



# Building thriving communities

Our annual report to customers 2018 to 2019

[orbit.org.uk](http://orbit.org.uk)



building  
communities

# Contents



# Welcome

Excellent customer service defines everything we do and our focus on building thriving communities is backed with a clear commitment to deliver our customer promise.

35,000 of you provided feedback on our services and we are pleased that satisfaction has gone up in almost all areas, especially with repairs, gas servicing and home improvements.

This year, we launched our new Property Management team and relaunched Estates Services to improve the quality of your homes and the estates where you live. Both teams are working more closely with you, responding on the ground to any concerns so we can focus our improvements in the right areas.

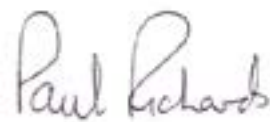
Safety improvements have continued and we are delighted that our efforts have resulted in us being recognised with two Gold Awards from Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) - we've become one of the first housing associations to achieve this Gold Award in customer safety.

We've invested more into your homes, delivering over 3,000 new bathrooms, kitchens, windows and insulation projects. We have focussed on improving energy efficiency and about 21 families a week are seeing reduced heating bills and warmer homes. This is a continued focus for us this year.

We have improved our repairs service and how we work with our contractors. We're also upgrading our IT systems to better support our employees so they can deliver great customer service. Our services to older and more vulnerable customers in our sheltered, supported and extra care housing schemes are being improved. We're also looking at how we can help those people living in our wider communities.

We continue to improve our communications with you at a local level and involve you in the more strategic decisions. We have signed up to the new code developed by the National Housing Federation - 'Together with Tenants' which has been created to help strengthen the relationships between housing associations and their tenants.

Despite all that progress, we recognise that we need to continue to improve and our customer promise provides a clear commitment to achieving this. We have every intention of making even more improvements to back this up.



**Paul Richards**  
Group Customer Services Director



## 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!**

# Orbit's key highlights of 2018 to 19



We built **1,266** new homes



**50%** of the homes we built were for affordable rent



**86.98%** of you said you were satisfied with our home improvement service



**90.02%** of you said you were satisfied with our responsive repairs service



We spent **£40.9m** in improving your homes



We invested **£4.7m** invested in our communities



Overall customer satisfaction is **86.06%**



We upgraded **998** kitchens and **342** bathrooms



**93.6%** of you were satisfied with gas servicing



We achieved two **RoSPA Gold Awards** including Customer Safety



We provided **1,935** of you with financial advice



**46** customer involvement activities were held



We helped **269** of you into jobs



We achieved **100%** health and safety compliance



## Key

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

The colours indicate:



We achieved our target



We were close to achieving our target



We did not achieve our target

## Icons



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



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

## Delivering excellent services

### Our promises

- 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.

### Customer service

The service that our customers receive is just as important as the quality of homes we provide and our Customer Service Centre is the main way that you get in touch with us. We aim to sort as many customer questions and issues at the first point of contact as we can and to do this as professionally and as quickly as we are able to.

	2017-18	2018-19
Calls that were made to our Customer Service Centre	485,825	<b>484,784</b>

Percentage of customers that were satisfied with the customer service they received



2017-18  
**80.30%**

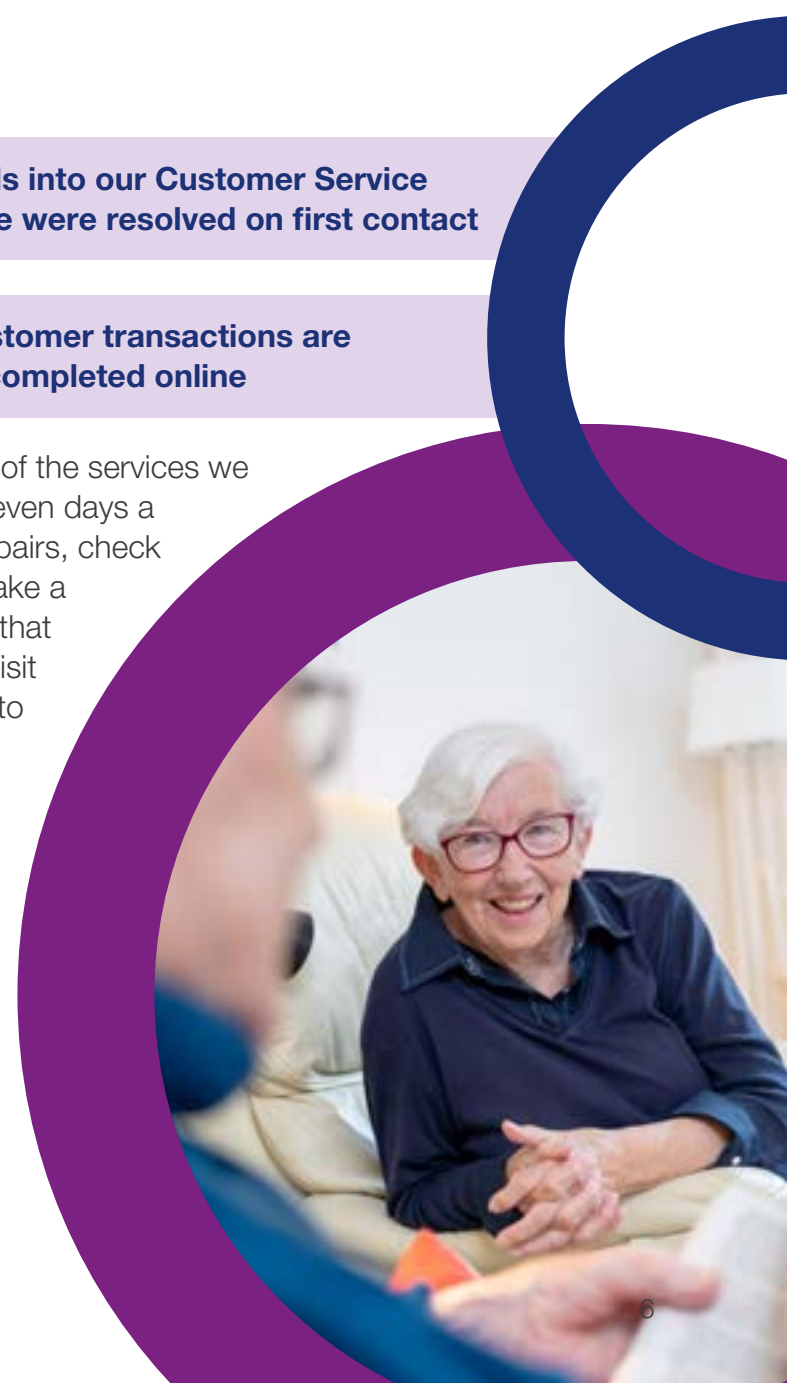


2018-19  
**83.02%**

**68%** of calls into our Customer Service Centre were resolved on first contact

**61%** of customer transactions are now completed online

You may access many of the services we offer 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can raise repairs, check your rent balance or make a payment – all at a time that is convenient for you. Visit the **My Account** page to register if you haven't already.



## Moving into your home

Percentage of customers who had a good first impression of us as a landlord



2017-18  
**79.68%**



2018-19  
**75.5%**

Occupancy



2017-18  
**98.34%**



2018-19  
**98.95%**

We've changed how we measure the amount of time that properties are empty. In the past, we calculated the number of average days it takes to re-let an empty home to a new customer. However, this figure has become more challenging to compare as each landlord measures it in a different way. We now use a measure called 'occupancy'. This is a truer measure of the amount of time all our properties are empty, whether it is awaiting repairs or needs a new customer nomination from the local council. Sometimes we may also keep it empty because it requires a lot repairs or is redeveloped as part of our property investment work. Three out of four new customers had a good first impression of us as a landlord, this is a reduction from last year and an area we continue to work on improving.



# Complaints

Formal complaints **acknowledged** on time



2017-18  
**96.9%**



2018-19  
**96.3%**

Formal complaints **responded** to on time



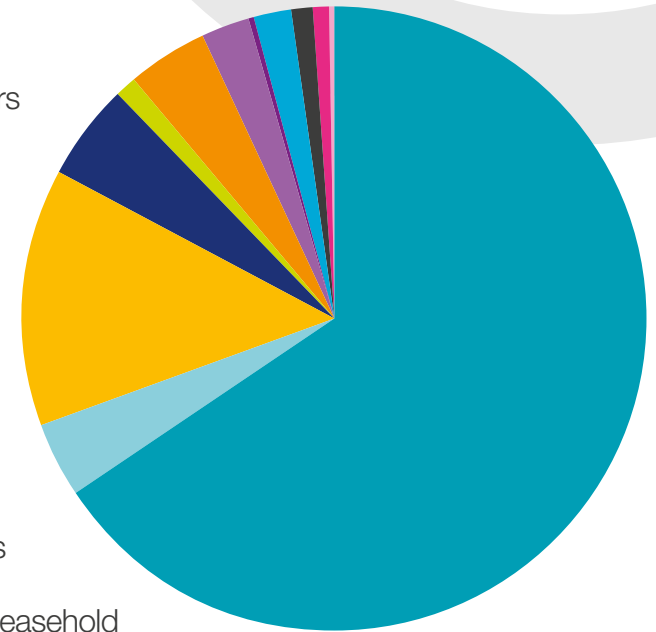
2017-18  
**99.8%**



2018-19  
**99.1%**

What our customer complaints were about

- 286 Responsive Repairs
- 17 Planned Works
- 58 Housing service
- 21 Income
- 5 Independent Living
- 18 Development
- 11 Leasehold Services
- 1 Private Retirement Leasehold
- 9 Estate Services
- 5 Customer Service Centre
- 3 Finance
- 1 Insurance





## Complaints (continued)...

We have seen a decrease in the number of complaints we received compared to last year, from 443 to 435 with the reduction being credited to better work in our Customer Service Centre. The way we manage complaints has improved to make sure we handle more of your concerns at first point of contact to reduce the number of formal complaints.

We have seen a 28% reduction in complaints moving to stage two (meaning the complaint was escalated further); mainly due to the improvements we have made to the way we handle and record complaints. We have also improved the quality of our complaints responses to make sure we fully explain our investigations and decisions.

13 investigations were carried out by the Housing Ombudsman, who is responsible for reviewing customer complaints that have not been resolved with our internal team. In all but three cases, we were found to have resolved the complaint satisfactorily.

This year, we will continue to focus on improving our services and responses to all customer complaints. By September 2019, we will have reviewed the way we manage our complaints and compensation, to make sure that we provide customer focussed responses. As part of this work, we will be engaging with customers through our quarterly complaints improvement forums.



## Providing high quality homes

### Our promises

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

### The types of housing we offer

#### Affordable or social rent

We provide rented homes at affordable or social rents. This means that these properties are rented out at costs which are less than those charged by private landlords.

#### Shared ownership

Shared ownership provides an affordable way for you to take the first step onto the property ladder. You buy a share in a new home and pay affordable rent on the remaining share. The share you buy will usually be between 25% and 75% of the full purchase price and is tailored to suit your personal situation, meaning it is not only affordable for you now, but also in the future. Learn more about shared ownership [here](#).

#### Outright sale

We also build a range of homes for outright sale. We provide a range of offers and promotions including Help to Buy Equity Loans and Part Exchange (if you have an existing home to sell). Our housing developments range from small schemes in rural villages through to sites of hundreds of new homes in towns and cities. We build a variety of homes from one bedroom apartments through to large family homes. See more about our offers and promotions [here](#).

#### Independent Living

Our Independent Living homes offer people over the age of 55 a tailored set of services and lifestyles. We offer homes for both affordable rent and shared ownership that provides opportunity of living your life as independently as you wish. Many of our schemes offer a range of shared facilities or common areas – as well as activities and social events, which we know helps create closer knit, supportive communities. See more about Independent Living [here](#).

# Our locations and properties

## Orbit region

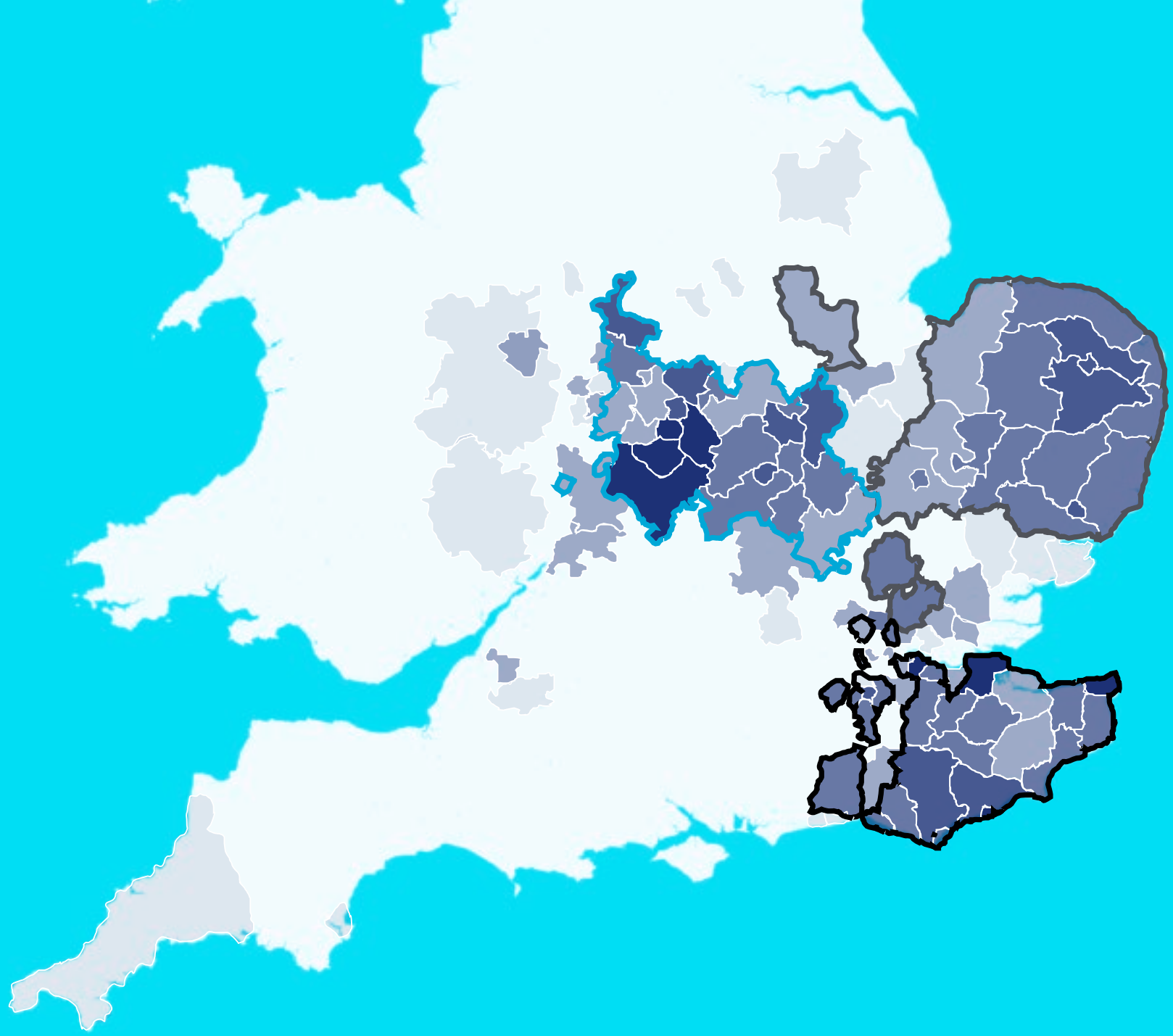
based on physical area offices

- East
- Midlands
- South

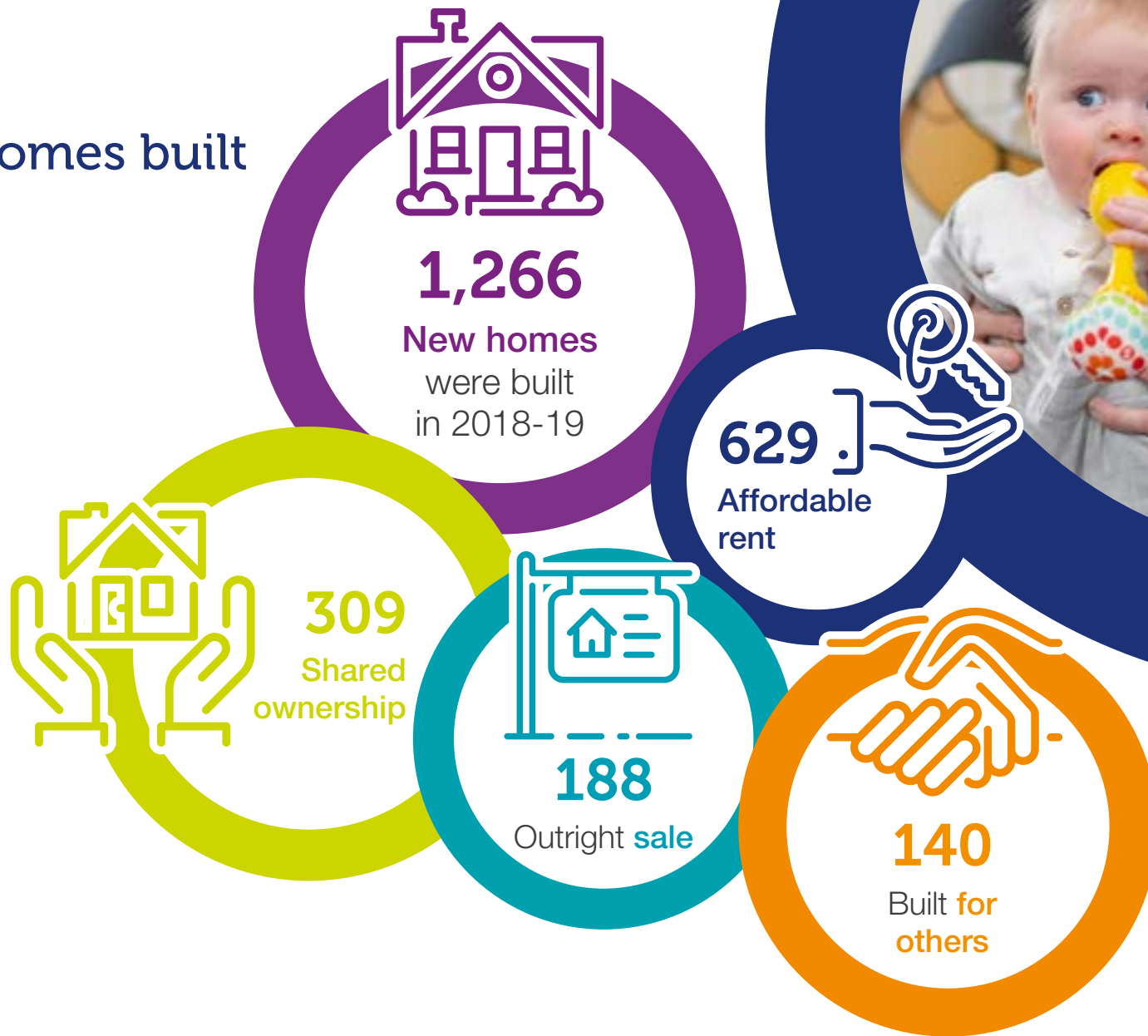
## Property count

per local authority

- Less than 5
- 5 - 99
- 100 - 499
- 500 - 999
- 1,000 or more



## New homes built



{ 4% of the homes we built in 2018 - 19 were for Independent Living, and we have several new schemes in our pipeline for 2019-20. }

## Maintaining your home

{ We spent over **£74m** in total and have also focussed on driving higher standards for all of our repairs. }

### Repairs and maintenance spend:

	2017-18	2018-19
Responsive repairs	£24.8m	<b>£25.5m</b>
Home improvements and customer safety	£39.0m	<b>£47.1m</b>
Energy efficiency	£2.3m	<b>£1.4m</b>

{ **75%** of our customers were satisfied with the quality of their home }

Percentage of customers satisfied with our **overall response repairs service**



2017-18  
**87%**



2018-19  
**90.02%**

Percentage of customers satisfied with our **overall gas servicing**



2017-18  
**90%**



2018-19  
**93.6%**

Percentage of customers satisfied with our **overall home improvement service**



2017-18  
**64.6%**



2018-19  
**86.98%**



## Maintaining your home (continued)...

**Home improvement spend:**  
We invested **£40.9m** in improving your existing homes in 2018-19



**998**

kitchens installed  
and upgraded



**342**

bathrooms  
upgraded



**2,504**

energy  
works



**1,843**

fire safety  
actions



**8,370**

homes had  
electrical upgrades



**1,211**

boilers  
replaced



**817**

storage heater  
replacements



**928**

window and door  
replacements



**6,745**

homes  
decorated



**120**

water service  
replaced



**168**

roofs  
replaced



**10**

lifts  
upgraded

## Placing community at our heart

### Our promises

- 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.

### We involve you in the decisions that affect your community

Customer involvement is really important, as it gives us a great chance to understand your experiences and for you to review our performance, help us make decisions and shape improvements. You can be involved at home, in-person, over the phone or online. For more information, please visit our [website](#).



Last year we held 46 engagement meetings. We also launched two strategic groups (Services and Communities and Homes and Neighbourhoods). The groups are designed to challenge, monitor and review service performance and satisfaction.

All relevant service areas are discussed and split into each group where meetings are held every two months in various locations. The groups have been a huge success, with 507 customers attending our meetings.

This year will see us introduce Your Voice, an online engagement tool where you can more easily provide feedback to us. You will be able to register your preferences and participate in a range of activities such as surveys, polls and discussion groups. If you would like to sign up to Your Voice, please visit [here](#).

We have signed up to the new code developed by the National Housing Federation (NHF) – 'Together with Tenants', a campaign which aims to strengthen the relationships between housing associations and their tenants. We took part in a review of the NHF plan to ensure it was taking into account the views of tenants, residents and housing associations. We will now test the new plan to identify what support and guidance may be needed to reach excellence and share examples of good practise to inspire others.

## Placing community at our heart (continued)...

“I enjoyed networking with other tenants at the National Housing Federation ‘Together with Tenants’ event. It showed the high standards we meet, I feel proud of Orbit and the way we work together”

Frances, Orbit Customer



Percentage of customers were satisfied that their views were taken into account



2017-18  
90%



2018-19  
90%

Percentage of customers were satisfied with their involvement in meetings



2017-18  
95%



2018-19  
95%

Customer Involvement activities held last year

2017-18  
52

2018-19  
46





## Tenancy sustainment

We recognise that the world is a busy place and even the most organised people can have unexpected situations happen that they aren't ready for.

We offer one-to-one or group coaching sessions to support customers who may need extra support with managing their tenancy. Our coaches can help with setting up utilities, answering benefit questions, providing energy advice, offering fire safety and budgeting advice alongside the following coaching sessions:

- **Keys to a successful Orbit tenancy**
- **Managing the unexpected**
- **Being a good neighbour**
- **Living in a thriving community**
- **Making a positive change**
- **Thinking about work.**

*"My employment coach was really helpful, gave good advice and there was no pressure. She guided us through everything. It was well worth the time we put in and now my partner and I BOTH have jobs!"*

## BETTERDAYS

We want to be more than just a landlord. One of the ways we do this is by funding support services through our Better Days programme.

### What is Better Days?

Better Days provides support to you with some of life's biggest challenges; employment, online and computer skills, managing money and overall wellbeing. The programme has helped over 70 different groups and organisations, who in turn have reached out to over 3,000 people.

Here's what some of our customers who received support from Better Days had to say:



## Tenancy sustainment (continued)...

“Breathing Space was supportive and had a high level of knowledge about mental health. They rang me and visited a lot when I was really low. I have been able to manage my anxiety and get myself moving and doing things thanks to their support.”

“Thanks to PayPlan, we are now in a much more secure position financially. It’s no exaggeration to say that as a result of advice through this project, we have received backdated and ongoing money that will make a huge difference to our lives. It has relieved some of the considerable stress and pressure that we have felt under. We have been able to pay off a debt that had been troubling us, and we desperately needed a new car, which we can now afford.”

Click [here](#) to see how you can benefit from Better Days.

As a result of our work:



## Investing in neighbourhoods

### Our promises

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

Percentage of customers satisfied with the **handling of their anti-social behaviour case**



2017-18  
**52%**



2018-19  
**59.74%**

**{ 76% of customers were satisfied with their local neighbourhood as a place to live }**

Our Property Management team is out and about within our communities, helping to make each neighbourhood look and feel better. They are on hand to respond to any questions you may have and have a positive impact on our customers' lives through improving our estates.

## Customer safety

### Our new Customer Safety team

Over the last three years we have worked hard to improve the way our Customer Safety team works. This is the team that carries out surveys and work to keep customers and their homes safe from hazards including fire, asbestos, electricity and gas.

This year we won two gold RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) awards for our commitment to raising the standards of customer safety and our overall health and safety. This fantastic achievement demonstrates our ongoing commitment to customer safety and best practice. Winning these awards means that you can be sure we've done everything we can to make sure your home is as safe as possible.

**{ £10.7m was spent last year on making sure our homes are safe. }**

## Value for money

Delivering value for money is key to how we operate. Our Board leads our approach, through setting our goals and deciding how we spend our money. This makes sure we have a healthy balance between delivering customer satisfaction, maintaining high quality energy efficient homes, increasing the supply of new housing and creating a great place for employees to work.

Over the last two years, we have looked at how we run our business through our 'Shaping Our Future' programme. The programme, which was monitored by our Board, is on track to deliver £10 million of savings each year by improving the way we work and improving our services for customers.

### Value for money highlights

We set ourselves with a number of goals to achieve which have improved the way we work as well as make sure we're getting the most for our money:

#### Achievements

Employment help delivered



2017-18  
**378 people**



2018-19  
**269 people**

Operating margin (percentage of how much profit we make)



2017-18  
**25.4%**



2018-19  
**27.3%**

#### How we operate

Transactions online



2017-18  
**51%**



2018-19  
**61%**

#### Outcomes

Community investment



2017-18  
**£3.8m**



2018-19  
**£4.7m**

Customer satisfaction



2017-18  
**82.7%**



2018-19  
**86.1%**

All homes with an energy performance certificate of band C or higher



2017-18  
**71.8%**



2018-19  
**75.7%**

## Value for money (continued)...

{ **79.6%** of our customers are satisfied that their rent provides good value for money }

More information on how we measure value for money and perform against the Housing Regulator's 'value for money' targets can be found in our financial statements which are available [here](#).

### Did you know?

We spend 6% (or £11.5 million) more of our rental income on average, on maintaining our homes than other housing providers similar to us, to improve the quality of living for our customers.

{ **97.5%** of customers pay their rent on time. }

"Rent and other charges help pay for the upkeep of your home. Without this we would not be able to carry out repairs, improvements or build new homes for people who need them'."

Katherine Buxton,  
Collection and Recovery team



## Orbit Earth

Last year, £1.4m was invested into improving the energy efficiency of your homes. This is not only better for the environment, but can also help to reduce heating costs for you. This year, 100% of our electricity is from renewable energy sources, helping to reduce the impacts of climate change, ensure the air around us is cleaner and support a more sustainable future.

We're working hard to make sure that the work we do as a business is good for the environment. This includes:

- Taking responsibility for our effect on the environment
- Taking action to reduce this effect, and
- Finding better ways of doing things.

By taking small steps as individuals, together we can help make positive change.



### Did you know?

- Last year we completed 5,432 jobs to improve the energy efficiency of our homes including wall and loft insulations, boiler replacements and window replacements.
- Some shops reward you for recycling your clothes, for example H&M will give you a £5 voucher for each bag of clothes returned to store (any brand).
- By turning your thermostat down by just one degree, you could save about £75 on your energy bill each year.
- A quarter of our individual carbon footprint comes from the food and drink we consume, eating less meat and more locally sourced fruit and vegetables can reduce this by quite a bit.

# Get in touch:

You can visit our website:

 [orbit.org.uk](http://orbit.org.uk)

For more information, please email us:

 [info@orbit.org.uk](mailto: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)

Our postal address:

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Coventry, CV3 9NB**

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

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