



Annual Report to Customers

2016-17

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building
communities



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Welcome

For nearly 50 years, we have been investing in homes and communities to help people live independently and maximise their potential. This annual report is a way of showing you how successful we have been during 2016-17, what we did well and what we still need to work on.

Last year has been a year of steady improvement and gains. By listening to customers, we are changing the way we think about service improvement. In short, it allows us to deliver a better, more efficient service and it's showing dividends. The best example of this is the repairs service: customer satisfaction jumped from 68% to 87% in the last quarter of the year.

We celebrated an important milestone in our mission to build 12,000 new homes by 2020. Eleven new shared ownership apartments in Kent saw us reach a target of 5,000 new homes built since 2013.

Our main objective last year was to regain our G1 governance rating which we did within seven months (G1 means we meet all the regulatory requirements). We take customer safety extremely seriously; so we've built a strong team and structure around safety so we never get in that situation again.

In this report, each section covers one of the six standards that our regulator, the Homes and Communities Agency, looks at - so you can see how our services measure up to them. This year's report covers the whole of Orbit as one, rather than splitting into the operating areas of Orbit East, Orbit Heart and Orbit South.

Did you know?



This year:

- We have built 1788 new homes
- We've had a 55% increase in shared ownership sales
- Over 1,400 customers have been supported with training and employment opportunities
- The repairs service achieved an increased customer satisfaction score of 87%

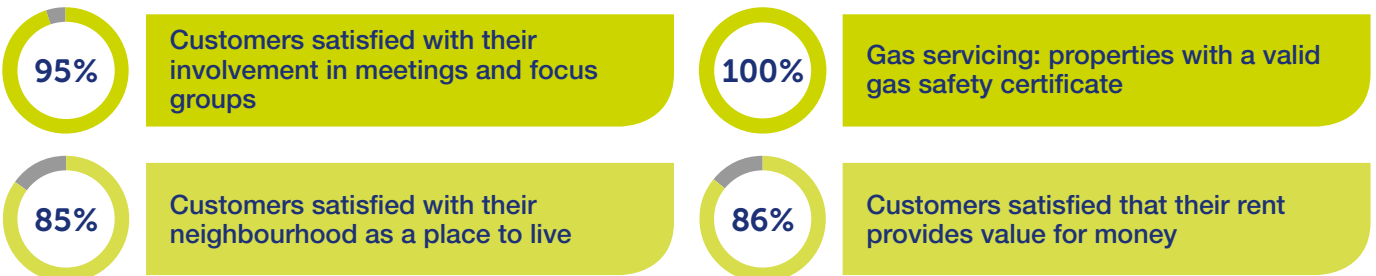


How we compare to other landlords

We compare our performance against other housing providers like us who have more than 5,000 properties and work across more than six local authority areas.



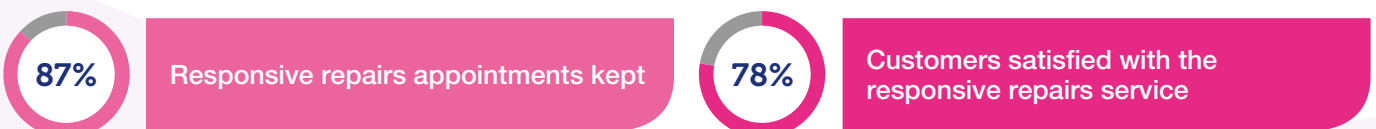
Top 25%



Average



Bottom 25%





Key

In each section we also show how we have performed against the targets we set ourselves. The colours indicate:



We achieved our target



We didn't achieve our target but our performance was better than last year



We did not achieve our target



Where the performance figure is grey, this means that it is either a new service standard for the year or that we had changed the way we measured it

Icons



Click this icon at the top of the pages to return to the contents



Click this icon to read a case study



Click the play button to watch a short film



Click this icon to read more information



Look out for this icon, it will indicate where there is some interesting information



Click this icon at the top of the pages to return here



Customer service

Standard: we provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of our customers

How we performed against our service standards



54% of calls were resolved first time when contacting the customer service centre



70% of customers satisfied with the speed of the service provided



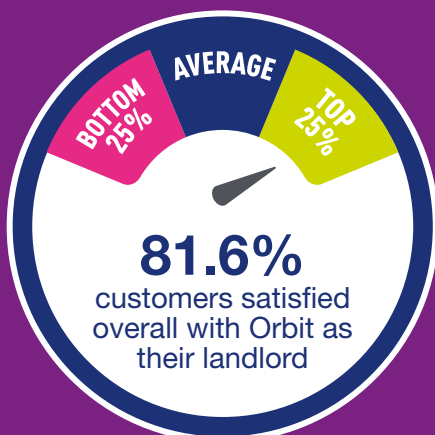
88% of customers were happy with the helpfulness of staff



81% of customers satisfied that they are treated as a valued customer



89% of customers happy with the competence of staff



We were the first housing association to use real time feedback. It has helped us change the way your feedback is managed and acted upon across the business. This is good for us as a business and better for you because it makes us focus on customer care and getting things right.



What we did

The new resolution team had been formed the year before to proactively manage negative customer feedback. It's proved a real success with customers so we expanded the team. They can now do even more to give early feedback to managers about issues on a day-to-day basis. This helps us resolve problems quickly and stop them recurring. There have been significant improvements in customer satisfaction because of this.

There had been an issue with contractors changing repairs appointments so we made changes. If a repairs appointment was changed, we kept in touch with the customer, letting them know what was happening, why and when the next appointment would be. We also worked with our contractors to reduce the number of appointments being moved. Customer satisfaction has gone up and the number of calls customers were having to make to chase up new appointments has reduced from around 40% to 20%.

What we plan to do

We want to make things easier for you by introducing two way texts so you can change an appointment if you need to without having to call us.

We want to continue to increase the knowledge of the customer advisors so they can answer your questions straightaway. This is about giving them the training and the knowledge to deliver the best experience for each individual customer.





Complaints

Standard: We have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that makes sure that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly.

How we performed against our service standards



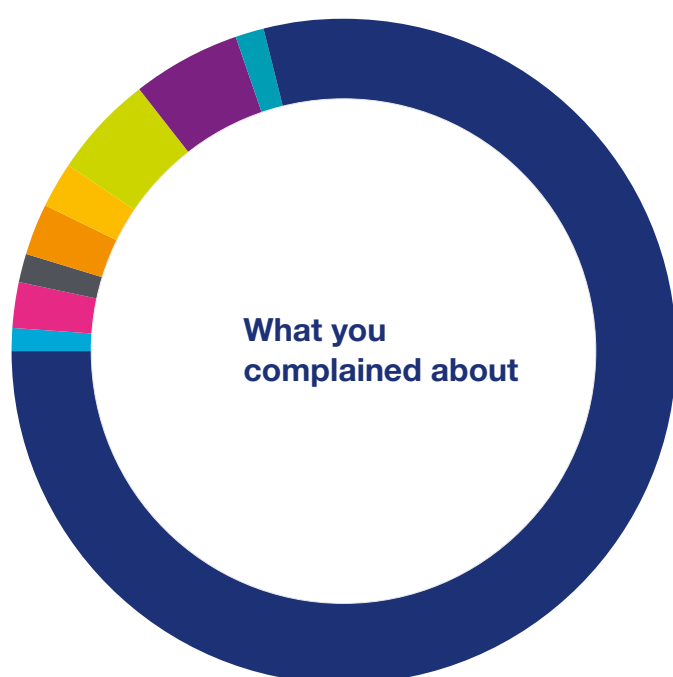
90.1% of formal customer complaints were responded to on time



37.5% of customers were satisfied with the resolution of their complaint



96.7% of formal complaints were acknowledged on time



Number of complaints:

- 287** Repairs service
- 6** Planned maintenance service
- 6** Customer Service centre
- 14** Staff
- 1** Policy
- 13** Housing service
- 9** Independent Living
- 5** Estate services
- 4** ASB
- 36** Other



- **234** Provided advice
- **143** Took corrective action
- **18** No action required

*14 additional cases were also resolved this year; they had been opened in the previous year

Did you know?



Four formal complaints were closed through the ombudsman and there have been no cases of faulty procedures or service failures.

Most of your complaints were around the repairs service (in particular, the work carried out, missed appointments and the time taken to get the repair fixed). We've seen significant improvement in our contractors' performance. We'll continue to work with them to reduce complaints and improve the service.

Complaints help us understand the customer experience and highlight areas where services need to be improved. So, to make sure we are taking what we learn from your complaints and making positive changes, customers and staff completed a major review of formal complaints and customer dissatisfaction.

What we did

As a result of the review, towards the end of the year, we set up a new specialised customer relations team to deal with all formal complaints. Once a customer raises a formal complaint, they get a dedicated complaints manager who works with them from start to finish, makes sure we respond on time and regularly keeps in touch with each customer. The team are also in touch with the rest of the business so can give an insight on where things started to go wrong. This means we can learn what we need to do differently so the problem doesn't happen again.

It's early days but we've seen customer satisfaction with the new team increase significantly which is encouraging. Some customers have withdrawn their formal complaint because they have been happy with how their case has been dealt with.

What we plan to do

A customer service improvement group is monitoring how the formal complaints process is working and they will be auditing this service next year. There will be a lot of focus to make sure we are hitting the mark and doing what we need to do for customers.



Customer involvement

Standard: We make sure customers are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved. We support customers to develop and implement opportunities for involvement and empowerment.

How we performed against our service standards



92% of customers were satisfied that their views were taken into account



92% of customers were satisfied with the training they received



96% of customers were satisfied with their involvement in meetings and focus groups



50 services were changed, withdrawn or begun as a result of customer involvement



96% of involved customers said they would recommend getting involved to other people



Customer involvement isn't just a tick box exercise; it does count and it does make a difference. So we have increased the number of opportunities for customers to get involved.



What we did

Keeping everyone up to date on progress is an important part of our commitment to customers. The **customer involvement ezine** used to be published four times a year. It now goes out every month to involved customers and is posted on the website for everyone to see what services have been improved as a result of customer involvement. We also updated the involvement pages on our website.

Our hugely successful real time feedback system helped us capture a really broad range of customer views. We've also increased the number of surveys we send out. These surveys go to all customers (not just involved ones) so we're now getting insight and feedback from around 6,000 people.

What we plan to do

Real time feedback has been a great way of shining a light on any issues with our service. So, each month we will identify any trends that appear via real time feedback and then link up with customers who might be being affected by those trends to get their opinions and insight. For example, if we notice an increase in anti-social behaviour in a particular area, we will contact customers who live there to investigate further. By identifying issues that matter to customers sooner, we have a better chance of improving things.

We want our involved customers to be a true representation of the people living in our homes. So we will be looking at how we can get a good cross section of views to reflect our diverse communities.



//
Much greater insight into how community investment will benefit Orbit customers
//

//
Well informed lead staff and a good group of involved customers which made the activity better
//

//
There were a lot of positive comments around the work of the customer service centre and also a number of great suggestions for things we can look at improving
//



Diversity

Standard: We treat all customers with fairness and respect. We demonstrate that we understand the different needs of our customers.

What we did

We worked with our senior staff and board members to support our equality and diversity agenda. The Naseem Khan award was relaunched as a grant and there were three winners (supporting staff with dyslexia; supporting a programme of Straight Allies for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender staff and customers; a dementia music café).

Breathing Space is a free mental health and wellbeing support service for all customers. This new service provides customers with free access to help and advice 24 hours a day, online, by phone or via live web chat on our [Better Days website](#). It also provides opportunities for customers to access personal and confidential face-to-face support from qualified support workers. We estimate that this service will help more than 1,200 Orbit customers in the coming year.

We set up a new involved customer equality and diversity group. At the first meeting, the group agreed to use our customer data more to make sure that the services we provide don't disadvantage customers and are accessible to all. We have a duty to work with local authorities and report any safeguarding concerns. We developed a recording tool to help us report any issues to the local authorities as well as identify the numbers and types of safeguarding cases.

Did you know?

Around 45% of customers seeking employment advice have a mental health condition. Support, such as Breathing Space, will help these customers break down their barriers to finding and maintaining employment.

Did you know?



We completed:

- 262 major adaptations
 - 620 minor adaptations
- for the benefit of our customers.



What we plan to do

We will review our approach to how we communicate with you. We want to improve our digital services so that customers who want to use those channels will have a good experience; also, we'll look at using more text messaging so you get useful information quickly and at the right time.

We'll review how we manage reported cases of domestic abuse and hate crime. We are concerned that these issues may be being under reported. We want to understand how we can help customers experiencing this.

We'll continue to look for opportunities to engage with customers from different backgrounds to help improve our services, particularly younger customers. If you are interested, please [get in touch](#).



Case study

We funded a project supporting people struggling with mental health in East Anglia. The Appleseed project, based near Norwich, is a 12 week programme, giving people access to working outdoors and with animals.

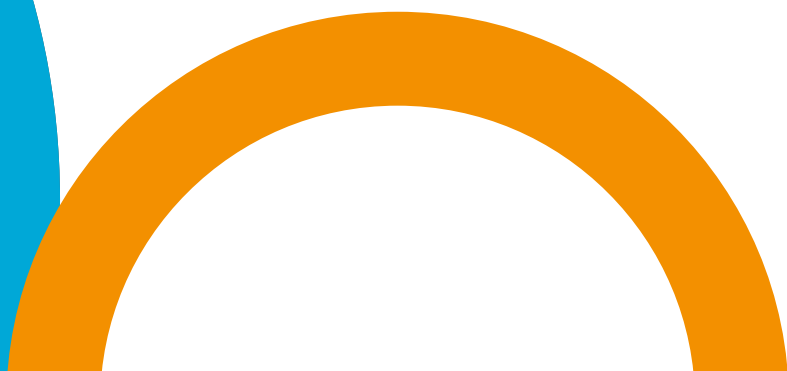


This was an excellent first meeting. The scope of equality and diversity is enormous and customer participation is essential. I hope that it is repeated on a regular basis and that customers continue to be involved



Case study

We hosted a 'virtual dementia tour' event for staff and customers. It gives people taking part the physical and emotional experience of what it might be like living with dementia. Alison, the daughter of an Orbit customer living with dementia, took part.





Responsive repairs

Standard: we provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas. We meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants of their homes.

How we performed against our service standards



78.2% of customers satisfied with the overall responsive repairs service



100% of properties had a valid gas certificate



87% of responsive repairs jobs were completed on the first visit



87% of appointments were kept

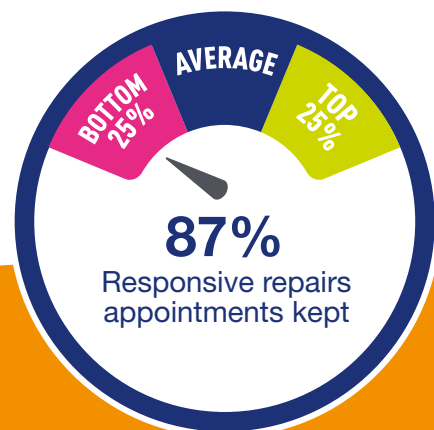


89% of customers satisfied with the overall gas servicing

Did you know?



- **87,404 repairs reported**
- **21.2% of repairs were treated as an emergency**
- **Average repair time reduced from 19.5 days to 14.6**
- **Carried out 14,293 pre-inspections; of which 79.5% were completed within 7 days**
- **Area surveyors carried out 3,168 inspections to check that the repair had been done properly**





We know that a well-maintained home is important for customers. So we have put a huge effort into improving the responsive repairs service this year. The great news is that this work is paying off. We saw customer satisfaction with the repairs service increase in the last three months of the year: from 68% to 87%.

What we did

We have improved our systems for checking on jobs that might slip behind schedule. We are also working with our contractors so we can more easily track repair jobs.

We also began training our contractors'



engineers on what 'good' service looks like from the customer's point of view.

It's called the **Orbit Pledge**: an eight step process for contractors to follow on each job and improving how they communicate with customers and manage their expectations.

To encourage as many people as possible to feedback on the service they have received, our contractors leave a card reminding people how they can give us their thoughts via our real time feedback system. Knowing what you think about your experience helps us make sure that we are focusing our improvements on the right things.

What we plan to do

After a successful pilot project, we launched a new online repairs service using My Account. It provides customers with the opportunity to report repairs, book appointments in real time, track progress and cancel repairs. It's an easier, more convenient way for customers to report their repairs.

Our own Orbit surveyors will be responsible for checking what needs to be done for a repair and getting a property ready. They will also inspect every job once it's finished to make sure it's up to standard before being signed off.

To make sure that customer service advisors send the right contractor to the right job, we will be using our contractors' training facility to give advisors the knowledge and background on the various types of repair jobs that need doing. We will develop the Orbit Pledge for contractors working on capital delivery (planned maintenance) and compliance (customer safety).

Excellent induction and accommodation high standard. Very helpful and were quick to complete requested repair on communal front door





Capital delivery (previously called planned maintenance)

Standard: we take a prudent, planned approach to repairs and maintenance of homes and communal areas that balances planned and responsive repairs against value for money.

How we performed against our service standards



72.9% of customers were satisfied with the overall capital delivery service

Investing in our properties and your home is an important commitment each year. We want to make sure we maintain and improve your home to a high standard.

Did you know? 

Orbit fitted:



641

kitchens installed and upgraded



439

bathrooms upgraded



718

window and door replacements



4890

properties decorated



180

communal security systems upgraded



2003

electrical checks were done



1289

front fire doors replaced



8

lifts upgraded



1090

homes had electrical upgrades



120

water services replaced



1678

boilers replaced



What we did

At the start of the year, we moved from measuring our capital delivery (planned maintenance) service by phone surveys to using real time feedback. That means you are letting us know what you think and what is important to you. We are able to analyse this feedback and act upon it as quickly as possible.



We produced a video to help customers who were having their kitchen replaced understand all of the steps, from start to finish. The video also had useful tips to make everything run smoothly for you while the work is being done. Customers continue to work with us on specifications for kitchens, boilers and bathrooms, including reviewing the information we give out at the start of a project so it's consistent, no matter which contractor is working on the job.

What we plan to do

We are doing a lot of work with our contractors to improve customer satisfaction, particularly around gas servicing. New contractors for kitchens and bathrooms will be starting in the Midlands and, in the East and South, we will be retendering for the painting contract.

A major improvement programme is planned. We are going to invest more money in our housing stock (kitchens, windows, heating, bathrooms) to improve the overall quality. We will be reviewing all our policies and procedures to make sure we have the best approach to customer safety.

Did you know?



We completed the external insulation project to 557 properties. This will improve the energy efficiency of customers' homes, helping to reduce their energy bills.



I am writing to tell you what an amazing job was done on my kitchen. I couldn't be happier with it. I would like to mention how great the kitchen fitter Jimmy was. He always kept me updated with what was going on and the quality of work is at such a high standard



We have just had our home externally insulated. As we are both in our eighties, we were concerned about how the job would affect us. We need not have worried. The workmen were polite and efficient. The house is now good to look at and very warm. We are very happy with the result





Letting our homes

Standard: We shall let our homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way. We shall take into account the housing needs and aspirations of customers and potential customers.

How we performed against our service standards



19.8 days average time taken to re-let our general needs properties



21.9 days average time taken to let all our properties



32.6 days average time taken to re-let our sheltered properties



78% of customers who had a good first impression of Orbit as a landlord

Did you know?



- There were **1,114** new tenancies (1,038 new general needs and 76 sheltered tenancies)
- There were **2,560** re-let tenancies (2,016 re-let general needs and 544 sheltered tenancies)
- **392** mutual exchanges (386 general needs and 6 sheltered)



Providing customers with a new home is a great part of our job. When it comes to letting our homes, we aim to be efficient, fast and fair, providing properties that are of a good standard and cleanliness.



What we did

We want to be able to answer as many of your questions without having to pass you on to a different member of staff. So our housing teams have been working closely with the customer service centre to give them the knowledge to deal with your queries straightaway.



'Orbit Move', our online tenancy sign-up system, has continued to prove popular with new customers. It's success has been recognised within the industry as well; it won 'Best use of technology' (Chartered Institute of Housing awards, Midlands) and 'Most innovative IT system' (Housing Innovation awards) and was shortlisted in the Outstanding innovation of the year' in the UK Housing awards.

What we plan to do

We will be looking at our tenancy strategy to make sure that we are offering the right kind of tenancies to our customers; are we meeting the needs of our customers? What can we do to support them better? This will also include how we support new customers from their first application to their sign-up meeting.

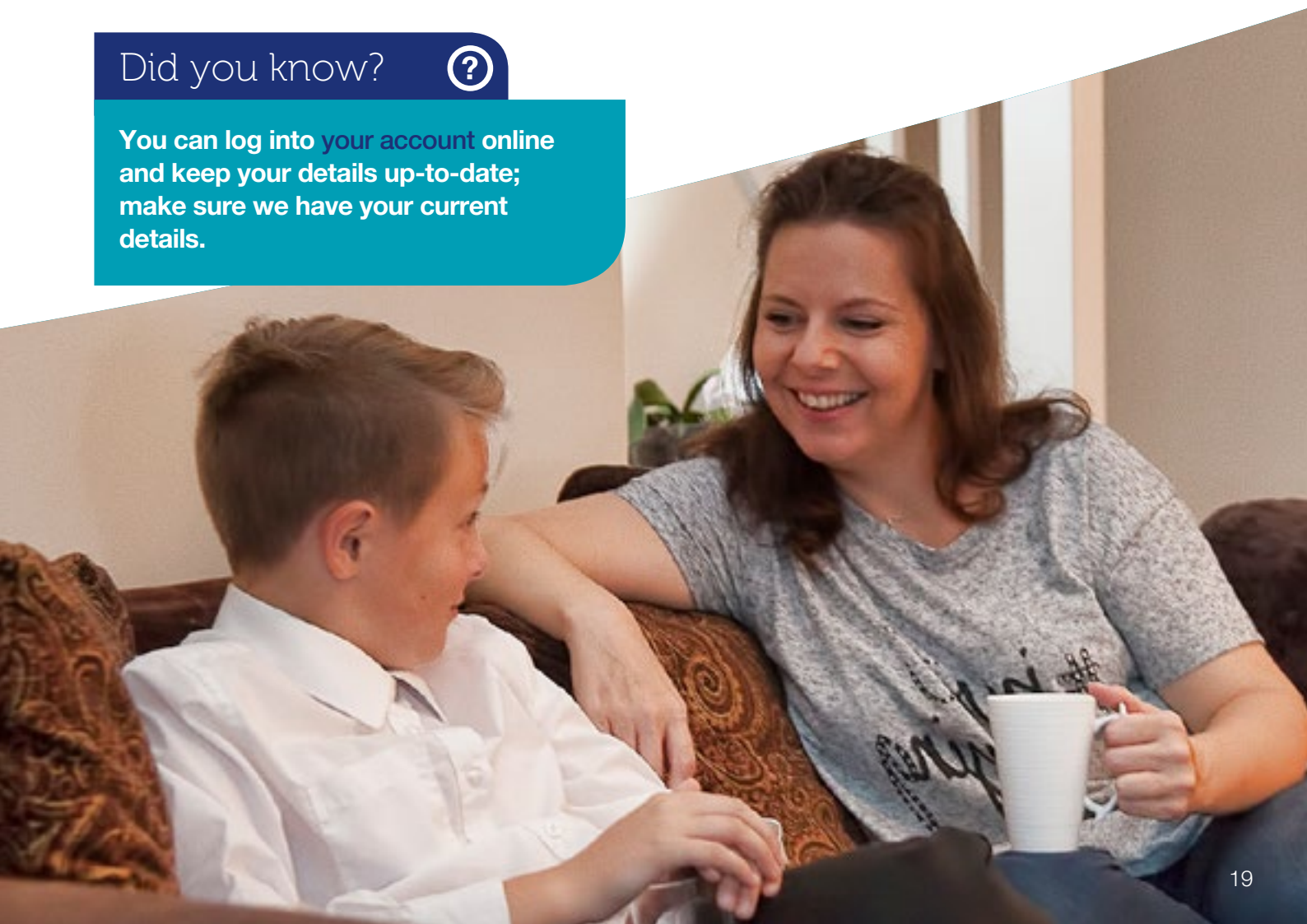
We will work with HomeSwapper, the mutual exchange service, to offer free use of their website to our customers who want to exchange their home. Working with one provider means we can be more efficient and offer better value for money.

We want to reduce the length of time our properties stay empty in between lets. The sooner we can make a property available, the sooner a customer gets a new home. We will be reviewing the whole process to see how we can significantly reduce costs and improve the customer experience.

Did you know?



You can log into your account online and keep your details up-to-date; make sure we have your current details.





Developments



Case study

Our £40m **Arden Quarter** development in Stratford-upon-Avon was praised for its design features and community consultation at the prestigious National Housing Awards. It was awarded the 'highly commended' award in the Best Scheme in Planning category.



Case study

Phase two of Erith Park in Bexley started in 2016 with the final 244 homes being built. 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**.



Tenancy fraud



Tenancy fraud affects everybody. It reduces the number of homes available for people who really need an affordable house. It's not fair and it's not legal. We're working hard to prevent it:



42

properties recovered
(so able to house 42 families
with genuine need)



2

successful prosecutions for
unlawful subletting



1 and 2

stopped one fraudulent
application for housing and
two fraudulent attempts to
assign tenancies



3

agreements reached following
interviews under caution



5

helped resolve five anti-social
behaviour cases through
tenancy fraud intervention




114

new fraud referrals in the year
(20 via the Orbit website)



Community investment



 This year, we launched **Better Days**, a new way of engaging with you through our community investment programmes. Better Days is all about helping you to have a good day, every day. Over 23,000 customers took advantage of opportunities to change their lives, helping them keep their tenancy and improve their local communities.





What we did

We set up an in-house team to deliver employment and skills to customers across the business, especially those affected by welfare reform.

We launched #earnitdontburnit - a new online service offering a package of free tips and advice to engage, support and educate customers to make the most of their money online.

Last year, we invested **£1.9m** in community projects and used this funding to draw in over **£1.4m** of other investment into our communities; that's over **£3.3m** being invested in the communities where you live.

Did you know?



This year we provided more than 2,200 customers with free financial advice. For more information, go to **Better Days** and search #earnitdontburnit

We gave **grants** to 391 customers



//
Even though it's only day two I feel that I know what I need to do now."
Gemma, Norwich
GOALS course
//

//
The training I received was amazing and it was only through your support with my CV that I am able to start applying for jobs again.
Mariama
//

//
For the first time in years, I am finally looking forward to my future" Marta, helped to find a job through the employment support team
//



Case study:

Citizens Advice referred Daniel to our employment support team to help him tackle the difficulties he faced communicating confidently.



What we plan to do

As well as continuing to provide support to customers who are affected by the government's changes to welfare benefits, we will be looking at how we can help customers who are affected by key life changing events (such as moving in, reaching adulthood, redundancy, changes in relationships, retirement, bereavement).

We will promote **Better Days** to customers as well as embed it throughout the business, so we get referrals from frontline teams (such as the customer service centre and housing)



as well as linking in with our **volunteering programme**.

The employment team will look to support 989 people with employability leading to 225 jobs (part time, full time, apprenticeship and self-employment) and 174 training and education outcomes (work experience, work trials and educational training).



Case study:

"Because of the help I got from Orbit, I now have my own company!" Sam Moroney, 'The Property Doctor' based in Rushden, Northamptonshire.

Sam was keen on starting his own property maintenance business so he referred to Orbit's employment team.





Neighbourhood and community

Standard: We shall keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes that we own clean and safe. Where it is effective, we shall work in partnership with our customers and other providers and public bodies.

How we performed against our service standards



85% customers satisfied with their local neighbourhood as a place to live

We don't just build and maintain homes; we build communities too. We want to make them sustainable, thriving and pleasant places where people want to live.

What we did

We have reviewed the services provided by our contractors and in-house teams. We want to get estate inspections right, offering a better, more consistent service for you. That means putting a new quality process in place.

We continued to work closely with the community investment team to link projects to our communities where they have the most social impact and benefit our customers.

We have a target to get our homes to a minimum energy rating of Band C. This includes investing in our homes but also selling properties that aren't able to meet this standard. So far, we have been able to move 33 customers into warmer, more energy efficient homes.



Case study:

Customers in Pickard Close, Rugby had problems with people using their gardens and driveways as a short cut.



Case study:

We helped Bexley Wheelchair Services and Disabled Equipment Services.



What we plan to do

To give better customer service and react quickly to issues, we need to review how we work and balance our teams. Therefore, we will be considering the best, most responsive way of working for staff and customers. We will be trialling this new approach later in the year.

We have been given a grant from the government's Estate Regeneration fund to develop Arthur Street, Bexley. Built in the 1960s, Arthur Street is next to Erith Park, our award winning development. It consists of three 13 storey tower blocks and a number of low rise blocks. We will use the money to prepare a planning application, working with the London Borough of Bexley and the local community to design an inclusive community that people are proud of.



Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

Standard: We shall work in partnership with other agencies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhoods where we own homes



How we performed against our service standards



46% of customers satisfied with the outcome of their ASB complaint



85% of customers contacted about their ASB complaint within the timescale

Anti-social behaviour affects a relatively small number of customers but we will help them by giving support and advice on how best to deal with it when it happens. From abandoned cars and barking dogs to more serious crimes, we work with customers, local authorities and the police to improve the lives of customers in our communities.

What we did

Thanks to the resolution team in the customer service centre who provided daily reports and information on issues that needed extra attention, we were able to react quickly against customers who had been causing problems for their neighbours. Having the information to seek injunctions against people who cause anti-social behaviour is a great result for customers who have had to put up with it.

What we plan to do

At the end of the year, we started a major review on how we handle anti-social behaviour, looking at what we can and can't do, how we work with you and other agencies. This will also look at domestic abuse and hate crimes. The review will carry on into the summer.

Did you know?



We won the 'Excellence in Youth Involvement' category at the Central TPAS awards for success in tackling ASB on the Brownsover estate in Rugby. The On Track project is aimed at young people aged 10-19 and offers them a chance to get involved in sports and leisure activities after school and during the school holidays. Within two months, the number of ASB cases reduced dramatically (with reports of serious cases eradicated completely).



Case study:

An anti-social behaviour case quickly escalated from youths hanging around a communal entrance of a block to a homophobic assault and harassment of a couple who were living there.



Case study:

Housing officers, Mahri (Northampton) and Annette (Stowmarket) had to deal with anti-social behaviour (ASB) problems caused by drug dealing from customers living in Orbit properties.





Estate services

Standard: we shall keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes that we own clean and safe.



45% customers satisfied overall with estate services

We want you to be happy with your local neighbourhood as a place to leave. That means we need to continue improving the ground maintenance and cleaning services we deliver.

What we did

To achieve this, we put more formal arrangements in place with our contractors which will help us monitor the quality of the work they deliver. We also made sure that we went out and about a lot more to check that contractors were meeting all the specifications within their contract.

Our frontline teams were given digital devices which allow them to report repairs, take photos of unacceptable standards and respond faster to customer queries. The teams also started to use digital technology which helps us understand if we're getting our scheduling right so we can plan wisely. Customer feedback is always welcome but using digital technology helps us to monitor our service accurately.

What we plan to do

We will send out a survey to customers living in communities where quality monitoring has already taken place. This is to see if our standards match the expectations of our customers.

The dumping of bulk waste and fly tipping on our estates and the removal of it continues to be a problem. Last year, we received more than 1,500 calls about fly tipping and it cost us over £200,000 to remove this rubbish – a cost we have to pass down through the service charge to you. We want to make sure we have a more economical solution to deal with the removal of the fly tipping. We will also produce clear information about the consequences and cost of fly tipping.





Rent

Standard: we shall charge rents in accordance with the government's direction to the regulator, the Homes and Communities Agency.

How we performed against our service standards



3.8% overall rent arrears owed (for general needs and sheltered customers)



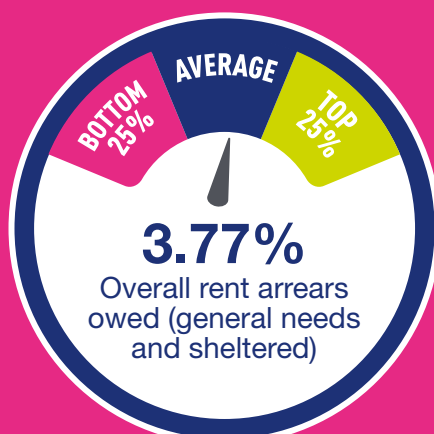
86% of customers satisfied that their rent provides good value for money



Did you know?



Eviction is always the last resort. So it was great that we reduced the number of evictions by a third (63 in 2016-17; down from 93 the year before). This was because more people chose to work with us to keep their tenancy.



The majority of our income comes from rent which funds all of our services, including repairs.

The recovery officers have now been trained to take card payments using the Call Pay website and how to set up a paperless Direct Debit. It improves the customer experience because everything's done in one smooth transaction and it means less paperwork and fewer phone calls.
Hannah, team leader



What we did

We launched our paperless Direct Debit service; around 2,000 customers have taken advantage of this (setting their payments up over the phone or online). We also changed our debt (rent arrears) process so that customers who pay by Direct Debit don't get letters if their benefit changes but the council are slow to tell us. Instead, we automatically recalculate the collection amounts when we are told the new benefit amount.

We have been contacting all customers who are affected by the government's benefit changes (such as the benefit cap, universal credit and local housing allowance) to make sure they understand the changes and are aware of the support available to them.

Working with our involved customers, we reviewed all our debt (rent arrears) letters to make sure they are clear and written in plain English.

What we plan to do

We recovered £300,166 from former customers who owed us money. However, we didn't meet our target of collecting £500,000.

We will be reviewing how we go about collecting debt from former customers; changes might include the use of bailiffs. We will continue to work with collection agencies and enforcement organisations who chase debts on our behalf long after the customer has left their tenancy. The more money we can get back, the more we can invest in services for our existing customers.

We will continue to support customers who are moving from housing benefit to universal credit to make sure they don't run into problems with their rent.





Advice services



2,462

customers have been provided with tailored, personal advice and tenancy support



£4,552,505.63

As a result, our customers are better off by more than £4.5 million

Advice services is made up of specialist money and tenancy support officers who offer free, friendly, confidential advice and support. They help customers who are having trouble managing their debts, need advice and help claiming benefits, have problems with budgeting or need support to maintain their tenancy. This is in addition to the independent advice available through our Better Days website.

What we did

We negotiated a special arrangement with Citizens Advice that will allow Orbit customers to get priority telephone advice.



We launched our new Better Days website which gives a wide range of advice on benefits and wellbeing. Over 380 customers have actively asked for help through this [website](#).

We secured around £4.5 million of additional income for customers who worked with the advice services team.

What we plan to do

The advice services team will be working more closely with our housing teams. This means that vulnerable customers are identified sooner and offered support with their tenancy before problems get out of hand.

We will also draw in resources from other organisations allowing us to support more customers.

We will introduce new technology that allows us to contact customers sooner by telephone if they appear to be struggling to meet rent payments. The aim is to help them with debts (rent arrears) before they get out of control. As a result, we'll send fewer letters which will be a cost-saving for the business that can be reinvested into services for customers.



Did you know?

Around 200 customers a year will be given a free 12 month subscription to financial app, Squirrel, which helps people save the money they earn.



Case study:

A customer's housing benefit had been suspended for several months so he'd been paying rent from his own savings.



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I am a completely different person to what I was a year ago. I'm more organised and can budget better. I wouldn't be like this if I hadn't met Susan [money advisor]

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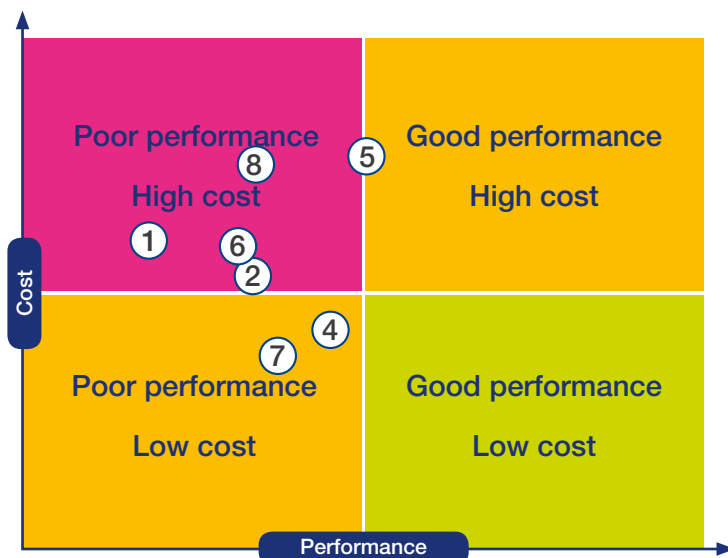
Value for money

Value for Money (VfM) is about making sure that we spend our money (including what we've collected in rent and service charges) wisely, efficiently and effectively. We have to get the balance right between cost, quality, meeting expectations and achieving high levels of customer satisfaction.

We achieved a £5.2m efficiency saving. Orbit's work on VfM gives us a focus to improve services and release resources to meet development targets, improve our existing homes and help us to invest in our products and services and the communities where we work.

This is achieved in a number of ways including a clear and strong approach to project management, selling some of our central services as well as a continued focus by all staff and teams to achieve savings locally.

Each year we produce and publish on [our website](#) an overall Value for Money self assessment.



- 1) Responsive repairs and void works
- 2) Rent arrears and collection
- 3) Anti-social behaviour
- 4) Major works and cyclical maintenance

- 5) Lettings
- 6) Tenancy management
- 7) Resident involvement
- 8) Estate services





Income and expenditure

- Our operating surplus increased to **£107.4m** (up **£14.3m** from last year)
- Our surplus on sales increased to **£22.8m** (up by **£3.3m** from last year)
- Our surplus from property sales increased to **£42.8m** (up by **£12m** from last year)
- Our surplus after sales, interest and taxed increased to **£55.7m** (up by **£14.4m** from last year)
- Turnover increased by **11%** to **£333.3m**
- Operating costs increased by **4%** to **£155.4m**
- We spent **£63m** on major works, compliance and repairs to our properties
- Our fixed assets increased by **£191.8m** reflecting our investment in our homes.

Details of our income and expenditure can be found [here](#). Our full annual accounts are available on our website.

Did you know?



We invest a large amount into maintaining and improving your home. The table shows how much we set aside in our budgets and what we actually spent in the last two years.

	Budget 16-17 £m	Actual 16-17 £m	Budget 15-16 £m	Actual 15-16 £m
Responsive repairs	26.5	25.8	29.5	25.8
Capital delivery and compliance	36.5	35.8	23.1	29.2
Energy efficiency renovation programme works	1.4	1.4	8.3	6.9
Total maintenance	64.4	63.0	60.9	61.9

Standard: We shall make sure we have effective governance arrangements that deliver our aims, objectives and intended outcomes for our customers and potential customers in an effective, transparent and accountable manner. We will manage our resources effectively to make sure the organisation's viability is maintained whilst ensuring that our social housing assets are not put at undue risk.



Governance and financial viability

The Board is responsible for the running of Orbit. It makes decisions on business strategy and plans, overall budget and investment decisions. It has a key role in monitoring and scrutinising the progress we are making and the outcomes and impacts we achieve. It contains a mix of independent members as well as members who are customers of Orbit.

At the end of the year we had achieved a final surplus of £107.4m million to reinvest in the business and into our neighbourhoods and communities.

Our strong financial performance provides confidence to our customers, regulator, funders and other stakeholders that we can deliver existing and new services.

Let us know what you think

We hope you find this year's report interesting. We welcome your feedback and look forward to hearing your views. You can do this by clicking [here](#).



Get in touch:


You can visit our website:

 **orbit.org.uk**

For more information, please email us:

 **info@orbit.org.uk**

Or to talk to us, please call:

 **0800 678 1221**

Textphone:

 **18001 0800 678 1221**

Take a look on social media:

 **/OrbitHelp**  **@OrbitHelp**

Our postal address:

 **Orbit, PO Box 6406, Coventry, CV3 9NB**

If you need information in a different format
please contact us on **0800 678 1221**

Orbit Group Ltd, Orbit South Housing Association Ltd and Heart of England Housing Association Ltd are all registered societies under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Are all exempt charities and registered with the Homes and Communities Agency.