

Orbit Life

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Want to save on energy?
Read our top tips

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Learn how we've
delivered services
to you, read our
customer annual
report summary



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*Bexley resident, Lilah,
at a recent family fun
day event in Erith, South
London*



Meet our guest resident editor, **Linda Price**

Meet Linda Price, an Engaged Customer and our guest editor of this edition of Orbit Life...

After living in a council home, I moved into my Orbit home in 2015. I did a lot of volunteer work with the council, so when I joined Orbit I wanted to get involved as an Engaged Customer. I was pleased to see that there were so many opportunities to feedback about Orbit's services, from repairs to estate services – and more. As an Engaged Customer, you can earn reward vouchers from Love2Shop too. Find out more by visiting our **website** .



*With the colder weather now upon us, I hope that everyone is making the most of their heating, blankets, jumpers and hot drinks. If you're looking for ways to keep warm and make your pounds stretch further, be sure to read 'Dan's top five tips for saving energy' on page six. Don't forget, if you need a helping hand, you can attend one of the free Better Days winter wellbeing events or get in touch with Orbit's Better Days team to find out what free support is available to you. Visit our **help and support**  page to find out more.*

We've just published the new 2023-24 customer annual report, 'Continuing to drive positive change together' and invite you to have a read about how we've delivered services to you over the last year. You can learn more about the work customers just like you been involved with and in their own words, explain how we're working together to improve services for all customers.

You can watch a short highlight film or read the full version of the report by visiting our **website** .



Prioritising your wellbeing

As autumn turns to winter and the days get shorter, it's a good opportunity to reflect on our mental wellbeing and recognise the importance of self-care. Whether you're facing personal challenges, or simply looking for ways to enhance your everyday wellbeing, taking steps to care for your mental health can make a huge difference.

Simple ways to prioritise your wellbeing:

- **Get moving:** Physical activity is a proven way to improve mental health. Whether it's a short walk or a stretch at home, moving your body can release tension and improve your mood
- **Talk about your feelings:** Whether it's with friends, family or a professional, opening up about how you're feeling can relieve some of the negative emotions you may be carrying around. It can be as simple as sharing with someone you trust or connecting with an online support community
- **Take time to unwind:** Carving out personal time to do things you enjoy, whether it's reading, watching a favourite show, or taking a relaxing bath, can help you recharge
- **Get enough rest:** Quality sleep is essential to good mental health. Establish a bedtime routine that helps you wind down and aim to get enough hours of restful sleep each night
- **Try journaling or gratitude lists:** Writing down your thoughts or noting what you're grateful for can help process emotions and shift your mindset toward positivity. Making this a regular habit supports healthy mental wellbeing
- **Learn to manage stress:** Techniques like deep breathing, meditation, or mindfulness can help you manage stress effectively. Taking just a few minutes a day to focus on your breathing can make a big difference.



The countdown to Christmas is on and this is a time for happiness and joy for most people, however for some it can be a time for heightened emotions. With loneliness, anxiety and depression on the rise, it's important to get help if you need it. Our free Better Days programme can help, visit our [myWellbeing](#) webpage to learn more.

Do you want to care for your physical and mental wellbeing as you're getting older? **Take part in our new monthly ageing well events!**

Discover the variety of activities that we have to offer at our free monthly ageing well events, designed for anyone aged 55 and over. Connect with others, stay active and enjoy a day filled with opportunities to relax, exercise and socialise in a welcoming atmosphere. With a variety of activities and support from our partners, these events are all about YOU! Here's what you can look forward to:



Opportunities to make new friends

Health checks with qualified professionals

Help getting online

Weekly fall prevention or seated exercise classes

Free Better Days help and advice

Please note: activities vary at each ageing well centre

We're currently trialling the events at our ageing well centres and they are open to anyone over the age of 55:

Mentmore House - Mentmore Road, Ramsgate, Kent, CT12 6RY

When: 4 December, 8 January, 5 February, 5 March
10am to 12 noon

Lawrence Mackie House - St Peter's Road, Wellesbourne, Warwickshire, CV35 9PN

When: 29 January, 26 February, 26 March
10.30am to 12.30pm

Sherwood House - 1 Queen St, Erith, South London, DA8 1RP

When: 3 December, 7 January, 4 February, 4 March
2 to 4pm

Tithe Lodge - Little Park, Southam, Warwickshire, CV47 0JJ

When: 29 January, 26 February, 26 March
1.30 to 3.30pm

Walsingham Court - 2 Winchester Way, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP2 9YL

When: 19 December, 16 January, 20 February, 20 March
10.30am to 12.30pm

Osprey House - Archer Close, Studley, Warwickshire, B80 7HG

When: 30 January, 27 February, 27 March
10am to 12 noon

To find out about other events we've got going on in your community, visit the **events page**  on our website.



It's time to get festive!

Looking for some holiday activities for the family? Check out our festive family fun webpage! We've got plenty of activities for you, including DIY decoration ideas, puzzles, quizzes, downloadable colouring sheets, recipes and more. Visit our [website](#)  to find more.

We're going to be holding free Christmas events in your communities. Come along for games, music and fun activities! Visit our [events webpage](#)  for more details.

Customer Support Hub Christmas 2024 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'll still be here to support you on the days our Hub will be closed, as our usual out of hours emergency service will be available. As always, if you need our support and someone to speak to urgently, please call us on **0800 678 1221**.

Monday 23 December 2024 – 8am to 8pm

Tuesday 24 December 2024 – 8am to 5pm

Wednesday 25 December 2024 Christmas Day – Closed

Thursday 26 December 2024 Boxing Day – Closed

Friday 27 December 2024 – 8am to 8pm

Saturday 28 December 2024 – 8am to 1pm

Sunday 29 December 2024 – Closed

Monday 30 December 2024 – 8am to 8pm

Tuesday 31 December 2024 – 8am to 8pm

Wednesday 1 January 2025, New Year's Day – Closed

Tuesday 2 January 2025 – 8am to 8pm



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

Dan's top five tips for saving energy



We want to make sure that the energy advice we give you comes from people who know best. That's why we've spoken with our Energy and Environment Lead, Dan Welch. He's provided his top tips for saving energy:

1 Turn down your thermostat by 1°C

Lowering your heating by just 1°C can save about £100 a year on your energy bills. The World Health Organisation says that 18°C is warm enough for healthy adults, with slightly higher temperatures needed for those who have long-term health conditions, are older or are pregnant

2 Maintain your fridge and freezer

If your freezer is looking a little frosty, you might want to consider defrosting it. This can improve its efficiency, as the motor doesn't have to work as hard

3 Don't leave your mobile phone to charge overnight

The average mobile phone can take about three hours to fully charge. So if you're plugging your mobile phone in overnight, you're likely wasting energy

4 Wash clothes at 30°C

Most clothes wash just as well at 30°C. You can save around £28 a year by reducing your washing temperature. Don't allow your clothes to dry on your radiators and keep the area around your radiators free of furniture, as you'll only be blocking the radiator from heating the room and encouraging mould growth

5 Use the power of the sun

Make the most of natural light during the day – open curtains and blinds throughout the house to let the light and heat in. Just remember to close them again as soon it starts to get dark in the evenings.

Come along to one of our free **'winter wellbeing'** events near you.

You'll receive free expert energy advice from our partners, Citizens Advice, and a free 'winter warmth pack' worth up to £85. The pack contains winter essentials such as a hoodie, lantern, thermos flask and more! No need to RSVP, just come along on the day. Find your closest event on our **events webpage** .

For more energy saving tips, visit our **cost of living hub** .

Changes to the Winter Fuel Payment: **what you need to know**

The Government recently announced changes to the Winter Fuel Payment, so we've pulled together some information to help explain it...

What is the Winter Fuel Payment?

The Winter Fuel Payment helps eligible people over State Pension age (66) with their heating bills during the colder months. Payments typically range from £100 to £300 depending on your circumstances.

Key change this year

Previously, Winter Fuel Payments of up to £300 were available to everyone eligible above State Pension age in the UK. However, starting this winter (2024 to 2025), this will no longer be the case. You will only be eligible for a Winter Fuel Payment if you meet the following criteria:

You were born on or before 22 September 1958 and you receive one of these benefits: Pension Credit, Income Support, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, or Universal Credit (e.g., through a joint claim with your partner).

Additionally, the payment amounts were doubled for the last two winters as part of the Government's cost of living support. This has now ended. For example, a £200 Winter Fuel Payment became £400 last year. This year, it would return to £200.

If you need free benefit advice or support with making a claim, our partners at Citizens Advice are here to help. Visit our [myMoney](#)  page to find out more.

Need extra help?

For more information about the support available to help you with energy costs, you can visit our [cost of living hub](#) .

Understanding Pension Credit

What is Pension Credit?

Pension Credit is a means-tested benefit for people over State Pension age who have a lower income and is a separate benefit from State Pension. It comes in two parts: Guarantee Credit and Savings Credit. You can be eligible for one or both parts.

Guarantee Credit tops up your weekly income to a guaranteed minimum level. Savings Credit is extra money if you've got some savings or if your income is higher than the basic State Pension. It's available to people who have reached State Pension age before 6 April 2016.

It's important to note that Pension Credit can also open doors to other support, including the Winter Fuel Payment, help with housing costs, council tax and heating bills.



How can you apply?

You can apply to the government directly by completing their [online form](#) . You can also call the Pension Credit claim line on 0800 99 1234.

If you need free benefit advice or support with making a claim, our partners at Citizens Advice are here to help. Learn more on our [myMoney webpage](#) .

Who is eligible?

You might be eligible for Guarantee Credit if you have reached State Pension age and live in England. State Pension age is currently 66 for both men and women. When you apply for Pension Credit your income is calculated. You can check this using the government's [Pension Credit Calculator](#) .

If you have a partner, your income is calculated together. You can also still be working as long as your income isn't too high. Even if your weekly income exceeds the thresholds, you may still qualify for Guarantee Credit if you:

- **Are a carer (receiving Carer's Allowance or a related payment)**
- **Have a disability and receive a qualifying disability benefit**
- **Have eligible housing costs (such as service charges)**
- **Are responsible for a child or young person under 16, or aged 16-20 in approved training/education (12+ hours per week).**

You might be eligible for Savings Credit if you reached State Pension age **before 6 April 2016** or if you're a couple and both of you did.

Love your community? Love taking photos?

Last call to enter our 'Love your community' photography competition

The latest winner of our photo competition is Ian Brown and his photo of the moonlight. Congratulations Ian, we hope you enjoy your £50 Love2Shop voucher!



If you love taking photos of where you live, you've got one last chance to enter to win our final quarterly prize of a £50 Love2Shop shopping voucher. The deadline for entering is Friday 27 December. Complete your entry form and upload your photos on our **website** . We'll announce the winner in the February 2025 edition of Orbit Life, as well as the overall grand prize winner of a £250 Love2Shop voucher. Be sure to send in your photos!

Looking to move? Try **Homeswapper**



We're excited to share that swapping your home with another housing association customer is now simpler and more efficient with Homeswapper, an online site for affordable housing swaps, providing access to over 200,000 homes, with thousands more being added each week.

If your circumstances have changed and you're looking to upsize or downsize, or you want to move closer to work, friends and family, head to our '**Swapping my home**'  blog for more details and to find out how Homeswapper can help you find your perfect new home.

Join us for our **Your Voice** customer events



Join us in March 2025 for an exciting series of **Your Voice customer events** designed for you to get involved, share your feedback and learn more about how we can work together to enhance your experience of being an Orbit customer.

With a variety of events planned, you'll have the chance to meet our Customer Engagement team, ask any questions and explore how you can shape future Orbit services. With most activities conveniently hosted online, we have made it easier for you to participate from anywhere. For those who prefer or need a different option, we'll also have ways to get involved offline, ensuring that everyone can take part.

There's even more to look forward to... during these events, we'll be offering a range of fun activities with **fantastic prizes** to be won! By getting involved, not only can you help influence the services you and other customers receive, but you could also walk away with some great rewards. It's the perfect time to engage, connect with other customers, and explore how we can work together to improve your experience as an Orbit customer. Don't miss out on this chance to have your voice heard and make a real impact—join us in March and see how you can get involved!

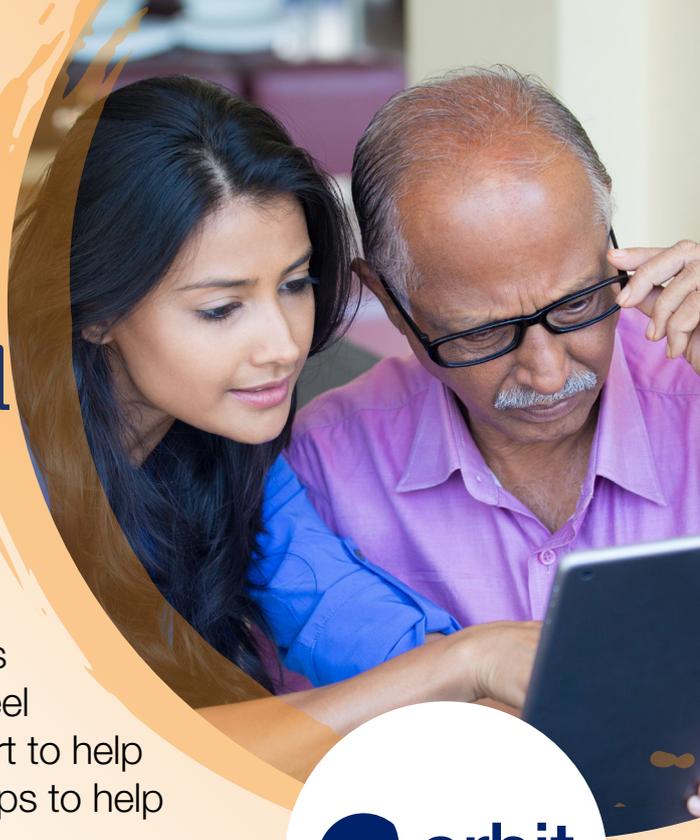
Want to sign up now for regular updates?

You can do so in any of the following ways:

- Join our Your Voice **Facebook group** 
- Complete our **sign-up form** 
- Email **customer.engagement@orbit.org.uk** saying you are interested.



Getting digitally connected: Helping your loved ones get online



In today's world, being online can help us stay closer to others and manage our everyday lives more easily. For some, using technology can feel overwhelming and they may need extra support to help build their confidence. We've got some great tips to help you get your loved one connected.



Get access to the internet Make sure they have internet access. If not, you can help them find a good deal by looking at offers from various providers. If they're on certain benefits, they may qualify for a discounted rate, called a 'social tariff'. We may be able to help too. Through our Better Days partnership with Good Things Foundation, we're offering free data SIM cards to customers who don't already have internet access. You can learn more [here](#) .

Choose the right device Help them decide what device suits them best. Tablets are great for browsing and watching videos, while laptops are better for writing and chatting.

Stay safe online Always buy devices from trusted shops and don't forget to get online security software.

Help them get started Setting up a device can be tricky if you haven't done it before. Help them connect to the internet, set up an email or create social media profiles. A shared online calendar can help you keep track of important dates together.

Guide them in searching online Show them how to use search engines and find websites related to their interests.

Encourage practice Using the internet every day will help them get comfortable with it. With practice, they'll become confident in no time.

If you need any help or advice, please reach out to us. Find out more on our **Better Days myDigital**  webpage.

Our **myLearning team** is bringing free digital training sessions directly to customers at our Orbit community hubs, ageing well events and Independent Living schemes. In a comfortable and relaxed setting, you'll learn how to get set up online, keep safe and improve your digital confidence. We'll be sending out letters and putting up notices, so keep an eye out for more details. In the meantime, you can find out more about myLearning by visiting our **myLearning**  webpage.

Contents insurance all wrapped up



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

Insure your belongings

It's our responsibility as your housing provider to insure the structure of your home, however this doesn't include what's inside, like your furniture, clothing and personal possessions.

As our customer, you are eligible for an exclusive home contents insurance scheme, starting from just £1.98 a month for £4,000 standard cover. There's no long-term commitment and you can cancel at any time.

Terms and conditions apply, contact above.

Price includes Insurance Premium Tax (IPT) charged at the appropriate rate.

The policy is underwritten by Aviva Insurance Limited. Aviva Insurance Limited, Registered in Scotland Number 2116. Registered Office: Pitheavlis, Perth PH2 0NH. Authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority.

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Or to talk to us, please call: **0800 678 1221**

Textphone: **18001 0800 678 1221**

**Take a look on
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 /OrbitHelp

Our postal address:

Orbit, PO Box 6406, Coventry, CV3 9NB

If you need information in a different format
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