitted and jumped at the chance. I had been feeling a bit fed up due to some health issues and felt it could be the boost I needed. I was offered an installation date just a few weeks later and given some simple choices about the type and colour of worktops, cupboards, tiles and flooring. I decided on a white and grey design to brighten up my kitchen.

The team of contractors turned up on time and were super friendly and helpful. My dog, Ralph, loves people, and they made such a fuss of him which made both Ralph and I feel at ease. They offered to move everything out of the kitchen. I put my microwave and kettle in my living room, so I was still able to eat and drink for the week my new kitchen was being installed.

I hadn't expected them to plaster all the walls, however it's standard for new kitchens. Having lovely smooth walls has really added to the result. The kitchen was finished within a week and the contractors left everything clean and tidy. They also helped put everything back



where it belonged, which is part of their hassle-free service.

I'm absolutely delighted with my new, beautiful, modern kitchen. It has exceeded all my expectations. As an Italian, it has reignited my love for cooking traditional pasta dishes. My friends who have visited are really impressed with the high-quality finish – and the lovely food I've made for them!

I'm proud to say that I now have the best kitchen on the block. The whole process was fantastic from start to finish. I would encourage everyone to take up the offer of a new kitchen. If you are prepared to not have full use of your kitchen for a few days, the minor inconvenience is worth every second and you will get help from a wonderful team every step of the way."

To find out more about home improvements, just visit our website.

[CLICK HERE >](#)

Getting online

You might be surprised about how much of your life can be managed online. Many of us use the internet to browse the news or use social media, however there are some more practical uses too. You can access services such as your dentist or GP, or do your banking without the need to go into a bank. You can also connect with loved ones and order your groceries online. You can even access your Orbit account 24 hours a day, seven days a week through **myAccount** 🖱️



We want everyone who wants to get online to have the confidence to do so and the ability to afford it. That's why we've recently joined the National Digital Inclusion Network, which is run by the charity 'Good Things Foundation', to help you access the internet and develop your digital skills.



Through our Better Days programme, Good Things Foundation will help us offer free data SIM cards and vouchers donated by Virgin Media, O2, Vodafone and Three, to those of you

who don't already have internet access in your home and would like to take advantage of this support. SIM cards are what give you access to the internet through your mobile phone, tablet or other device.

How do I find out more?

If you're currently not online, you can give us a call on 0800 678 1221 and we can help you to apply. You can also speak to us face-to-face at one of the Better Days Community Hubs or talk to a Community Connector at one of our **Winter wellbeing** 🖱️ events. If you already have some digital skills, you can also complete an online application form in a library or internet café by visiting our **website** 🖱️

Want to improve your digital skills?

Through our new partnership with the Good Things Foundation, we are pleased to introduce 'Learn My Way' a new digital support toolkit. Thousands of users have already engaged in regular sessions, in their own time and at their own pace, to brush up on their learning. Whether you just need a helping hand, some guidance on how to set up an email account for the first time or are just getting started with a new laptop or tablet, the toolkit can help. Find out more on the **Good Things Foundation website**

[CLICK HERE >](#)

For additional free digital support, you can also take advantage of Barclays Digital Wings, an online training tool that provides tutorials to help you improve your digital know how. Just visit our **myDigital webpage** 🖱️ to find out more.

Managing your wellbeing over the holidays



Christmas is a time for joy and happiness for most people, however it can also be a time of heightened emotions for many. With loneliness, anxiety and depression on the rise, it's important that we all support one another this holiday season. We've pulled together some helpful tips to help you manage:

- Be gentle, generous and patient with yourself. It's ok to prioritise what's best for you, even if others don't seem to understand. Think about what support you need and explore ways you might be able to get it. Consider talking to someone you trust about what you need to cope
- Plan ahead by thinking about what might be difficult about Christmas for you, and if there's anything that might help you manage more easily.

It might be useful to write it down. It's okay to set boundaries and say no to things that aren't helpful to you

- If you think you will be feeling lonely or isolated this Christmas, think of some ways to help pass the time. This might be doing something creative or spending time in nature. If you're over the age of 60, Age UK has a free befriending service that can put you in touch with someone to speak with, all from the comfort of your own home. Just visit the [Age UK website](#)
- If you can't be with the people you want to see in person, you could arrange a phone call to catch up with them on the day, or try to arrange a visit around Christmas, if there is a time when it's possible to meet.

If you need support with your wellbeing, just visit the myWellbeing page our website.

[CLICK HERE >](#)

Customer Support Hub Christmas 2023 hours:

To allow our colleagues to spend time with their families over the Christmas period, the Customer Support Hub will be working reduced hours over the festive season.

We will still be here to support you and on the days our Hub will be closed, our usual out of hours emergency service will be available.

If you need our support and to speak with someone urgently, then please call us on **0800 678 1221**.

Friday 22 December 2023 – 8am to 8pm

Saturday 23 December 2023 – 8am to 1pm

Sunday 24 December 2023 – Closed

Monday 25 December 2023, Christmas Day – Closed (bank holiday)

Tuesday 26 December 2023, Boxing Day – Closed (bank holiday)

Wednesday 27 December to

Friday 29 December 2023

– 8am to 8pm

Saturday 30 December 2023 – 8am to 1pm

Sunday 31 December 2023 – Closed

Monday 1 January 2024, New Year's Day – Closed (bank holiday)

Tuesday 2 January 2024 – 8am to 8pm

We wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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

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orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/homecontentsinsurance



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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**

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/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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