

Orbit Life

Building thriving communities...

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In this issue...

Read about your Good Neighbour award nominees

Pages 4 and 5

The latest Cost of Living Support

Pages 6 and 7



An introduction from our guest resident editor, **Lisa Phillips**

We would like to introduce you to **Lisa**, an Engaged Customer and our guest resident editor of this edition of Orbit Life. As a transgender woman who relocated to the UK from Zimbabwe, she's always been grateful for the new life she's created here and is passionate about giving back to her local community.

Meet Lisa...



"Hello and welcome to your latest edition of Orbit Life magazine. In this edition, we're featuring customers you nominated for our Good Neighbour awards and we've included some of the great things you've told us about them. You can also read about good neighbours and scheme besties Pat and Rita, and the special friendship they've formed. See pages four and five for their story. This summer, Orbit and Engaged Customers held a Your Voice conference where we talked about the topics most important to customers and how we can work together to bring positive change for all Orbit customers. Read page nine to find out more. The increased cost of living continues to affect everyone, so we've got some helpful tips on how to avoid scams, plus mental health advice for students. We've also got details about low-cost social supermarkets, what they are and how you can find one where you live. See pages six and seven for more details."

If you would like to be a guest editor of Orbit Life, we would love to hear from you. Just email campaigns@orbit.org.uk or call **0800 678 1221**.

We hope you enjoy the magazine. If you have any feedback then please let us know by emailing campaigns@orbit.org.uk.

If you'd like to find out more about becoming an Engaged Customer, then please **get in touch** . Engaged Customers are residents who get involved in reviewing the way we work and make suggestions for improvements from a customer perspective.

CLICK HERE 

Would you like to earn some Love2Shop vouchers? **Join our new reward scheme**



Would you be interested in earning Love2shop shopping vouchers?
Are you passionate about excellent customer service?

If you have the time to share your experiences with us, then we'd love to hear from you. To recognise the value of the contributions, time and commitment customers put into customer engagement activities, we've launched a new reward scheme to say a big thank you to those customers who share their experiences with us – both good and bad. Best of all, you can work around your own schedule and take part in the activities that interest you most. It's completely up to you!

Start collecting points by completing our online form below or by emailing our Customer Engagement team at customer.engagement@orbit.org.uk

[CLICK HERE >](#)



Join our new **Your Voice Facebook group**

You told us that you wanted to share your views with us more easily, so we've created a new closed Facebook group called 'Your Voice' - and we invite you to join us! It's a place for you to provide feedback on the services you use and share ideas for improvements on the things that matter to you. Many of you already use Facebook, so you can take part in our online surveys, discussions and polls while you're scrolling. You don't need any experience and don't have to take part in every activity – you can give as much of your time as you choose

and decide which activities you want to participate in. Best of all, you can also earn Love2Shop vouchers!

Join our **Your Voice Facebook group** today! Don't have a Facebook account? You can sign up [here](#)

If social media isn't 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. Find out more [here](#)



That's a wrap! Did you see our recent Good Neighbour campaign?



We've come to the end of this year's Good Neighbour campaign where we've been sharing stories from your communities and shining the spotlight on different topics, including:

- **Becoming an ally**

Home is our safe space, where people should be able to be themselves without the fear of prejudice, regardless of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity

- **A community for all**

Our communities are made up of a range of people from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. We know that we're stronger when we support each other and combine the unique perspectives, talents and wisdom that our different life experiences give us

- **Connect with your community**

Having a sense of community unites us. It gives us the opportunity to connect with others and improve our wellbeing by helping us feel safe and secure.



A story of friendship

We're sharing stories from people in your communities who are truly helping them to thrive. Meet Pat and Rita, scheme besties since 2015 and residents from Queensway Court in Leamington Spa. They tell us about their special friendship and the benefits of living at the scheme and being part of a wider community.

Rita and Pat spend a lot of time together at the scheme, they are both avid knitters and run the knit and natter group together at Queensway. They also knit for the premature baby unit at Warwick Hospital. The two go out on their scooters together to the park or to the shops, attend the exercise classes at Queensway and even go to the bar on a Saturday night where they hold events like race nights.

On their friendship, Rita says: "She is always there for me when I need her. She listens to my woes, and I know I can trust her and talk about anything."

Pat adds: "She is always there if I need her and keeps me in check. If I need anything and Rita is able, she will. If I need Rita she is always on the end of the phone."

To find out more about Pat and Rita's special friendship, just read our [blog](#) 



Left, Rita
and
right, Pat

Congratulations Ken!

Over the last few months, we received an outpouring of nominations from you for our Good Neighbour awards, which highlight all those who go above and beyond for others in their local community. We were overwhelmed by the volume of nominations and truly inspirational stories you shared with us.

Ken was nominated by his neighbour, Anne, who noticed how Ken would run coffee mornings for older residents and go out of his way to check on everyone, especially if anything unexpected occurred, such as a power cut. Anne added that Ken is always willing to head up to the chemist or shop if asked and will also run rubbish down to the bins for his neighbours who find this difficult.

Ken said: "I was surprised to be nominated as I didn't think I was doing anything to warrant it. I appreciated the nomination as it was good to be appreciated. I am pleased to have received the award and I hope it encourages others to help one another."



Anne,
and
her good
neighbour,
Ken.

Be sure to
visit our
**Good
Neighbour
Hub**



Our **Good Neighbour Hub** is host to some fantastic resources, tips and handy downloadable documents such as our Good Neighbour leaflet and welcome postcard. The hub will continue to host to any future Good Neighbour competitions, awards and updates - so be sure to bookmark it!

[CLICK HERE >](#)

Here're some of the other things you told us about your special neighbours...

"They've been super helpful when I have been in hospital and looked after my dog, always friendly and always caring. One of the best neighbours I could ask for." - Jasmine, Norfolk

"My neighbour has been so kind to me over past few months after having surgery, he has been helping with childcare and shopping and he always checks in on me. He is a wonderful friend and neighbour." - Brooke, Hastings

"They've been nothing but helpful since I've moved in. They've been so kind and considerate. I cannot rave about them enough!" - Sophie, Kent

"My neighbour is always available to help anyone in need and will go above and beyond if necessary to help a neighbour. He can turn his hand to most households' needs, it's like having a reliable handyman on site. All he asks in return is you be polite and decent." - Anonymous, Kent

How to spot and report scams



Become scam savvy! We've got some helpful advice on what to look out for, how to protect yourself and how to report scammers.

Scams seem to be everywhere these days and we can be targeted by phone, email, text message, letter or online.



Scammers are getting smarter all the time and will use a variety of ways to try and convince you to part with your details or money – sometimes both!

[Read our blog](#) for some practical advice on how to spot scams and report scammers.

[CLICK HERE >](#)

Student life and managing your wellbeing

Being a student can be challenging as there's more than just school, college or university work to manage. There can be pressure to fit in or commitments outside of student life that need to fit into your already busy schedule. It's important to take care of your wellbeing, so we've pulled together some useful advice to help you get the most out of student life.

Coping with new challenges can impact your mental wellbeing, however there are some things you can do to help make it easier:

- Try to manage stress before it gets to be too much and take time out to relax
- Keep yourself organised and plan your time. Planners can help keep track of deadlines, commitments and help you plan study time. Just be careful not to overload your schedule around busy times (such as exams)



For even more useful information on how to manage the increased cost of living, visit our ['Cost of living hub'](#)



- Improve your mental wellbeing by looking for online support or apps. Have you checked out our free Togetherall online support service? It's completely anonymous and provides immediate access every day of the year. The service is moderated by healthcare professionals around the clock and includes access to a range of free online courses, tools, trackers and self-help resources. Find out more [here](#).

What are social supermarkets?



The cost of food, including everyday items, is increasing and not everyone is eligible to receive hampers from a food bank. To help those who are finding it more challenging to find affordable food, social supermarkets and food re-distributors are helping to fill that gap.

Social supermarkets are operated by voluntary organisations and differ from food banks in that the food is not entirely free. However, they provide a wider range of choice than a food bank at heavily discounted prices compared to the supermarkets.

Social supermarkets rely on extra food from supermarkets, much like food banks. This could be food that's unable to be sold, food reaching its best before or use by date, or food with damaged packaging. It could even be food with incorrect or missing labels.

How do social supermarkets work and where do I find one near me?

Not all social supermarkets work the same. Some may require you to have a membership (for a small fee) where members can go into the supermarket and choose as much or as little as they need. Others may bundle food packages and make them available at weekly pop-up stores for a low set price.

One of the best ways to find your nearest social supermarket is to search 'social supermarkets' and include the name of the area you live in online. You should be able to find the local ones in your area. There are also some larger social supermarkets in the UK that you may be able to buy affordable food from, including; **The Message**, **The Feed**, **Shop and Donate**, **Coventry Food Network** and **The Byker Pantry** 

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. Just visit our **website**  to find out more!

Managing condensation, our commitment to you



Condensation in the home is common and with the colder weather soon upon us, we want to remind you of some simple things you can do to help minimise it. We also want to let you know what you can do if you're

concerned about damp and mould and how we can help you.

We recently sat down with Jayne Lombardi, Project Director for our 'Doing More for Customers' (DMC) taskforce, to find out more...



What is the DMC taskforce?

We set up a DMC taskforce to focus on condensation, damp and mould and how we manage it when you report issues to us. We've created a dedicated team to support you as we look into your report, identify the issue and put effective plans in place to resolve it.

We've also set up a team of specialists who are responsible for making sure that your reports of condensation, damp and mould are managed as quickly as possible. Some cases may be more complex and may require a few visits to get sorted, but we want you to be confident that your issue is being resolved.

Are there any other ways in which you are supporting customers with issues of damp and mould?

We've partnered with National Energy Action to provide you with advice on how to heat your home in the most affordable way possible.

You can find out more by visiting the **'Your energy, our support'** pages on our cost of living hub.

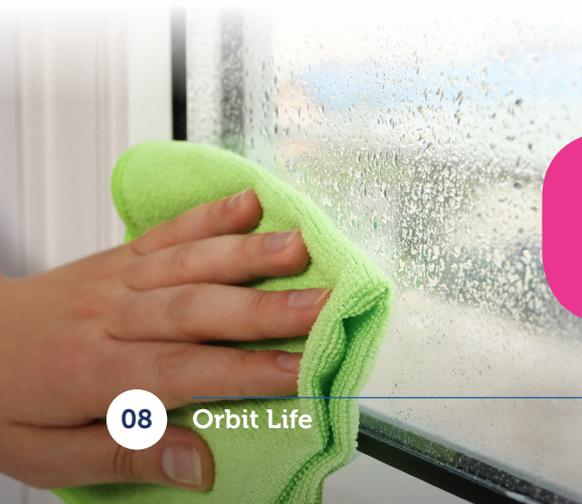
What advice would you give to people to help keep their homes comfortable this winter?

If you have an issue with damp or mould, please report it so that we can help. You can do this on our website, through myAccount or by calling us on 0800 678 1221.

You can also:

- Open your windows for at least five minutes a day to allow any built-up moisture to escape, even in winter
- When you're cooking or bathing, close any internal doors. If you can, turn on extractor fans for at least 15 minutes after you're finished, to allow these rooms to dry out
- Try not to dry laundry on your radiators if you can help it and be sure to keep free space around them too.

To find out more about how you can reduce condensation in your home, have a look at our leaflet **'Reducing condensation, damp and mould in your home'**



Listening to your voices

We held our Your Voice Conference with customers this summer for the first time since 2020. We wanted to meet Engaged Customers face-to-face and have discussions about how we work together and what our upcoming priorities are.

This included topics such as lettings, complaints, rent collection and more. Customers were able to question us about how we deliver our services and offer their suggestions for improvement. We're currently shaping plans based on those conversations and will be sharing more in future editions of Orbit Life, so watch this space.

We also had discussions about our Customer Support Hub and the recent improvements we've made to train team members to handle more complex repair enquiries over the phone. This is helping improve the experience for all customers who report repairs to us, by ensuring repairs get raised quicker and completed right first time. We also talked about our environmental pledge of reaching Net Carbon Zero by 2030.

Engaged Customer, Rola Eldahouk, said; "A home is the main thing in a person's life and to make a good home is even better – and this is what Orbit provides for me. If I know more about the whole process and what they are doing, then I can fill the puzzle between my opinion and what's happening. Then we can work together to improve customer service."

Engaged Customer, Anil Ujat, said; "I was telling my fellow neighbours, and now friends, I was coming here and I've been able to relay things that are being implemented. I can show them how to voice their own concerns themselves."

If you'd like to read more about how we've delivered on services to you in the last year, be sure to read this year's customer annual report, [Customer voices driving positive change.](#)



Watch our video to see how the day went!



Engaged Customers told us that making sure you know about the free Better Days services we offer you as an Orbit customer is also important, so we discussed new ways of getting this message across, including our new **Your Voice** Facebook group. Other ideas include looking for new ways to increase our presence in your communities and working more closely with local councils to hold community events.

It was great to hear so many positive conversations throughout the day, with everyone working together to create positive change.

To find out more about how you can get involved in reviewing our services (and start building reward points that can be exchanged for Love2Shop vouchers), visit our **'get involved' webpage** or email us at customer_engagement@orbit.org.uk



Psst... Did you spot us at the Pride festivals?



Pride Month in June is an annual global event which recognises and celebrates 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 bring communities together. Pride has grown from strength to strength in recent years and local events took place up and down the country all summer.



In August, we went along to Pride events in Margate, Hastings, Leamington Spa and Bexley, to show support for our LGBTQ+ communities and take part in the celebrations. We also had

the opportunity to meet some of you face-to-face and to share details about our Better Days programme, which helps thousands of you each year with free information, advice and guidance.

John Bennett, one of our Engaged Customers who attended a couple of the events, said; "The LGBTQ+ customer engagement group is proud that Orbit provides homes to people from all backgrounds without discrimination, including sexual orientation or gender identity. As Engaged Customers, we support Orbit getting out into local communities and meeting with residents in such a positive way. It sends a message to everyone that discrimination of any form is not okay. It was also great to meet people in the community and share information about all the free services that are available exclusively to Orbit customers."

If you missed us at the Pride events, you can learn more about our free Better Days services by visiting our [website](https://orbitcustomerhub.org.uk).

Our attendance at the Pride events was prompted by our **LGBTQ+ customer engagement group**. They help us bring the Houseproud pledge to life and demonstrate our commitment to LGBTQ+ equality and support. In 2021, we signed up for the **HouseProud Pledge Scheme** to demonstrate our commitment to our belief that our homes should be safe spaces where people can be themselves. Education and training are key in changing

ignorance and prejudice, so we will be working closely with Engaged Customers on projects that will continue to bring positive change to all our communities.

Introducing Phil Andrew, our new CEO



We're delighted to announce the appointment of our new Chief Executive Officer, Phil Andrew.

Phil joined us in July and not only does he bring with him years of experience working with other charities and companies with a strong social purpose like ours, he also has first-hand experience of growing up in affordable housing. We met with Phil recently to learn more about him and ask him questions that came from our own Engaged Customer groups.

In our video, Phil talks about where



he grew up, what that experience taught him and how it's critical that we put you at the heart of everything we do. He also discusses his plans to get out and meet as many of you as he can, so that he can get an unfiltered view of your experiences as an Orbit customer. He highlights the importance of our Better Days support programmes and how he plans to listen to customers, colleagues and our partners to improve services for all our customers.

To find out more, you can view the [video](#) on our website.

Have you checked out your local Better Days Community Hub?



Our Better Days Community Hubs are places where you can 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 currently got hubs open in Gorleston in Norfolk, Newmarket in Suffolk and Leamington Spa in Warwickshire.

Later this year, we're going to open three more hubs in Erith in South London, Daventry in Northamptonshire and Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire. We are also planning to take a mobile hub into communities that are a little harder to reach.

To find out more about what's happening where you live, including details of free upcoming events, just visit our [website](#)



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