



Annual report to customers

2017-18

orbit.org.uk



building
communities



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Contents

Our customer promise:

We provide excellent services and good value, high quality homes.

We place our customers at the heart of what we do, investing in communities to make great places to live.

We are Orbit!



Welcome

For over 50 years, we have been investing in homes and communities to help people live independently and maximise their potential. Our customer annual report is a great way of showing you how we have performed as your landlord during 2017-18, including what we did well and what we still need to work on.

We have seen customer satisfaction with repairs improve and we have made significant improvements in how we keep your homes safe. One of our biggest recent achievements was being named a 'top 50 UK landlord' in 24Housing magazine's annual listing, ranking 28th, up 19 places from last year. This was thanks to nominations from our peers in the housing sector who noted our success in 'providing excellent digital on-boarding of new tenants and superb mental health support for tenants'.

We know there are areas we still need to improve on around our repairs service, service charges and the way that we let our empty homes, and we have plans in place to help us do so.

We have set out this years' report to explain how we are delivering on our Customer Promise to you, sharing how we are performing against our service standards and some of our plans to improve in the future.

Get in touch

If you have any questions about how we are performing as a business, or would like to know more about how you can be more involved in reviewing our performance or supporting us to improve, please get in touch: annual.report@orbit.org.uk





Key

In each section we show how we have performed against our targets.

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



No target



Delivering excellent services

- We are easy to contact, resolve your queries and keep our promises
- We make moving into your home as easy as possible
- We demand the utmost professionalism from our people.

Delivering excellent services to you is what our Customer Promise is all about. We have made some good progress in a number of areas, but recognise that we still have work to do. We have seen customers remain happy overall with the way that we handle enquiries and questions, which is great, and we have seen the way that we handle your complaints improve, with twice as many of you now satisfied with the outcome of your complaint. We recognise that you want a right first time service and that you want to speak to the right person who can help you - and this is a key focus for us moving forwards.

We are easy to contact, resolve your queries and keep our promises...

We have continued to improve the way customers can access services digitally and we are making great progress towards our 2020 target of 75% of all transactions with customer being online.

Icons



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



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

Did you know?



51% of all customer transactions are now completed digitally or online?

Through My Account online, you can access many of the services we offer 24 hours a day, seven days a week, getting the same level of service as if you called our Customer Services team. You can raise repairs, check your rent balance or make a payment – all at a time that is convenient to you. Visit the **My Account** page to register if you haven't already





Customer service

We demand the utmost professionalism from our people:



95% Calls resolved first time when contacting the customer service centre



89% Customers were happy with the competence of staff



81% Customers were satisfied that they are treated as a valued customer

Sometimes things go wrong and for some customers, there were things that we didn't do so well. We received 443 complaints last year. 272 of these complaints were about our repairs service, which is a reduction on the previous year, but still too many. We know that we need to focus on completing jobs 'right first time' and ensure that we keep appointments that are booked with you so we are working hard on this.

We made some changes to the way we handle complaints last year by introducing our Customer Resolution team and this saw the number of customers satisfied with the resolution of their complaint increase by 29%.

Complaints



99.8% Formal customer complaints were responded to on time



96.9% Formal complaints were acknowledged on time



66.7% Customers were satisfied with the resolution of their complaint



0% Formal complaints through the ombudsman



What customer complaints were about

- 272 Repairs service
- 4 Capital delivery service (property maintenance)
- 8 Customer Service Centre
- 40 Employees
- 31 Policy
- 17 Housing service
- 3 Independent living
- 8 Estate services
- 8 ASB
- 52 Other



What we did as a result of your complaint*

- 289 Provided advice
- 77 Took corrective action
- 37 No action required
- 28 Other



We make moving into your home as easy as possible...

It took us slightly longer to let our empty properties to new customers last year and just under four out of five new customers had a good first impression of us as a landlord. This is something we have identified that we need to improve on, so that new customers are satisfied when they first move in, but also so that we don't lose out on valuable money from empty properties that could be spent on improving our homes.



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



28 days average time taken to let all our properties



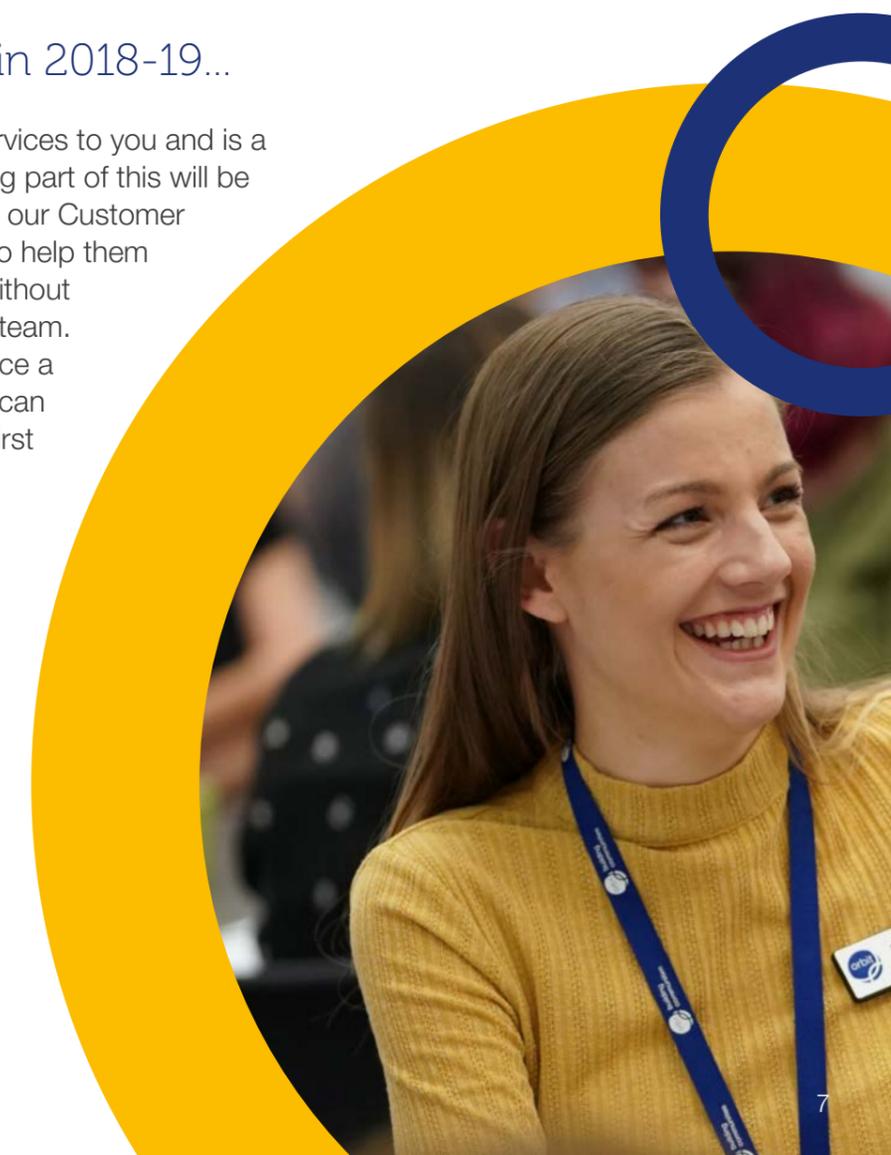
46.6 days average time taken to re-let our sheltered properties



79.68% of customers who had a good first impression of Orbit as a landlord

What we are improving in 2018-19...

2018-19 is a year of improving our services to you and is a key focus for the whole business. A big part of this will be increasing the skills and knowledge of our Customer Services team and giving them tools to help them resolve more queries straight away, without having to pass you across to another team. This forms part of our plans to introduce a new 'Shared Services Centre', so we can focus on delivering services right the first time in a more effective way. We are also introducing specialist teams in repairs and tenancy management, so that you can talk to experts who have the time and skills to deliver you an excellent service. We are looking to increase the number of services that you can use through our website, so that it is quicker and easier to resolve your query. A new specialised lettings team will also be introduced to improve the way that we re-let our empty homes and to focus delivering excellent services to new customers.





Providing high quality homes

- We provide a range of homes for sale, rent and shared ownership
- We build and maintain quality homes you can be proud of
- We make sure our homes are affordable and sustainable.

Providing high quality homes is what we should be doing first and foremost. This includes building new homes in the communities where we work, investing in your homes for the future, repairing things that go wrong today and ensuring that you are safe and secure in your home always.

We build and maintain quality homes you can be proud of...

Last year was a record breaking year for us as we built over 2,000 homes in a year for the first time ever.

Did you know?

Our satisfaction rate for new build rented customers has improved from 88% to 91%



- 344 social rent
- 790 affordable rent
- 539 shared ownership
- 199 market sale
- 82 private rent
- 76 built for other providers



Maintaining homes you can be proud of...



82% of customers are satisfied with the quality of their home.

Last year, we saw significant improvement in the way we managed the 86,000 day-to-day repairs we handled, with satisfaction increasing from 78% to 87%. The introduction of our **Customer Pledge** played a real role in helping to improve our relationship between you and our contractors.

Last year, we saw more appointments kept, but we did complete slightly less jobs on the first visit. We aren't yet at our 90% satisfaction target and recognise how important a good repairs service is to you, so we will continue to work to improve the service this year, specifically looking at increasing the number of appointments kept and the number of jobs that are completed right the first time.



87% Customer satisfied with the overall responsive repairs service



100% Properties had a valid gas certificate



84% Responsive repairs jobs were completed on the first visit



89% Appointments were kept



90% Customers satisfied with the overall gas servicing

Did you know?

- 86,332 repairs reported
- 22% of repairs were treated as an emergency
- 82% of repairs completed within timescales
- Carried out 2866 pre-inspections; of which 49.5% were completed within 7 days
- Area surveyors carried out 5,649 inspections to check that the repair had been done properly

Improving your home...

Each year we continue to invest more into your homes and have a goal to increase the amount we spend on your homes by £8million per year over the next few years. Whilst we hit our target in terms of the amount of investment we made and the number of improvements we delivered, we are disappointed with how many of you were satisfied with this service, 64.6% is not good enough and improving this is a clear focus for us in 2018-19.



Capital delivery



64.6% Customers were satisfied with the overall capital delivery service



683

kitchens installed and upgraded



450

bathrooms upgraded



921

window and door replacements



2,042

electrical checks were done



515

homes had electrical upgrades



1,214

boilers replaced



2,197

properties decorated



1

water service replaced



9

lifts upgraded

Keeping you safe in your home...

Over the last year, we have made major improvements in the way we help keep you safe in your home. We have also taken steps to improve the performance of our contractors so that customers receive the level of service that they deserve. We have invested heavily in our new Property Compliance team. This investment has led to a number of achievements and we have been awarded a Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) award for our work on fire safety, as well as being the first housing provider ever to be granted a partnership arrangement with the West Midlands Fire Service.

We have listened to our customers and through mutual consent, have ended our relationship with Swale Heating who carried out our gas safety and heating works. The performance level of Swale was a major cause for concern, as we were letting far too many of our customers down. To resolve this, we introduced a new contractor, Robert Heath Heating, our new gas and heating contractor in the Midlands and the East. Since we made this change, we have received excellent feedback from our customers and our customer satisfaction scores have increased to over 85%.

What we are improving...

Despite some big improvements over the past year, we know we can do better in looking after your

homes and that is why we are introducing a new Property Management team in 2018. Each area will have dedicated Property Manager who will be carrying out regular estate inspections to make sure the quality of our properties are of a high standard. They will be accountable for the visual and physical quality of our estates, schemes, open spaces and communal areas.

To help deliver a better planned maintenance service to you, we are also looking at how we can improve the way that we communicate with you about improvements we are making to your home, such as new kitchens and bathrooms to make the experience smoother and better for you, as this is something you weren't happy with last year.



Orbit Earth

We are bringing green objectives to more of our work. We are introducing Orbit Earth, a new plan to take responsibility for our impact on the environment, take action to reduce this impact and make sure we operate as a green business. Over the coming months, we will be creating an action plan of steps big and small to care for our carbon footprint, alongside an employee and business pledge to ensure that our commitment to the environment is everyone's responsibility. [Click here](#) to find out what we have achieved since 2013.



Placing community at our heart

- We listen and take account of your views
- We involve you in the decisions that affect your community
- We offer support and advice for you to live happy, independent lives.

Did you know?



To be successful, it is important that we engage with and listen to our customers and communities. That is why 'placing community at our heart' is central to our Customer Promise.

We listen and take account of your views...

Last year we continued to take your views into account when evaluating our performance and planning for new or improved services. Last year we had 33,000 responses to our real time feedback surveys and 4,300 responses to our 'What Matters' survey that asks you what it is like to be our customer. We used this information to help us to make a number of improvements to our services including changes to our gas contractor, the introduction of our customer pledge and the training and coaching we provide to our Customer Services team.

What we know we need to do better is to communicate with you how you have helped us to improve and to share the improvements and changes that we have made quicker and more effectively.



We involve you in the decisions that affect your community

Customer involvement is really important, as it gives customers a great chance to work with us to both monitor and review our performance and to help improve the services that customers receive. You can be involved at home, or by coming to focus groups and/or face-to-face meeting. It's up to you!

If you think you might be interested in working with us to help scrutinise and improve our housing services, please get in touch with the customer involvement team at service.improvement@orbit.org.uk



90% of customers were satisfied that their views were taken into account



95.2% of customers were satisfied with their involvement in meetings and focus groups



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

We offer support and advice for you to live happy independent lives...

2017 was a big year for us, it was our 50th year. To celebrate, we enjoyed time with many of our customers across our Independent Living schemes. Customers really had fun and it was a great chance for us to spend time together. [Click here](#) to see more.

We know that Universal Credit is here for many of you and will be coming in the future to many more. This is going to provide a different way that many customers will manage their money on a monthly basis and we know there is a role for us to play in helping you to do this. To find out more about universal credit, please visit our website at www.orbit.org.uk/universal-credit-is-coming/

We continue to provide support, guidance and help to manage your money and to sustain your tenancy. Last year we supported over 4,000 customers with advice and tenancy support, and helped customers be better off by over £4 million.

In 2017-18, we strengthened our offer of providing all customers with free access to 24/7 mental health support, help in accessing work and one-to-one support to get and stay online. We also worked with an independent specialist team to help with any money issues from dealing with debt to gaining the financial skills to saving for something special.

Our Better Days programme is how we provide customers with more than just housing. We help customers with dedicated advice about managing money, finding work, getting online and much more. All of our Better Days offers for customers are available via our Better Days website <http://betterdays.orbit.org.uk/contact-us/> or through a quick call to our Customer Service Centre on **0800 678 1221** (choose option four).



Community investment



What we are improving...

We want to be able to listen to and engage with all of our customers and we recognise that the way we currently involve you in reviewing and improving our housing management services, means that some of you don't get a chance to do that. That is why we are undertaking a detailed review of our approach to customer engagement this year. We will be working with customers to improve the range of opportunities you have to get in involved, locally and through online and digital channels.

We are interested in your views on how we can improve the way that we engage with you. Please let us know your thoughts by emailing: service.improvement@orbit.org.uk

We are also looking closely at the way we contact and work with customers who are in rent arrears or who are having financial issues.

We will be further improving our Tenancy Sustainment team to be able to provide you with advice and guidance both on the phone and face-to-face, through coaching and mentoring sessions. This team is there to provide a helping hand in the early days of your tenancy, or help if you get into any difficulties. The team will be working in a more focussed and efficient way in 2018-19 to help us reach even more people.



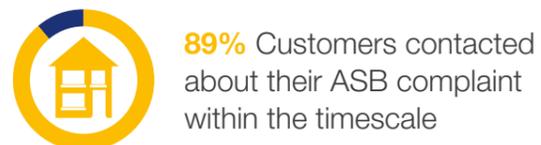
Investing in neighbourhoods

- We are committed to creating diverse, thriving neighbourhoods
- We will keep your neighbourhoods clean, green and safe
- We invest for the long term in the places where you live.

Neighbourhood and community

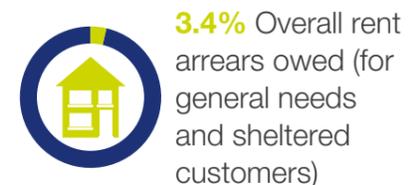


Anti-social behaviour (ASB)



Value for money

Rent



We have a strong track record of using our money wisely and investing cost savings in improving our homes, our communities and in delivering more housing in areas of need. This year we have embarked on a two-year programme called 'Shaping our Future', which will build on this record to further help our business performance. It includes:

- A new operating model, structuring our housing service into two functions, housing management and property management. Working in specialised roles will improve the effectiveness of our employees and outcomes for customers.
- A review of corporate structures to reduce layers of management and better align them to frontline services.

- Review the locations of our offices and how our Customer Service Centre and online services work together (on line transactions have increased to 51% this year from 24% and we have an ambitious target by 2020 of 75%).

- Investment in computer systems to streamline systems and improve the quality of our information.

- Develop a new corporate culture with a focus on making Orbit a great place to work.

The programme has achieved operating cost savings of £7.2 million for 2018-19 and will realise another £2.7 million per year from 2019-20.

	2019	2020
Revised operating model	£3.8m	£0.7m
Procurement	£0.8m	£0.3m
Working more efficiently	£2.6m	£1.7m
Total	£7.2m	£2.7m

Service charge improvement...

We are disappointed that only 64% of customers are satisfied with their service charges and we know that this is something that we really need to improve. In 2018-19 our new Property Management team will be starting a large piece of work to improve the accountability, transparency, accuracy and communication around service charges. We will be working with involved customers throughout this project and need to ensure that our information, process and communication is much better.



Maintenance budget information

	Budget 17-18 £m	Actual 17-18 £m	Budget 16-17 £m	Actual 16-17 £m
Responsive repairs	26.5	24.8	26.5	25.8
Capital delivery and property compliance	37.9	39.0	36.5	35.8
Energy efficiency renovation programme	3.1	2.3	1.4	1.4
Total maintenance	67.5	66.1	64.4	63.0

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:

Bottom 25%



Average



Top 25%



// We place our customers at the heart of what we do, investing in communities to make great places to live. //

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](https://www.facebook.com/OrbitHelp)  [@OrbitHelp](https://twitter.com/OrbitHelp)

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

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