



Social Value 2022



Our Social Value

We know that homelessness and living in poor quality housing can have a negative impact on our health and well-being, yet for many people in East Anglia, having a safe, decent, affordable home is far from the reality.

Orwell Housing Association provides homes for over 7,500 customers by managing approximately 4,500 properties throughout Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridge and Essex. We provide care, support, housing management, property development and estate services and we believe everyone should be able to live in a good quality home that they can afford. Our property portfolio is diverse and we provide homes for customers with a wide range of needs from extra care to supported housing for a variety of client groups including people who have recently experienced homelessness or domestic abuse.

We recognise that delivering a wide range of services to diverse customer groups means that we do not always generate a lot of financial surplus. When we make decisions about investing in new and existing projects and services we don't just factor in monetary value. Social value is a key consideration and having a positive impact on our customers and communities is balanced with financial considerations. As a not-for-profit organisation, any surpluses we do make are further re-invested in the work that we do, improving our existing services and the lives of our local communities.

Through our customer engagement activities, we are empowering our customers, ensuring we listen to their views and we embed their needs and wishes into our services.

Our Housing Team makes a difference to the lives of our customers, through services such as tenancy sustainment and signposting our customers to welfare benefits, advice and other support services which may be helpful to them.

Our care and support schemes help our customers gain and retain independence and take control, so they can live their best life.

Our Development Team built 36 affordable homes to rent and buy for local families in 2022, with more planned in the coming year.

We have developed partnerships with other local housing associations to extend the reach of our work, having a positive impact on more local people.

As a large local employer, we are also dedicated to developing our people through training, apprenticeships and wellbeing activities.

Finally, we are working to meet government carbon net zero targets and to improve the energy efficiency of our homes, which will help to reduce costs for our customers. Talking to our customers will be a key part of this work so that we can consider their views and needs as we embark on these vital programmes.

We have chosen not to measure and express our social value purely in financial terms, because the things which are meaningful to us and our customers are not always measurable in financial terms. Instead, our social value report is based on the core themes of Orwell's work and the stories that bring this work to life.

Our Social Value



Access to education, employment and training



12

colleagues supported to gain additional skills through apprenticeships in either care or leadership.

additional skills through apprenticeships in either care or leadership.

14



customers living in our sheltered schemes up-skilled through 'ease the squeeze' financial and digital skills workshops.



2

apprentices recruited, enabling local people to gain hands-on work experience, alongside an accredited qualification, whilst earning a wage.

to gain hands-on work experience, alongside an accredited qualification, whilst earning a wage.

940



volunteer hours donated, enabling local people to gain valuable work experience and build confidence.

10



local students supported through work experience placements, giving them a greater understanding of future career opportunities and choices.

Access to education, employment and training

Volunteering Pathways

We work closely with Community Action Suffolk to create volunteering pathways. One of our partners at Communication Action Suffolk said,



"Orwell Housing have been very supportive of the East Suffolk Volunteering Pathways project (run by Community Action Suffolk) since it was launched in March 2022.

The volunteer manager has taken time to understand the aims of the project, how participants may need extra support to be able to volunteer and to then explore suitable potential volunteering placements with Orwell Housing projects and schemes.

I have worked with three different Orwell Housing Scheme Managers whilst supporting potential volunteers and found them to be welcoming, understanding and flexible around any additional support needs that volunteers have.

The relationship between Orwell Housing and the East Suffolk Volunteering Pathways project is one that I can see continuing to develop to help support volunteers to access roles which benefit themselves and the organisation."



Provision of good quality, affordable homes

156



adaptations made to customers' homes at a cost of **£76,327** enabling people to stay in their own homes and reducing reliance on health and social care services.



36

new homes built, 7 of which were shared ownership. Investing in more affordable homes for local people is one of our priorities.



unaccompanied asylum-seeking children housed in an Orwell home dedicated for this purpose.

Our rents are, on average, **56.3%** of private rent levels and **68.2%** of local housing allowance rates, making them more affordable for our customers.



Provision of good quality, affordable homes

Placemaking

In 2022, Orwell completed the refurbishment of the former police station in Leiston, transforming a redundant yet prominent building in a residential area into six flats, and enabling the provision of a further seven new homes in the grounds.

We are also currently constructing 31 new affordable flats on a redundant former commercial site in the centre of Lowestoft, ensuring that a derelict site delivers community benefits. This has included working with East Suffolk Council, our supported housing colleagues, and housing management team to make best use of the homes and to meet local housing needs.

Being very close to the centre of the town, the regeneration of the site to a residential use will provide quality accommodation within walking distance of many amenities and services, which also supports the local economy.

Empowering our customers to live their best lives

For a number of years, Orwell has been the landlord and support provider for a learning disability service in Ipswich, which houses three customers with complex needs. Until 2022, Orwell did not own the property, and so we could not make improvements to the fabric of the building. During 2022, an opportunity presented itself for Orwell to purchase the property. Whilst it would not necessarily benefit the organisation financially to do so, the decision was made to purchase the property. This decision has enabled Orwell to make much needed improvements which will make a significant difference to the quality of life of our customers and those who support them.

We have already installed a fully fitted kitchen and appliances, alongside new flooring and redecorating. Orwell funded a holiday for the customers whilst the work took place to avoid any disruption to their lives.

There is an extensive schedule of planned works which will take place during 2023, none of which would have been possible had Orwell not purchased the property.

Supporting and listening to customers

Two of Orwell's caretakers have stepped beyond the day job and independently volunteered to help children who live on their estates to get back on their bikes and enjoy the outdoors. These are their stories:

Gary

"Starting about a month after being at Orwell, a young lad around 7 years old was out in the community riding his bike. The chain of his bike came off and he asked me to help him. On closer inspection his brakes weren't working either, so I tightened his brakes and fixed his chain. He was then able to go back and play on his bike.

About a week later he was with his friend on their bikes and his friend asked me to look at his bike. Nothing was wrong with it but he wanted me to make sure he was safe. I guess that's how it all started.

From then on I've fixed bikes, scooters, go-karts and prams. Anything with wheels really, and on a regular basis. I don't just fix these things but I also spend time teaching the kids how to do it themselves. Every time I've fixed a bike they have been there helping and learning how to use a screwdriver or a bike spanner."



Supporting and listening to customers

Chris

"Very soon after I started working at Orwell, I began mending punctured tyres for kids who asked me to help. The word soon got about in the community and at times there were 5 or 6 bikes in my front garden waiting for repairs.

When the local primary school started a cycling proficiency course, all the kids' bikes had to be in working order and street legal. I decided to start a Saturday bike club that lasted all summer and was great fun to show them how to fix things themselves. I also get asked to assemble new bikes and scooters and hide them in the lock-up until Christmas or birthdays. I love it when the kids come round Christmas morning to show me their new bikes. Little do they know!"



445,000

personal care hours delivered.



£36,903

in external funding obtained by our team, on behalf of customers, for goods, services and support for customers experiencing financial hardship.

Supporting and listening to customers

49



engaged customers accessed training empowering them to share their views and have a say in the services we provide.

 £2,400

allocated to customers to purchase essential items for their homes and ease financial pressure.



35

successful move-ons from our temporary supported housing services.


750

hours of support provided to our customers.

£5,182



raised through the Make A Difference fund provided tenants with essential items when they were most needed.



5 procurement exercises carried out involving our customers.

 542

people received care and support services enabling them to retain their independence.

Supporting and listening to customers

More than your average Housing Management Service

One of our housing team visited a customer in July 2022 who had been made redundant and needed help to apply for benefits.

The Housing Officer immediately had concerns about the customer's ability to look after themselves and their flat. They had no access to the internet so the Housing Officer helped them to phone up to claim Universal Credit.

Following the claim, several in-person appointments were needed with the DWP. The Housing Officer was concerned that the customer would not be able to keep any of these appointments as they were struggling with their mental health. For their first three appointments, the Housing Officer personally accompanied the customer to the appointments because they couldn't do this alone. Eventually the customer also agreed for a referral to be made for care and support.

The Housing Officer was delighted when they visited the customer a couple of weeks later to find them happy and that they were coping much better. The Housing Officer is proud of the small part they played in helping turn the customer's outlook around when they were so in need.



Supporting and listening to customers

Pathways through Orwell accommodation.

Our team engage closely with our customers so that they can identify anyone who would benefit from more support.

One of our Housing Officers worked with a customer to move them from their property to one of our sheltered housing schemes. When the Housing Officer first took the customer to look around, they were quite withdrawn and lonely, following the loss of their long-time partner.

Since moving in they have flourished in their new community; they are a great neighbour, helping others with car journeys for appointments and shopping and are an active member of the social events club.



Supporting and listening to customers

The Orwell Make a Difference Fund

The Orwell Make A Difference Fund, our internal fundraising venture, raised the amazing sum of £5,182 in 2022 and this has helped our customers, purchasing items such as weighted blankets, rollators, clothing, food, cameras and gifts for children in our domestic abuse services. The fund was also used to give vital help customers during the cost of living crisis with our Winter Hardship Fund, helping customers with gas and electricity payments, including emergency top-ups.

This is how some of these purchases have made a difference:

Weighted Blanket

We gifted some money to buy a weighted blanket for a child with non-verbal autism, meaning they aren't able to communicate when they are anxious or there are changes to routines. When this occurs they can be very physical which can lead to high levels of stress. Since they have had the weighted blanket, when these situations occur, they wrap themselves in the blanket which has a calming, comforting effect. This has had a positive impact on the whole family.

Clothing

We used some money to purchase some clothes for one of our customers struggling with their mental health. The strong medication they take caused rapid weight gain so their clothes no longer fitted. The only clothes they had were a single pair of shorts and a tracksuit top which they wore every day; everything else was too small. This made them feel self-conscious and embarrassed; they avoided being seen in public and spent most days in bed. With new clothes that fit, they began visiting family, going for walks and reconnecting with old friends. Gradually over time they were able to take charge of their life again.

Contributions like this from the Make a Difference fund may appear small in monetary terms but make a massive impact on individuals' lives. This money was raised by our office-based colleagues, with activities such as bake sales, barbecues and jacket potato lunches, culminating in our annual Big Orwell Challenge, which involved creating a shelter and camping out overnight.

Supporting and listening to customers

Our colleagues in our supported housing services change lives every day. We think this letter from a former customer really tells the story of what Orwell's support can mean.

"Thank you for taking the time to read my letter as I am sure you are very busy and can only spare a few minutes to hear my voice.

I have been a resident with Orwell since September 2019. I was placed here after fleeing domestic violence and have just been given a brand new property of my own, so am due to leave any time in the next few weeks. However I didn't want to leave without expressing my sincere gratitude to the staff members for all their help and support over the last few years. I just had an immense desire to let you at head office know what an amazing team of support staff you have.

When I came here in 2019 I was in quite a state where I could hardly leave the house alone. I couldn't budget my money properly, my confidence and self-esteem was non-existent, but now, three years later, thanks to the much needed input and support from the staff here, I am a completely new person. They have struggled with me, at times, due to my own stubbornness, but have still stuck it out with me until they finally got through to me!

Thanks to a staff member's suggestion, I am now in a position where I go everywhere on my own, as long as

I wear my headphones, (which block and filter all the outside noise). I'm in the best state of mind I have been in for over 20 years! The staff here have been so patient with me. I know I would not have my self confidence back the way I have without their perseverance.

I never used to pay my bills: I just buried my head in the sand and tried to forget about them, but now I make sure I open every letter and make sure I deal with any issues that may arise and ensure all my bills are paid; all thanks to the staff here.

My quality of life is 100% better than it has been for over 20 years and I now feel capable and confident that I can maybe volunteer somewhere and reach out to help others who maybe in the same situation I was when I arrived.

So what I am trying to say is that your Temporary Supported Housing service, and the support team that you have there has changed my life completely. This country needs more team members and replica services like this project, believe me!

All support workers and the manager here have been amazing towers of strength for me, even at times when I was at my worst and my behaviour wasn't at its best!

I will miss them all. Thank you."

Supporting and listening to customers

Gardening Competition

In August 2022, our Customer Engagement Team ran a gardening competition for our customers. It was a real success, really motivating them to improve their gardens.

One runner-up was so pleased to receive a certificate that, for the first time since Covid, they left the safety of their home and jumped on the train from Norwich to Ipswich to collect the certificate and tell us their story. When we met they explained that they weren't able to get around as well as they used to due to being partially sighted but that the competition had really spurred them on.

We recognised the efforts they made and, as a thank you for coming all that way despite the obstacles, we sent them a gift voucher to help towards their next project.



Customers are at the heart of all the decisions we make

In response to one of our learning disability services needing to move, Orwell has worked to source an alternative home for the three customers living there. It was vitally important for our three customers to continue to live together as they had been sharing their home for many years. Responding to their wishes to remain together, a property was found for them in Woodbridge. Many of our caregivers have chosen to stay with Orwell at the new location, ensuring continuity of care and providing reassurance to those customers.

The support team were determined to ensure that the customers remained involved in every aspect of this planned move, involving them in the choice of décor and furnishings to ensure their new accommodation reflected their choices and personalities.

The team also arranged regular visits to the new home, so that our customers could see the progress in each of their own rooms, and shared living space, taking them shopping for the purchase of personal belongings to make their new home truly their own.

Supporting and listening to customers

Life changing support

M was referred to our Orwell Supported Housing team in July 2020, following an eviction which had left M sofa surfing for five months.

Due to former tenancy arrears of over £10k plus court and repair costs, the local council had assessed that M would need to pay their arrears off for 12 months before being considered eligible to rejoin the Housing Register. They managed to do this with help from family members and by setting aside £20 per month.

M moved into our accommodation and was able to move into a more independent flat in December 2020, as they had demonstrated the ability to maintain their home and work with support staff and specialist agencies. M also supported new customers moving in and became a real asset to Orwell.

M engaged fully with the support and opportunities available to them from Orwell and within the community, including addressing previous trauma and completing a recovery programme for alcohol and drug misuse.

M has also accepted support for their mental health, learning about themselves and how to recognise their triggers. They are able to talk to friends, family or support staff/services if they need to. They have developed excellent coping strategies, preventing them from reaching crisis point.

Due to support from Orwell and others, M has also managed to combat

significant debt problems and is in the final stages of completing the debt relief process.

Despite historic debts, M has developed excellent budgeting skills and has managed to pay their rent, service charges and other costs on time to maintain a home.

With a safe and affordable home, M was able to start a career as a carer and, despite having no previous employment history, is now working full-time. M has thrived in the workplace and is progressing quickly to senior carer positions, finding the role rewarding.

In 2022, Orwell was made aware that M was moving on into a home of their own through the Housing Register, which was unthinkable when they were referred to Orwell less than two years ago.

We really love hearing from our customers. In 2022 we received a number of compliments, including the ones below:

"The accommodation here is great and the staff are supportive and just really great."

"I really want to compliment the cleaners, there is not one job that is too hard for them and I really appreciate everything they do for me and the other residents."

Supporting and listening to customers

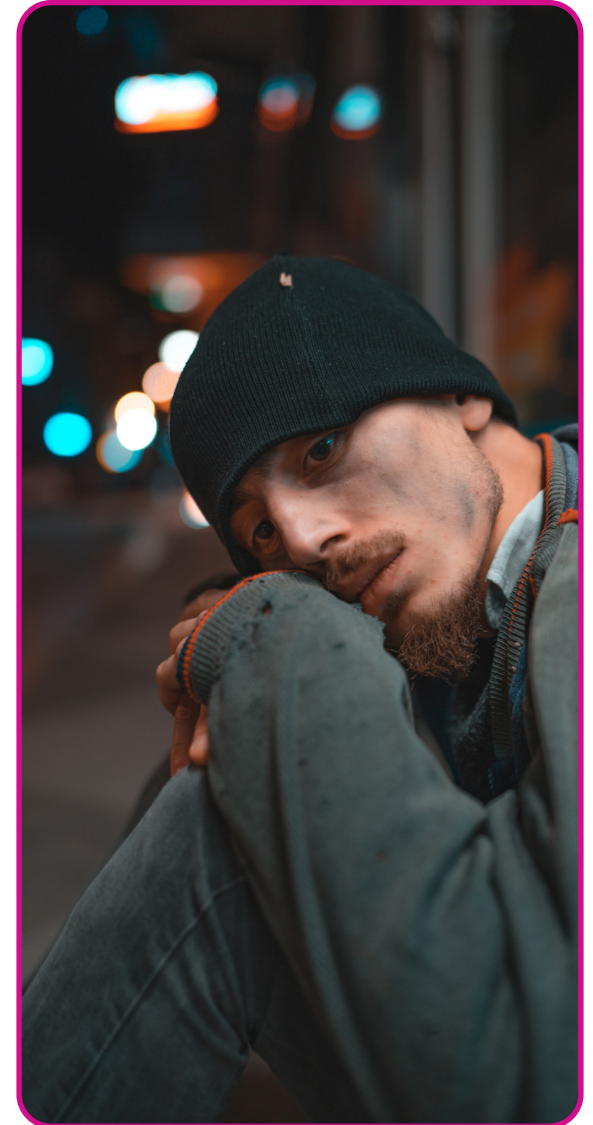
An amazing journey back from homelessness

Next Steps is a dedicated service for people who are, or have been, homeless. Our first customer, J, arrived in much need of warmth, love and acceptance. Our service offered them a home where they could feel safe and secure. When J first moved in, their behaviour was challenging in lots of ways. They had low self-esteem and no self-confidence; they struggled to trust other people, having experienced several traumatic events in the past which led to them being addicted to alcohol and drugs. J's alcohol addiction was the main challenge, with any attempt to decrease dependency leading to seizures which could potentially have been fatal.

The improvement in J since he moved into Next Steps has been incredible. Their confidence and self-esteem have been boosted and J now feels able to go out into the community and socialise.

Although J has not completely beaten their addiction yet, things have improved considerably. Over the past 18 months, with support from staff at Next Steps, J has learned several coping strategies. J also manages money extremely well now, paying back money they had borrowed, which has significantly improved their relationships.

Although there are still some areas to work on, J's journey has been amazing and their success at Next Steps has been tremendous. Looking at how far they have come during 2022 gives encouragement to the other customers at Next Steps, with the hope for J to live completely independently with a home of their own in the near future.



Sustainability

Environmental sustainability and our impact on the planet are really important to us. We are continuously investing in our homes to make them more energy efficient for our customers, and looking at how we can support biodiversity in our existing and new developments.

Deben View is an Extra Care service set in Woodbridge, housing 32 people with care needs. It is set in traditional communal grounds comprising trees and some shrubs, but to the greater extent laid to lawn.

The customers really love their garden and use it throughout the year for gardening projects, socialising, and for the access it gives them to nature.

As a result of very dry summers, customers noticed the loss of quite a bit of hedging around the garden and realised their regular hedgehog visitors had disappeared due to new fencing. Deben View's gardens continued to enjoy lots of bird life, largely due to the customers' birdfeeders, however, the lawned areas were dull and lifeless.

This is when the idea of re-wilding the grounds first 'took root.' The service initially contacted Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Transition Woodbridge and sought some re-wilding ideas. Transition Woodbridge and SOS - Swifts held a meeting with customers to talk through the many possibilities.

The customers and staff at Deben View decided they wanted to create a beautiful, nature-friendly garden; pleasing on the eye but equally enticing to local wildlife. The ethos central to the project would be to make, recycle and salvage resources wherever possible. Their vision was to plant a mini orchard on the central lawn surrounded by a simple wild flower meadow.

The customers took part in workshops using salvaged materials to make swift boxes, bird feeders and hedgehog homes and created a nature board where customers and

staff can record the wildlife they spot over the different seasons, alongside binoculars and a nature library donated to the scheme.

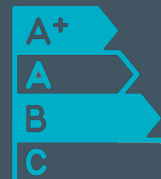
Orwell's gardening team has been busy creating habitats for insects and small animals by building bug hotels and leaf piles, and during 2023, the Development Team plan to volunteer some of their time to plant the mini orchard.

Other projects in the pipeline include building a bird hide from a recycled shed and making a water feature from a salvaged sink.

381



properties improved, at a cost of **£1.4 million**, contributing to our net carbon zero plans.



65% of our stock is rated EPC C or above, investing in energy efficient homes for our customers is a priority.

Sustainability

It is hoped that Deben View's re-wilding project will provide the garden with a dynamic natural beauty, supporting a richer habitat for local wildlife, resulting in more insects, more bees, more butterflies, more birds, more bats, more mammals. In short, more of everything, for the enjoyment of the people who live and work at Deben View.



Homelessness prevention

These stories demonstrate the incredible work our Tenancy Sustainment Officers do. This is a service we do not need to provide but choose to fund because it has such a positive impact on the customers who need it.

G suffered from severe IBS episodes, fibromyalgia and chronic back pain, which greatly affected their confidence, self-esteem and pride as a parent. Their Tenancy Sustainment Officer (TSO) supported them to complete a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application. This was successful and the award backdated. The TSO also organised a radar key to access all disabled toilets, £149 food and fuel vouchers, £120 from the household support fund, and a poop scooper to help them clean up after their dog. They also went to register and apply for a transfer to move to an adapted bungalow, even organising for the removal costs to be paid for by a charity; Rope Trust. With all of that support in place G's self-confidence increased. They are now able to enjoy simple chores like the family shop or walking the dog. They are enjoying a much better quality of life for them and their family.

F is retired, but still very young at heart, and enjoys visits from friends and family members. However, they had experienced falls at home with no support when this happened. Working with Orwell's Disabled Adaptations Officer, their Tenancy Sustainment Officer was able to make the footpath to their front door safe and install railings for support. Orwell has also installed a level-access shower so F can use their bathroom safely, allowing them to continue to live independently and to continue to enjoy a high quality of life.

S had come from a refuge for people surviving domestic abuse and when their TSO first introduced themselves, they were very shy and quiet with little confidence. Their TSO worked with them to apply for funding to get essential items for their home such as carpets, and make sure they were receiving all the income they were entitled to. They also coordinated some food bank vouchers to help them out until everything was in place.

S didn't really leave their flat because they didn't know anyone and were very anxious. Their TSO did some research and found a wellbeing cafe just a few minutes from their home. The TSO spoke to the person who ran it, who explained it was a small group where you could go for a hot drink and a chat, do some crafting and socialise.

With encouragement from their TSO, S began to attend the group and on follow up home visits, it was clear their confidence was starting to grow.

in 2022, we were delighted to learn that S had started a college course. Their TSO said *"I cannot explain how proud I am of them! From this person I met six months ago with absolutely no confidence to going out there and trying to achieve their dream job is unreal and all they needed was some time and support."*

Homelessness prevention

One of our Housing Officers had been trying to contact a customer for some time without success but they continued to door knock whenever they were on the estate and, eventually, they made contact with the customer, B, and were able to visit them in their home.

The Housing Officer discovered that B had not had any heating or hot water for some time but had not reported this to Orwell. They were also concerned the customer wasn't coping well in their home which needed a clearance. The Housing Officer immediately referred B to our in-house Tenancy Sustainment Team and together they arranged a joint visit.

B explained they had lost their best friend a few years ago and had just given up; they were currently off sick from work and didn't really leave their home. They explained they really wanted to make things better but didn't know where to start. They also made it very clear they wanted to be involved in the process of sorting out their home and making a positive change.

B's Tenancy Sustainment Officer applied for some external funding which was approved and, together with money from Orwell's Tenancy Sustainment Fund, they secured external support from various agencies to help clear the flat.

In addition, the heating and hot water were reinstated, and B let us know that they were able to have their first bath in a long time. *"It was heaven!"*

A couple of weeks later, B's Housing Officer and Tenancy Sustainment Officer went back to visit. Their home was unrecognisable, their health had improved to the extent that they were back at work again, and they had their home and their life back.



Homelessness prevention

£5,858 

from the tenancy sustainment fund used to support Orwell customers facing financial hardship.

 **134**

families helped by our Tenancy Sustainment Team to manage their tenancies, reducing the chances of tenancy failure and homelessness.



44

customers attended Your Own Place workshops funded by Orwell, increasing life skills and boosting confidence.

25 

general needs homes let to people who were previously homeless.

Homelessness prevention

A customer and their three children were homeless, having lost their home through no fault of their own. They were living from day to day not being able to plan for the future and this was having a negative impact on the children's mental health. Orwell was able to offer the family a secure and affordable home.

The children have now started gaining their confidence and are so much happier knowing they are safe. Our customer was grateful for giving their family a place they can call home.

J and their partner lived in a first floor one bedroom flat. Both of them worked full-time. However, sadly this changed overnight in August when their partner had an accident and was paralysed from the chest down.

Their Tenancy Sustainment Officer supported them to register on Gateway to HomeChoice and provided all the necessary medical information so that by the end of the year they had moved into an adapted bungalow.

Although their lives have changed dramatically, they both have a positive outlook about the future and the prospect of being able to work from their home. Their Tenancy Sustainment Officer has also supported them to apply for disability benefits providing valuable help to navigate a complex system.

Stories like these illustrate how important it is that Orwell is more than a landlord, going above and beyond, investing in internal resources to support our customers in all aspects of their lives. Orwell prides itself on providing more than just a home.



Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and wellbeing

We know that diversity within teams, and a feeling of belonging and being 100% comfortable to be your authentic self, significantly contributes to happiness in the workplace. It provides diversity of thought, bringing creative and innovative ideas and gives significant results for our customers. It's so important to create an environment where everyone feels comfortable to perform at their best.

During 2022, Orwell teamed up with Independent East (a partnership of five housing associations in East Anglia) on a joint initiative called #flourish which focused on supporting our colleagues to be, and bring, their authentic selves to work.

As part of this initiative colleagues were offered the opportunity to take part in The Human Library which is a safe virtual space where experiences are discussed openly between the human books and the participants. Every "Human Book" from this "library" represents a group that faces prejudice, stigma or discrimination. A Human Book could be an alcoholic, from a particular faith, be a homeless person or perhaps someone HIV+. This was a unique opportunity for Orwell colleagues to listen to the 'books' experiences and ask any questions in a non-judgemental environment. Difficult and challenging questions were expected, appreciated, and answered without comment or concern, allowing walls to be broken down and to gain an understanding by being able to ask questions that people may not want to ask for fear of hurting feelings, offending or maybe just being ignorant to someone else's reality.

After taking part in a Human Library session, one colleague said they felt it was *"a great example of Orwell's PACE value: Collaborative. During my recent encounter, I was lucky enough to meet and speak with some pretty amazing people; including someone who survived the Holocaust."*

Another colleague went on to say, "I've just attended the virtual "Human Library"- what a fascinating experience. It was so interesting to meet the "books" allocated to my group.

I spoke to two people about two very different areas: someone who had experienced a serious assault and someone who identifies as non-binary. I thought I'd be nervous asking questions and might not know what to ask, but that wasn't the case at all: it was so interesting and I had more questions than I actually had time to ask. I definitely learned a lot."

Independent East comprises Broadland Housing Group, Freebridge Community Housing, Havebury Housing Partnership, Saffron Trust and Orwell Housing Association.

In 2022, Orwell celebrated achieving the Housing Diversity Network (HDN) Accreditation for equality, diversity, and inclusion (ED&I). It's great recognition of what has been achieved so far and represents a significant milestone in our ongoing journey. We received 12 areas of 'distinction' plus some suggestions to help guide our ED&I work going forward.

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing

Orwell were proud sponsors of Suffolk PRIDE 2022

For the second time, Orwell was a proud sponsor of Suffolk Pride, which took place this year on 18 June.

We believe that diversity and acceptance are key for any workplace, and we are keen to see the LGBTQIA+ community, both within Orwell and within our communities, continue to thrive.

Pride is a wonderful celebration of LGBTQIA+ identity, which brings the whole community together to celebrate equality and diversity, inclusion, progress, and respect, and marks Pride Month.

We joined the samba parade which opened a day of festivities, proceeding along Ipswich Waterfront, followed by a fantastic line-up of artists performing throughout the day.



Orwell regularly shares wellbeing and healthy lifestyle information and support with colleagues. This ranges from putting a spotlight on mental health and how to protect it, financial wellbeing and support and even healthy recipes!

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing

Orwell has received a Gold Suffolk Healthy Workplace Award from Cllr Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for Public Health and Public Protection.

The award recognises good practice among local employers in promoting the health and wellbeing of their people and provided Orwell with an opportunity to become accredited across eight standards: health & safety, mental health, physical activity and healthy eating, inclusive employment, leadership, attendance management, smoking & tobacco related ill-health and alcohol and substance misuse.

Michelle Harrison, Director of People and Culture, said:

"We are extremely proud to have received a gold accreditation in all eight standards of the Health Workplace Award. Supporting our people to be healthy and happy has never been more important to us."

"We are really focused on ensuring our colleagues have the support they need to stay well, and this includes having 24 trained Mental Health First Aiders across the Organisation. We also have a team of 18 trained Wellbeing Champions who share wellbeing advice and offer support. As an organisation we have very clear expectations for creating a healthy work/life balance. We created 'people partners' to support workplace interventions and offer continuous learning and development. We are also working with partners in the wider community, such as our focus on mental health in construction in partnership with Ipswich Town Foundation"

"Going through the award submission process was a great way to reflect on all that we have achieved and consider what more we can do to improve things further. I would highly recommend the process to other local businesses."



Cllr Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for Public Health and Public Protection said:

"I am delighted to be presenting the Gold Healthy Workplace Award to Orwell Housing Association. They have demonstrated commitment to improving the health of their workforce at all levels, supporting people to work well across the organisation."

This award is an opportunity for Suffolk employers to celebrate the excellent work they are doing in this area, and I would encourage others to be inspired by Orwell's example to seek accreditation and the benefits it brings."

The award was presented to Orwell by Cllr Reid and Martin Seymour, Deputy Director of Public Health & Communities Suffolk, and will remain valid for the next two years.

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and wellbeing

During 2022, Orwell Housing Association and Ipswich Town Foundation joined forces to support better mental health within the local construction industry.

We wanted to encourage construction workers in East Anglia to talk openly about their emotions and seek help when needed and we did this by running two events. We brought together key construction partners to discuss causes of mental health challenges and examine how, as an industry, we can support better mental health within construction.

Construction has one of the worst rates of mental health issues in any industry. In the UK, male workers in this industry are 3.7 times more likely to commit suicide than the national average. A 2020 report by the Chartered Institute of Building found that 26% of construction industry professionals thought about taking their own lives, and that between 70% - 87% of respondents experienced depression or anxiety.

These events featured guest speakers including Ali Livingstone, author of Broken Blue Line, Emma McKay, Chair of Chartered Institute of Building Assist Manager and Joe Thomson, Ipswich Talk Club Captain from Talk Club to look at the reasons those working within the industry face such challenges, share stories and to discuss together, how the industry can improve the current picture. We also heard from Suffolk MIND and Jason Dozzell and Simon Milton, former ITFC players. They shared their lived experiences of mental ill health, discussed the power of friendship and the importance of really asking those close to us if they are ok.

Construction workers will often experience high workloads, short

deadlines, and financial pressures. Within construction, the male dominated culture often prevents people from speaking out and seeking help, and we want to change this. We want everyone in the industry and beyond to start talking about mental health and how we feel and really listening to each other so we can address these alarming statistics.

These events really were just the starting point for us. We hope to hold more in the future in partnership with Ipswich Town Community Trust to reach even more people and will continue to promote open conversations about mental health within the industry and signpost to support, protecting our colleagues now and for the future.



24 colleagues across the organisation are Mental Health First Aiders, 21 of these trained by Orwell.

They increase awareness, reduce stigma and offer support to colleagues, helping them remain in, or return to work.



If you would like this leaflet in another
language or format please email
comms@orwell-housing.co.uk
or call **0345 60 100 30**

Version March 2023