in this issue...

How customer feedback is changing
Our new resolution team - page 2

What does the benefit cap mean to you?
The latest news - page 4

Real life
Jessica Threlfall - how I turned my life around - page 7

Goals training
Helping you get the most out of life
page 12
We want to understand what makes our customers happy... and what doesn’t. That’s why we’ve been using ‘real time customer feedback’, asking for feedback by email, automated telephone message and text. It’s timely, simple, straightforward and efficient.

During the last year, we’ve received over 25,000 pieces of feedback from you. That’s a lot of information helping us understand the issues that really matter to you.

We have also introduced a new team, the Resolution team, in the Customer Service Centre (CSC). They proactively deal with concerns raised by customers through real time feedback. As well as investigating issues raised by customers, contacting them and looking to resolve those issues, the Resolution team will also deal with more complicated issues referred from the CSC.

Your feedback is used to improve our services. So if you get a text message, email or telephone call asking for feedback, please complete it. Each reply to a text message from the real time customer feedback survey will cost one standard rate message per text.

Orbit Move is a faster, easier and more efficient online system for customers to complete their tenancy sign-up. It also includes an interactive game that helps customers learn about their tenancy rights and responsibilities.

It saves a lot of time when signing up new customers which frees up staff to deal with enquiries from existing customers. It’s more environmentally friendly because we don’t need to print loads of paperwork.

We are carrying out a thorough review of our approach to service charges, taking into account your feedback. We are putting the recommendations of our review in place and will be changing the way we do things.

Our aim is to make sure that service charges are clear, accurate and easy to understand. We will have open days and drop-in surgeries where you can have a chat with our team so we can make it right for you.

To find out when they are taking place in your area, visit orbit.org.uk/servicecharges or call 0800 678 1221.
Do you know how to stay safe online?

Whether you’re already online or if you’re thinking about getting online, and want to keep your personal information safe, there is lots of help and advice for you and your family. Visit orbit.org.uk/safety for links to well-known sources of advice about:

• online shopping and banking
• spotting the signs of scans, from email to postal fraud
• helping children and young people stay safe.

Do you want to get more from using the internet or know someone who could?

Orbit offers in-home computer and internet skills training exclusively to you, free of charge. These sessions can be tailored to you – whether you’re a beginner with the internet or want to build up your digital skills. The sessions will help you get more from the internet, such as using Facebook to stay in touch with friends and family, saving money through online shopping or improving your employment prospects with better computer skills. Training is subject to terms and conditions. Coverage cannot be guaranteed in all areas.

Grab a grant, and get online

If you’re struggling with the costs of getting online, Orbit may be able to help through our Super Surfer grants. Orbit advisors can check your eligibility and make an application on your behalf. Contact our Advice Services or Employment Support team to find out more visit orbit.org.uk/grants

Looking for a quick and easy way to get online?

GET AN EE OSPREY MINI MOBILE WI-FI HUB FOR ONLY £39.99 – 20% OFF RRP.

It is suitable for up to three months use and connects up to 10 devices. Perfect for using the internet for the first time, taking away with you or getting online in your new home without long term contracts and commitments!

Contact us for more details and your discount code. Limited to two per household. Offer excludes postage and packaging.

To find out more:
Phone: 0800 678 1221
Email: communityinvestment@orbit.org.uk
Web: orbit.org.uk/getonline
Q&A on the benefit cap

We’ve had some questions about the benefit cap. The government has passed legislation which will lower the amount that working age families can receive when they are on benefits. The new cap will be introduced this Autumn.

How will this affect me?
Household benefits will drop from the current cap level of £26,000 a year to two lower levels:

- In London, it will be to £23,000 (£15,410 for single people without children)
- Outside London, it will be £20,000 (£13,400 for single people without children).

How is it worked out?
The benefit cap is calculated by adding all the benefits that a claimant and their partner receive. If it is more than the amounts above (eg £23,000 / £20,000) then you will be capped. The capped money is taken off your housing benefit claim (unless you receive Universal Credit; in which case, it is taken from this). This means that you will have to budget to pay any top-up for the shortfall in your rent payments.

What benefits are included?
- Bereavement Allowance / Widowed Parent’s / Mother’s Allowance
- Carer’s Allowance
- Child Benefit / Child Tax Credit
- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) (contribution-based and income-related) except where the Support Component has been awarded
- Guardian’s Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Incapacity Benefit
- Income Support
- Jobseeker’s Allowance (contribution-based and income-based)
- Maternity Allowance.

Could I be exempt?
You won’t be affected if you or your partner qualifies for or receives any of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit, but earning at least £430 per month in wages
- People of pension age are exempt, but only if both people in the couple are above pension age
- Working Tax Credit
- Disability Living Allowance (or Personal Independence Payment)
- Attendance Allowance
- Industrial Injuries Benefits (and equivalent payments as part of a war disablement pension or the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme)
- The support component of Employment and Support Allowance
- War Widow’s or War Widower’s Pension.

The government recently announced that those receiving a carer’s and guardian’s allowance will also be exempt, but we don’t yet know when this exemption will start.

If you need any help, please contact our Advice Services team on 0800 678 1221
We now offer a new service to our customers - paperless direct debit. It means no more form-filling, plus you get to set up a worry free way to pay your rent or other charges. All you need to do is to ring us on 0800 678 1221 and we can set it up over the phone for you. We will then contact you to confirm what your payments will be after that. It’s that simple.

Do you struggle to pay your rent?

Each council has a pot of money that is set aside to support people on Housing Benefit or Universal Credit who struggle to pay their rent because of their circumstances. This pot is called the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP). Local councils may award a DHP payment if you are affected by the under-occupation rules, have been impacted by the Benefit cap, or have had a sudden loss in income. Each council has a different method or application process to apply for a DHP grant. Advice Services can help you apply if you think you may be eligible, or have applied in the past and have been turned down.

Power cut support

Although power cuts don’t happen very often, UK Power Network still holds a list of vulnerable customers who may need additional support if one happens. You can register for this service if it is available in your area, to see if you may be eligible and apply go to http://bit.ly/KxNynw

To get help or more information, please contact us on 0800 678 1221 and ask for Advice Services or email advice.services@orbit.org.uk. You can also visit our web pages and complete an online self-referral form at orbit.org.uk/advice/advice-services/
INVOLVEMENT MATTERS

Our involved customer training programme is proving to be a success with really positive feedback from those who have taken part.

The sessions are designed to develop customers’ skills in involvement and increase their understanding of how Orbit operates. Courses include:

- Confident communication
- Understanding value for money
- Introduction to complaints handling
- Meeting and presentation skills
- Team building skills.

We are also looking at expanding the training for 2016/17 for all involved customers.

Service improvement groups

We’ve launched several new Service Improvement groups:

**Day to Day Repairs**
A popular group that is focussing on areas of performance, offering a customer’s view on what improvements Orbit can make.

The first project is looking at the ‘high demand’ properties where we carry out more repairs on average than others. Members will learn about real time feedback and how this helps provide information on the repairs service. Customers have also created an action plan of potential service improvements to look at.

**Complaints**
Customers are working to improve customers’ experience with regards to how we handle complaints. We had a training session for new members and interested involved customers. The group has identified some quick wins to improve the complaints acknowledgement letter.

**Income Recovery**
Customers were given detailed information on the proposals surrounding benefits and how Orbit is supporting customers. As this group develops, it will help to shape Orbit’s overall approach to benefit changes.

Task and finish project

We’ve got a new approach to giving customers more opportunities to scrutinise services and make improvements.

We’ve worked with over 30 customers on ‘Task and Finish’ projects to review performance, meet with staff and make recommendations on where improvements can be made to benefit all customers.

There have been six reviews including:

- a detailed look at how we recruit, reward and retain involved customers
- reviewing the Customer Involvement website pages.

As a result, there have been lots of customer recommendations for service improvement.

To check out our new offers, get involved either at meetings or from home, or if you are interested in the training programme, visit orbit.org.uk/living-in-orbit/get-involved, contact us at ServiceImprovement@orbit.org.uk or call 0800 678 1221
There have been many successes at Deepmore Road, one of Orbit’s homeless hostels, and Jessica Threlfall, aged 20, is one of them. Jessica moved into Deepmore Road in late 2014 after a relationship breakdown with her family. Staff helped settle her in and get financial support so she could continue with her national diploma in Forensic Science. Soon she secured a part-time job in a supermarket to support her tenancy while studying. Jessica successfully completed the diploma and graduated with a triple distinction in July 2015. In September 2015, Jessica moved out of Deepmore Road to study Biomedical Science at Aston University. Upon completion of her degree, she hopes to become a Forensic Pathologist. She was nominated for a Brian Griffiths Award by the team at Deepmore and won in the ‘Positive Destination’ category. This recognises customers who have completed a qualification and are actively engaged during a difficult or challenging time in their lives. The award is in memory of the late Brian Griffiths, a former Orbit Board member who dedicated his life to helping others.

If you are interested in being nominated for a Brian Griffiths Award and you are currently being supported by a member of Orbit staff, please either speak to that member of staff or telephone 0800 678 1221 or email communityinvestment@orbit.org.uk

“The support I was given at Deepmore Road was great and I cannot thank the staff enough for all their help. Thanks everyone!”

Tenancy fraud

Regular anti-social behaviour complaints were being made about large groups living in a property in Rugby. After many attempts to make contact, the Housing team issued a notice to the tenant to vacate the property. The customer denied that he was subletting.

Fallon Warren, the Housing Officer, contacted Tenancy Fraud Officer, Mark Connolly, who started an investigation. Once information had been gathered, Mark and Fallon were able to show the customer proof he was subletting the property and suggested he give up his tenancy voluntarily. Failure to do so would result in Orbit seeking possession in the County Court as well as any costs (around £10,000). We would also consider referring the matter to the local authority which could lead to a criminal conviction, a fine of up to £5,000 and/or a prison sentence of up to two years.

The customer agreed to end his tenancy. Avoiding court action meant we saved £10,860.00.

Can you recognise tenancy fraud?

Don’t be fooled

IT’S NOT FAIR
IT’S NOT LEGAL
IT’S NOT ON

Learn how to spot it
Report it today

orbit.org.uk/tenancy-fraud
Phase two

Phase two of Erith Park in Bexley is underway, with the final 244 homes now under construction.

Erith Park is already home to over 200 households, including some long-standing customers who chose to remain in the area. Some of them were involved in helping to create the design and feel of Erith Park. You can find out more by watching this video: http://bit.ly.21RfB23

Once completed, the Erith Park development will provide almost 600 homes, many for families, across a range of tenures, including shared ownership, private sale and affordable rent. The first homes of the final phase will be ready in summer 2017.

Our journey to 2020

In April 2013 we launched our 2020 Vision and the nine targets to achieve by then. Three years on, this is our update:

Deliver 12,000 new homes: 3,616 new homes built so far.

Provide a full range of home rental and ownership options: we’ve reached record shared ownership figures; have two private rented schemes and 405 homes built for market sale.

Provide 10,000 training and capacity building activities to support empowerment, opportunity and jobs: we’ve provided 4,188 training opportunities, supported 617 people into employment and given 1,636 people digital support.

Deliver £30m of investment into communities, including external funding: we have committed £8 million into communities.

Achieve a minimum energy rating of Band C in our homes: 66% of all rented properties are at Band C or above.

Have 75% of customer contacts happening online: currently 10.4% of our contacts with customers are happening online.*

*Although more customers are now using digital methods to contact us, we have seen an increase in overall customer contact which has impacted on the percentage.

Provide a range of tailored services which satisfy 90% of customers: satisfaction is at 81% (based on the 2015 What Matters survey results).

Provide money and energy advice to 20,000 people: 7,940 customers have received advice.
Home contents insurance

Orbit insures the structure of our homes but it is your own responsibility to take out household contents insurance. In partnership with Wessex Group, Orbit offers all Orbit customers an affordable home contents insurance package with Aviva.

For more information, or to apply, go to http://bit.ly/225Ven7 or call the Wessex Group on 01962 892086.

Taking a lodger

All new lettings from 1 February 2016 are subject to immigration checks. This means, if your tenancy agreement allows you to take in a lodger and you decide to do so, it’s your legal responsibility to check that the person lodging with you is permitted to be in the UK and has a ‘right to rent’. The checks apply to all persons over the age of 18 moving in.

You need to see proof that they fall within one of the following groups:

- A citizen of the UK, the European Economic Area or Switzerland
- A person with an indefinite ‘right to rent’ - someone with indefinite leave to remain or right to abode in the UK
- A person with a ‘time-limited right to rent’ – someone who has limited leave to remain in the UK or a right to live in the UK under EU law
- A person with a ‘discretionary right to rent’ - the Home Office can grant this in certain cases; for example, to people waiting for their case to be resolved or taking legal proceedings to sort it out

If you allow someone to lodge, who doesn’t have the ‘right to rent’, you could be fined up to £3,000.

The Home Office has a guide on how to check documents and which ones are acceptable: http://bit.ly/202eYLi

WHAT MATTERS?

Our annual ‘What Matters’ survey goes live this June. It is an opportunity for you to tell us what you think about our services.

Marketing Means an external research company that is carrying out the survey for us, so you may receive a telephone call from them.

We hope you will participate and give your feedback. Understanding what is important to you helps us improve our services.
Kristy Potter is a Service Improvement Co-ordinator. Her job is to review Orbit’s services and work with staff and customers to make sure that those services are meeting customers’ needs.

**0900:** Kristy is planning a review on customer dissatisfaction and formal complaints. What can be done better? How can the process be made more efficient? Working with the Director of the service, she agrees the review timescales and which staff need to be involved.

**1030:** A customer focus group has highlighted issues that customers currently experience. Kristy now has to bring staff together (those who deliver the service and those who can make the necessary changes to the service). Trying to find available days for over 20 people to meet is never easy!

**1130:** She checks how teams across Orbit are making value for money savings. Orbit aims to use its money and resources in the most effective ways. Any money left over after costs are met can be put back into the business; this helps Orbit build more homes and provide better services.

**1330:** After lunch, Kristy travels to Coventry for a handover workshop with the project team working on a review of shared ownership. While Kristy plans and manages service reviews, when they are complete, she hands over an action plan to the operational teams to deliver the improvements and efficiencies.

**1530:** She attends an efficiency project team meeting to give updates on her projects. Kristy and her colleagues have a tight schedule of work so constantly review projects and workloads to make sure they deliver efficiencies by the end of the year.

**1700:** Gets paperwork ready for the next day – and then home.

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**Translation policy**

We are reviewing how we provide information for customers with individual communication needs (such as large print or in another language). If you have a particular communication need and would like to be involved in reviewing our Accessible Information policy, then please get in touch involvement@orbit.org.uk

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**Did you know you could receive Orbit Life by email?**

You can receive Orbit Life straight to your inbox by either logging into your “MyAccount” and updating your preferences, or by giving us your email address next time you phone into the Customer Service Centre.
Multi-sports at Erith

Two Community Reporters, Baeti Mothobi and Tracey Kember, braved the elements to visit the multi-sport and activity event at Orchard House, Erith.

The event was run by Charlton Athletic and funded by Orbit South’s Community Investment Team. Its aim was to teach youngsters discipline and fitness. Parents said the event was great; keeping youngsters off the streets, off their computers, learning great skills and meeting new friends. Staff were encouraging, welcoming and friendly.

We interviewed the staff and parents but not the children as we felt their faces told the story! Well done, Charlton Athletic and Orbit… more of the same please.

Baeti and Tracey
COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

Orbit provides free advice and support to access funding which can help secure a new job.

Tara from Stratford-upon-Avon, was working with Rosario Somma, Orbit’s Employment Support Officer, and secured a self-employment role with a delivery company.

She was having difficulties paying her fuel costs upfront before her first pay day. After talking with Rosario and explaining her difficulties, Orbit helped her with a grant through the No Stopping fund. No Stopping grants are there to support customers who face barriers when returning to work, including transport, childcare or interview clothing.

“I’d like to say ‘thank you’. After being on Employment Support Allowance for seven months I’m finally back in work and this was all due to yourselves. If you hadn’t helped with fuel until I received my first month’s pay, I would never have been able to return to work. I was stuck in a rut.”

You may be just starting out looking for work, or need help with your CV or interview skills. If, like Tara, you would like some help on your employment journey then please get in touch or visit orbit.org.uk/grants

Tara from Stratford-upon-Avon, was working with Rosario Somma, Orbit’s Employment Support Officer, and secured a self-employment role with a delivery company.
COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

The HARC project in Hastings and St Leonards was developed in partnership with Orbit South.

HARC is a local charity which gives advice and help to customers to identify and claim welfare benefits and make appeals. Clive Edwards, HARC’s advice worker, is based in Orbit’s Hastings office. He has helped customers claim an additional £61,890 of new benefits.

Russell Smith, Community Investment Officer for Orbit, said;

“The project has brought in some great financial benefits for our customers as well as additional outcomes. Clive has made referrals to our Tenancy Support officer and other services we offer when customers need a little extra help.”

Self-employment success: Kathy’s story

Kathy has been a keen seamstress since the age of 17. She attended a business enterprise programme funded by Orbit, becoming one of the winners in the dragon’s den event. This has allowed her to expand her lifelong hobby into a real business venture.

She designs and makes unique handbags. The quality and style is so good that Kathy is going to an open call at the famous Liberty store in London. Liberty will only meet with businesses who have the required high standard of merchandise.

Kathy has her own website [originalmeshop.bigcartel.com](http://originalmeshop.bigcartel.com) where you can see her full range. She is currently looking for premises to hold workshops to share her handbag-making skills.

To find out more about any of the courses or projects featured here, or to speak to an Employment Support Officer for a friendly, informal chat:

Call 0800 678 1221
Email communityinvestment@orbit.org.uk
Website [orbit.org.uk/support/employment-support](http://orbit.org.uk/support/employment-support)
Volunteers needed

There is a volunteering area on our website. The projects have been put forward by Orbit members of staff or are linked to our community investment funded projects. It’s an opportunity for you to help your community, give something back, meet new people, work in a team and develop your skills by trying something new. So why not give it a go?

For more information, go to orbit.org.uk/volunteer

How does your garden grow?

Over 30 people from teams across Orbit East and customers helped give some much needed attention to the communal areas around William White Place in Norwich.

They tidied up overgrown and untidy parts of the garden, cleared leaves, removed ivy and successfully tackled a huge overgrown laurel hedge.

Everyone enjoyed the day and were pleased to see the significant difference their work had made.

Well done to all who took part and many thanks to Karen Stevenson who organised and helped out on the day.

Anti-social behaviour

When involved customers reviewed our anti-social behaviour service, they told us to make sure that our teams are working in exactly the same way across all of Orbit.

We agreed and have created a toolkit for all staff to use to make sure the service is more consistent.

The toolkit has advice on how to manage different types of anti-social behaviour cases, from first assessment to taking legal action.

As well as information for staff, there are handy support leaflets for customers and guidance on how other agencies (such as the police) can help us.

Are you having your kitchen replaced this year?

If so, we’ve produced a helpful video to help you understand all of the steps, from start to finish. The video also provides you with some useful tips to help make everything run smoothly while the work is being done. Visit http://bit.ly/newkitchenvideo
Whether you are struggling to pay for your energy or simply want to make sure you aren’t wasting money, we can help! To help you live more comfortably we’ve launched the Energy Clinic on our website. There’s great advice and guidance to help you reduce your energy bills, so why not take a look and see what tips will work for you.

If you’ve got any great ideas on reducing energy usage in the home, please share them with us. Visit orbit.org.uk/energy-clinic for more details.

Smart Meter Project

Orbit has partnered with energy supplier, Economy Energy, to trial smart meters. Smart meters are the next generation of electricity and gas meters with a range of extra functions that can help consumers understand - in near to real time - how much energy they are using and at what cost.

In the UK, smart meters are part of the government’s plan to bring our energy system up to date. By the end of 2020, around 50 million smart meters will be fitted by suppliers in over 26 million households.

Customers taking part in the trial will benefit from more accurate bills, increased payment options and near real time consumption. Orbit will also be accessing this data, with the customer’s permission, to help us better understand the effectiveness of our energy efficiency works and to provide better energy and financial advice and support.

For more information: orbit.org.uk/orbit-smart

Intelligent heating?

We are working with CoControl Ltd and the National Energy Foundation to pilot a new energy-saving device to help Orbit customers save money on their heating bills.

The device, ‘CoControl’, works with existing heating controls and has an easy to use temperature control – simply adjust to “make my home warmer” or “make my home cooler”. The more the device is used, the more it tailors itself to your home and your needs.

Fifty customers across Orbit volunteered to trial the device over winter. We will report on the result of the pilot in the next issue.
How many times do we mention our phone number and our new PO Box address in this issue? Can you work it out? There are three prizes of £25 of High Street vouchers to be won. Send your answer, with your name and address to Orbit Living, PO Box 6406, Coventry, CV3 9NB or email us at: OrbitSouthCommunications@orbit.org.uk by 31 July 2016.

Question:
How many times do we mention our phone number: 0800 678 1221?
How many times do we mention our new PO Box address?

Name: ____________________________
Address: ____________________________

Terms and conditions
By entering, you agree to have your name printed in the magazine if you are a winner / runner-up. Competitions are only open to Orbit South customers.

Congratulations!
Rudhnath Marajh, Erith
who correctly answered the questions about our ‘Support’ pages on our website.

Online services
Have you visited the Orbit website recently? There are some great ways to connect with us and our services online:

- MyAccount allows you to access your rent account statement, update your details and make online payments
- Repairs: report a repair online.

New address
If you do have to write to us, we have a new address:
Orbit Living, PO Box 6406, Coventry, CV3 9NB

Textphone 18001 0800 678 1221

Live Chat
Why not use Live Chat on our website? It’s safe, secure and immediate. Since last summer, over 10,485 Live Chats have taken place. Join the conversation. 8am to 10pm, seven days a week.

Orbit South Housing Association Ltd. Registered Office: Foy House, 27-29 High Street, Margate, Kent CT9 1DL.
Homes and Communities Agency Reg. No. L4060
Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 - Registered Society No. 27802R (Exempt Charity)

If you need information in a different format please contact our Customer Service Centre.