



# Social Value

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## 2023



Orwell

The logo for Orwell features a stylized green and grey mountain range icon above the word "Orwell" in a white, sans-serif font.

# Our Social Value

60 Years on from our inception, Orwell continues to believe that 'together we make a difference.' Our vision is that everyone has a safe place to call home, with the care and support they need to live their best life. We currently own or manage over 4,300 homes providing safe and secure accommodation for over 8,200 people and operate in 12 local authority areas. Our annual turnover is £48m with assets of £260m and we employ in the region of 800 people. We aim to provide housing, care and support services with customers at our heart.

This means that, even against the backdrop of very challenging financial circumstances, and a really tough external operating environment, we go further than just being a social landlord. For #teamorwell, fulfilling our mission and delivering on our vision means that we choose to do things which go way beyond our regulatory duties and responsibilities as a social housing provider. Whilst these are really important to us, and we make sure we meet all of those duties, we also do a lot more besides.

This report tells the story of the added social value that we create, which is what really makes a difference to our customers and the communities we serve. We will tell the stories of our customers and our colleagues proudly and shout about our successes because we know that this is what makes us stand out from the crowd. We are not just your average housing association!

Providing these additional services, and going the extra mile for our customers, means that we make conscious decisions to invest some of our income back into our communities, not because we have to but because we know it is the right thing to do and we know that there is more to being a housing association than simply providing bricks and mortar. A home is more than a house, and a community is more than an estate.

Social value is at the heart of all that we do. Not only does it intrinsically run through all of our main strategies and plans, it is woven into our procurement processes and we have high expectations of our suppliers. We expect our colleagues, our suppliers and our partners to deliver to high ethical and social standards.

Social value is a key part of the way we define and understand value for money. Value is not just about pounds and pence; it's about the wider worth created by an activity or service. This is why 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.



# Partnership working

We work closely and collaborate with a growing network of organisations - this jigsaw shows just a selection but there are many more!



# Access to education, employment and training

## Volunteering at Deben View

Shelley and her friend Jonny both volunteered for about 9 months at one of our extra care services, Deben View, in Woodbridge. Both were keen to gain care experience as they were considering applying to study medicine.

Shelley and Jonny were not providing direct care but would essentially go to Deben View, chat with residents, play games and help them with simple tasks. Shelley enjoyed talking to them and listening to their stories. She enjoyed accompanying them into town to help with errands and understand how to use the iPlayer on the TV.


Shelley thoroughly enjoyed volunteering at Deben View and felt she had a positive impact in providing help and friendship. Jonny would say the same, enjoying every moment of the experience.


Shelley and Jonny are now both studying medicine, Shelley at Nottingham and Jonny at Cambridge, with Orwell playing an important part in giving them insight into the challenges residents face. These challenges, particularly around loneliness and mobility, highlighted a valuable experience and understanding of what it takes to work in a caring profession.




*“For me, volunteering is a great opportunity to learn. I love hearing all the residents' stories and all about their lives. I also recognise how beneficial it is for the residents having someone to talk to with a cuppa and piece of cake once a week. Volunteering has taught me many skills, compassion, caring and much more. I think volunteering has made me appreciate being young and all the things I can still achieve in the future”.*

Volunteer at Deben View.

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

 **30** colleagues supported to gain additional skills through apprenticeships in Leadership and Management, Learning and Development, Care, Business Administration and Project Management.

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

# Access to education, employment and training

## Work experience

We offer work experience roles for people to gain essential experience when looking for a job. Below we have a comment from one of our work experience students.

*"Completing 2 weeks work experience with Orwell Housing has been incredibly helpful in gaining invaluable experience and a bigger insight into the type of employment I am hoping to gain."*

*I am 19 years old and have completed level 2 site carpentry, bench joinery and plumbing and am now studying for my electrical level 2 qualifications and am hoping to get employment as a maintenance operative. Working for 2 weeks with Orwell Housing has shown me a much wider picture in the skills and experience needed and helped immensely in confirming that this is the employment I am hoping for.*

*I worked with the Void Team, completing many varied projects from projects in flats to work in a care setting. The people I worked with were very helpful in explaining what and why we were doing certain things and ensuring health and safety was always a top priority and how everyone was treated with respect and fairness at all times.*

*I thoroughly enjoyed gaining this experience and am very grateful for the opportunity."*



apprentices supported.



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

## Kick Start for Care

During 2023, Orwell continued to adopt the Kick Start for Care scheme to attract new colleagues into our care roles.

The scheme is aimed at people who haven't worked in the sector before and who are looking for a change of career. It provides a £750 bonus for new starters into a CQC registered provider in Suffolk.

The scheme has supported our recruitment since August 2022 and we have so far recruited 42 new colleagues who were eligible for the bonus.

Retention on the new recruits is also high and currently sits at 94% of colleagues recruited through the scheme still employed by us.

**KICKSTART**  
**SCHEME**

# Provision of good quality, affordable homes

## Prospect House

In 2023, Orwell worked with a local developer to complete 31 affordable rent flats at a development known as Prospect House in the town centre of Lowestoft in Suffolk.

The site used was a derelict commercial site which had been run down for many years. Orwell and the local SME developer joined forces to convert it into affordable homes, helping to address local housing need, creating employment opportunities and helping the local economy in Lowestoft.

The Prospect House development has faced a number of challenges including COVID-19 and material shortages which affected the completion time of this project. With the help of the local SME developer,

East Suffolk Council and Homes England, Orwell overcame these challenges to deliver this project in 2023.

Now, we are proud to say that Prospect House has been completed and is fully occupied.

What our customers say...

*"We have been very happy with the service provided by Orwell."*

*"Orwell Housing Association property is good accommodation with all essentials provided. We are grateful to have this apartment."*



3 county councils work in partnership with Orwell to support transforming care.



104 new homes built, 24 of which were shared ownership. Investing in more affordable homes for local people is one of our priorities.



124 adaptations made to customers' homes at a cost of **£116,321** enabling people to stay in their own homes and reducing reliance on health and social care services.



# Provision of good quality, affordable homes

Prospect House in Lowestoft



Our rents are, on average, **55.5%**

of private rent levels and **75.8%** of local housing allowance rates, that's **£105.30** per week compared to **£189.69** for private rent and **£139.00** for local housing allowance.

# Supporting and listening to customers

## Changing Lives

Christchurch House is a low to medium, housing support provision. Sometimes it becomes clear that a young person has more support needs than was first thought. Equally, the needs of the young people we support can change over time, and a young person may require additional support to keep them in accommodation, provide the complex support they require, or even to move on to a more suitable setting.

## Support leading to change

Alex had been a child in care and had experienced a very challenging home life, often going missing. When they came to Christchurch House, they were struggling to care for themselves and their child: they struggled with substance misuse, had difficult relationships, several health issues and poor finances.

With support from a key worker at Christchurch House, Alex turned their life around; attending medical appointments and managing their health condition as well as seeking support for their mental health challenges. Over time, their self-esteem grew. They were able to tackle things they had been avoiding for a long time, even attending court hearings relating to the custody of their child.

Alex's future looks quite different now, due to the support provided during their time at Christchurch House. The next step is a move on from Christchurch House and we are confident that this will be achieved.





# Supporting and listening to customers

## A new start at Christchurch House

Bennie was born in South Africa, had no ID and found it difficult to get a job as a result. They are estranged from family and struggling with substance misuse. Bennie is a talented sports-person and musician and aspires to work in the community.

They came to Christchurch House having not wanted to engage with support from other agencies. They had financial difficulties, unhealthy relationships, struggled with substance misuse and were prone to self-harm and depression. They didn't have a phone so reaching them to offer support was difficult.

On arriving at Christchurch House, Bennie quickly established a very positive working relationship with their support worker and began to engage. We tailored their support sessions around their personality and preferences, often conducting support sessions in the piano room because they loved music. We are currently looking for instrument donations to create a music room

for them because they are waiting for a start date for Making Waves, a 12-week music programme where they will work with a professional musician. They are fully involved and working with us to achieve this goal. Bennie is making real progress, their financial health has improved and budgeting is now a regular occurrence.

Bennie is currently waiting for a referral to a counselling service which provides support for, and education about, domestic abuse but they have not self-harmed for some time now.

Bennie has also reached out to a sport coach and is now attending athletics. They have also applied for a job, with the goal being to get their biometric card, gain employment and move on from supported living to be independent.

### Our outcomes

excellent personal hygiene  
Recognising consequences  
Empowering his wellbeing  
Improved health needs healthier relationships  
Contemplating options  
Taking control

We look forward to supporting Bennie to achieve this.



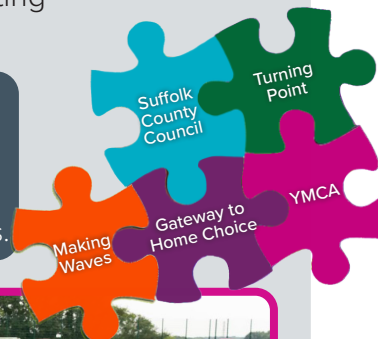
successful move-ons from our temporary supported housing services.



461,246

personal care hours delivered.

### Our Partnerships



# Supporting and listening to customers

## Food and Beverage Buggies (FABB)

Food and Beverage Buggies (FABB) are a group dedicated to taking a hot two course meal, and drinks out to homeless people in Norwich, finding them in doorways, cemeteries, or wherever they are. This meets a vital midweek need. Their buggies are filled with food, drinks, warm clothing, boots, sleeping bags etc, and they are out every Thursday; 52 weeks of the year from 7-9pm.

With many members of the homeless community housed in short-term accommodation, they also take food to hostels and other accommodation as needed.

Back in 2018, Hinde House, an Orwell supported accommodation service for young women in Norwich, agreed to help FABB with storage, providing a place to keep their trolleys.

The pandemic changed what FABB were able to provide, so they adapted, and this meant they were able to support the women at Hinde House as well. Volunteers would bring along homemade meals at a time when they were really needed and appreciated.

This proved crucial for many and saw FABB start to provide further support to Hinde House.

They would bring food parcels to people isolating in their rooms and donate clothing and essential sanitary products. By the end of the pandemic, FABB were providing two hot meals a week to Hinde House residents.

They also provided a Christmas meal for them, donated by The Assembly House who now also provide Hinde House residents with a hot meal during the week. This was a kind gesture from one of our well-established hotels in Norwich, who understood the difficulty we faced in maintaining structure and routine for our service users in what was quite an unstable and frightening time for everyone involved.

FABB also worked with Dunelm - who included Hinde House in their 'Giving Tree' where the community donated items for Christmas to the residents at Hinde House (2020).


FABB have supported Hinde House closely and donated money towards decorating the 'Support Session Room' (2023) - this is now a smart functioning hub room for meeting with other professionals or with key workers. The room creates a calming atmosphere and privacy.

In the last year FABB have offered volunteers to run knitting and card making workshops at Hinde House. This is well received and runs alongside the sessions/workshops we create and run for our service users at Hinde. All workshops are created to provide living skills, distraction techniques and a chance to build on self-esteem/confidence that provides the building blocks for our women to move forward in their journey of recovery.



 **445,000** hours of support provided to our customers.

 **£2,700** allocated to customers to purchase essential items for their homes and ease financial pressure.

 **£3,315** raised through the Make A Difference Fund provided tenants with essential items when they were most needed.

# Supporting and listening to customers

## The right place

Charlie could no longer live at home with their mother and siblings because they regularly experienced abuse (psychological, emotional, and physical). After being asked to leave the family home, Charlie was temporarily housed by their grandparents, sleeping on their sofa for six months.

Charlie was struggling with poor mental health, could not manage their finances and had challenges with accessing education and housing.

When Charlie arrived at Christchurch House, they were initially referred to a mental health practitioner for support and guidance. They were also thought to be autistic. Following an initial consultation, Charlie was referred on to the Children and Young People's Mental Health Team and they explored talking therapies. Charlie accepted the offer of attending counselling with the Inspire Well-being Service.

For their first two months at Christchurch

House, Charlie met with their support worker weekly. They learned to cook and wash their own clothes. Ropes Trust supported them to get a provisional license, a TV and a Hoover.

Their nan set up a bank account on their behalf and was providing financial support as often as they could. We then supported Charlie to understand and apply for universal credit, attend their appointments at the job centre, and advocated for them when an appointment didn't go as we would expect. Charlie has now had an assessment to determine their capability for work – and was deemed to have limited capability. This hasn't prevented them from securing a pot wash job at a local restaurant. Charlie has kept on top of their rent and has saved a substantial amount of money ready for move on.

The Young Persons Safeguarding Officer, at Suffolk One, worked with us to support Charlie with their education. They were enrolled onto an alternative course which better met their needs. The Orwell Make A Difference Fund provided Charlie with a laptop to help with revision for Maths and English. Charlie is making significant progress, receiving higher grades

and has their sights set on the course level above in the future.

Since October 2022, Charlie has continued to attend full-time college as well as maintain a part-time job. They have learned essential day-to-day skills such as cooking, washing clothes and tidying their room.

They have passed their driving theory test and, with the help of an application to the Buttle fund, purchased some driving lessons, as well as reading materials for college, bedding, clothes and a year's gym membership.

Charlie has been an absolute delight to support, and it has been a privilege to witness them overcome obstacles, adapt to changes, and strive for success at Christchurch House.

## Our Partnerships



# Supporting and listening to customers

## A new life at Whitworth House

Gene was referred to Whitworth House by social services. Whitworth House is an Orwell supported housing accommodation service for young woman in Cambridge. Gene had been with their foster family who live in the Peterborough area since age 8 and was about to turn 19.

The move to Whitworth House was unexpected, and they were initially reluctant to leave family and friends behind in Peterborough.

Gene found the move hard at first, struggling emotionally, and finding it difficult to settle in. They worked hard to 'give it a go' but things were still difficult. We began supporting them and we set small goals together.

Because of the move, Gene's relationship with their foster family became increasingly strained. Contact was minimal, but Gene was still travelling back 'home' to stay with friends

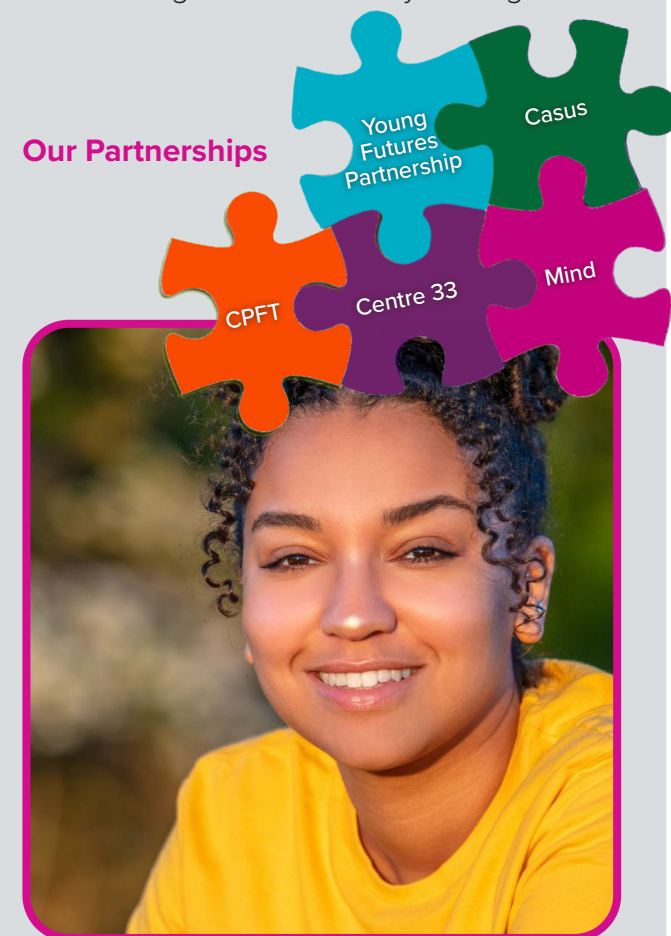
every weekend and was spending nearly all their money doing so.

From our conversations, we realised that Gene hadn't really felt 'heard' regarding the decision to move and miscommunication with their foster family was a big factor. We arranged a meeting with their social worker and outlined the issues. Together, we were able to resolve the issues with Gene and their family and they were able to visit them again.

Gene still felt strongly linked and rooted to Peterborough and spoke to their social worker about moving back. We then pursued two referrals to housing projects in that area. One of these referrals was successful and Gene was offered a place.

Our main goal was to support Gene to be heard and feel empowered and we are very

happy with the outcome for this young person. Gene will return to their connections, feel rooted again and that they belong.



### Our outcomes

respected Encouraged motivated supported Independent  
motivated safe advocated Encouraged supported Independent  
Supported appreciated hopeful appreciated

# Supporting and listening to customers

## Customer Voice

We relaunched our CHAT (Complaints Handling Assessment Team) initiative at the start of 2023. The Senior Customer Insight and Engagement Officer and the Head of Customer Services lead the sessions.

The first session took place in April, followed by the second in July and finally the last session of 2023 was held in October. Six customers took part, of which five belong to the Orwell Residents Group (ORG). We have recently welcomed a sixth customer as a member of the ORG.

The first session involved quite a comprehensive deep dive into our procedures around complaints. This included timescales, compliance and expectations of the Housing Ombudsman. This was delivered by the Head of Customer Services who helped the group work through each case, ensuring they had access to all documents and provided clarification when needed. Our newly appointed Complaints Officer also attended the October session.

Throughout the year, the team sampled 14 complaints. We agreed our CHAT would sample a minimum of 10% of our overall complaints. We currently have six customers who undertake these samples but are looking to expand further in 2024. Their feedback is collated and sent to all leaders in the organisation ensuring that any learnings can be applied, whatever department they work in. The individual cases that have been sampled were sent to the department who dealt with the complaint, detailing the property and issues regarding each complaint. This helped create a more bespoke training and learning which was applied.

In conjunction with our Communications team, we ensure that the website is updated every quarter with a “you said, we did” document detailing all the recommendations from the CHAT.

The first session of 2024 was held in February where the group undertook the final sample for 2023.



### CHAT Group Video

Check out our Complaints Handling Assessment Team video by scanning the QR code here.

## Monitoring our complaints process

All stage 1, stage 2 and complaints made to Housing Ombudsman Service, or the Care Quality Commission (CQC) will be monitored by Orwell’s lead officer for complaints.

A report giving an overview of complaints received and learning from them is taken to the Customer Insight Committee on a quarterly basis. A report containing details of complaints received during each calendar year, is published annually and made available to Orwell’s Residents’ Group and Orwell’s Board.

Quarterly, the Complaints Handling Assessment Team (CHAT) part of Orwell Residents’ Group, will scrutinise our complaints, compliments, and compensation service.

Twenty-eight days following the closure of a complaint, a customer satisfaction survey is sent to all customers who have logged a complaint. We will review any feedback to help us to learn from the complaint and contact customers that remain dissatisfied to ensure they are aware of how to pursue their complaint if they wish to.

# Supporting and listening to customers

## Independence at Hinde House

Sam has two children, the oldest, they see every weekend. The youngest child was removed from their care shortly after birth because of an abusive partner. This child now lives under the guardianship of a family member and Sam has regular contact visits.

Sam and their partner were both part of the homeless community. Sam spent four years with their partner, staying in hostels or in a tent, until their partner suddenly passed away in very tragic circumstances. Sam was arrested, and subsequently released, but, understandably, their mental health suffered.

Sam was offered probation as a way of supporting them to find their own accommodation – Sam engaged well with probation and hostel accommodation was found at Orwell's Hinde House. Sam's license with probation ended and there have been no further convictions or charges since.

Life at Hinde House wasn't without challenge, but things are looking much more positive for Sam. We approached Norwich City Council to put Sam on the housing register and had to demonstrate that Sam could live without issues for 12 months.

Sam demonstrated this and more, always paying rent in full and on time. They became a warm and friendly neighbour to other hostel residents, and we felt Sam would be a suitable candidate for a move on flat. This would allow Sam to make a comfortable home for herself, develop independent living skills, have space to cook meals and learn to manage and maintain a tenancy and utilities.

Sam has shown tenacity in getting the gas and electricity into their name, learnt to top up their meters, budget for extra expenses and manage independently. Sam responds promptly to correspondence and any requests from supporting services or agencies for information to maintain their housing and welfare benefit claims.

Sam does have a history of substance misuse but meets regularly with their drug and alcohol worker and is making strides in addressing these challenges. Sam has a goal to live independently and hopes to welcome back their children when they can.

### Our outcomes

Never quitting  
strength  
sense of worth  
reflection  
Control  
achievement  
reflection  
realisation of potential  
determination  
Growth and awareness  
Stability  
Confidence  
self empowered  
Resilient  
overcome barriers  
understanding



# Supporting and listening to customers

## Gardening Competition 2023

Orwell's annual gardening competition returned this year and showcased some amazing gardens from customers from all areas of the organisation.

This year's competition included categories ranging from Use of Small Space/Indoor Garden, Sustainable Garden, Community Garden, All-round Garden, and a new category of Your Happy Space, which showcased areas that bring people joy.

The competition closed at the end of August and Orwell enrolled the help of local celebrity gardener Mr Plant Geek, Michael Perry to judge the entrants.

Michelle Lunt, Senior Customer Insight and Engagement Officer at Orwell, said, "We were delighted with the response from our customers and we had some outstanding entries, but more so were humbled by some of the stories and friendships that were shared as well as some beautiful gardens/spaces. It was inspiring to see how many people shared the positive

benefit of having an outside space (whatever the size) had on their mental wellbeing and how this had encouraged friends, family and neighbours to have a go at planting and creating a green space for themselves."

"We will bring the competition back for 2024 and would love to see lots more examples of our customers' gardens and spaces this year and we encourage everyone who can, to join us. No garden is too big or too small."



## Cost of living support

We have created a cost-of-living tool-kit to bring together information on the support, services, benefits and grants available and how to access them.

We also created some business cards regarding our cost-of-living tool-kit. The QR code takes the tenant directly to Orwell's tool-kit web page where customers can access useful information and make self-referrals to the Tenancy Sustainment team. These cards were given to all our customer facing colleagues to share with customers as and when they see them.



Visit our website to view our toolkit

Scan the QR code to visit our webpage or type in [www.orwell-housing.co.uk/cost-of-living-toolkit/](http://www.orwell-housing.co.uk/cost-of-living-toolkit/)



# Supporting and listening to customers

## Make A Difference Fund

The Orwell Make A Difference Fund, our internal fundraising venture, raised the amazing sum of £2,795 in 2023.

The amount raised was match funded by Orwell Housing Association and the money was used to help Orwell customers. Orwell colleagues nominated customers who needed something specific and who were unable to pay for it themselves.

The Make A Difference Fund committee decides how to allocate funds based on the nominations received and then organises and/or purchases whatever is needed to help the customer.

The total expenditure for 2023 was £3,315 and here are some of the things that were purchased;

- ▲ Security doorbells to keep customers safe.
- ▲ Christmas presents for children in our Domestic Abuse services.

- ▲ Football kits provided for our team at Christchurch House (Temporary Supported Housing).
- ▲ Provision of mini bus hire for the annual Suffolk Recovery Football Tournament.
- ▲ A push bike for customers in one of our Learning Disabilities services, giving them more independence.
- ▲ A selection of white electrical kitchen goods for customers in General Needs properties.
- ▲ A laptop for a young person in one of our Temporary Supported Housing services.
- ▲ Some noise cancelling ear buds for a person who is noise sensitive.
- ▲ Emergency gas and electrical top ups for some customers in our General Needs properties.





# Supporting and listening to customers

## Dispersed accommodation for victims of domestic abuse

During 2023 Orwell delivered 6 new self-contained temporary accommodation homes with support for victims of domestic violence in East Suffolk.

These homes provide domestic abuse survivors with an alternative environment to our existing domestic abuse refuges which aren't suitable for everyone. This includes men fleeing domestic abuse or individuals who need accessible accommodation.

Orwell worked closely with East Suffolk Council, Suffolk County Council and Homes England to gain the support of stakeholders and to enable us to take the opportunity to deliver something different and meet an unmet need.

The homes are fully furnished and equipped, with Wifi access, CCTV to communal areas and a door entry security system. Support workers based at the local refuge provide practical and emotional support to allow men and women to be safe when fleeing abusive relationships.



## Young Futures partnership

The Cambridgeshire County Council commissioned housing related support service consists of a partnership between five young peoples' supported accommodation providers. It offers accommodation to 16-24 year old people for up to two years.

The providers are CHS Group, Orwell Housing, Riverside, Richmond Fellowship and YMCA Trinity. All referrals for supported accommodation for young people come to the partnership, who will complete a trauma-informed assessment, and will work with the referred young person to find the most suitable accommodation for them within the partnership.

Orwell offers the partnership's sole female only accommodation and supports up to 15 women aged 18-24 year old, for a maximum of two years.

**YOUNG  
FUTURES**

# Supporting and listening to customers

## Accessing an improved quality of life

Noa struggled to trust and engage with support after being homeless for several years. They suffered from poor mental and physical health after experiencing domestic violence. Noa was referred to Orwell's Tenancy Sustainment service to address a large debt they had with their energy provider.

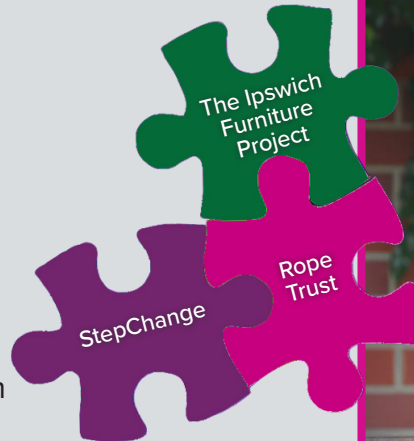
After several visits from the team, Noa began to trust us. We liaised with the energy provider on their behalf to address the outstanding debt and on their advice, we applied for the hardship fund to clear the debt, but unfortunately this was declined. We then registered Noa with StepChange, who supported them to find a resolution.

Noa is now moving to a level access flat due to poor mobility, the Rope Trust have awarded them new carpets, a new bed, bedding and cooker. Orwell's Tenancy Sustainment Welfare Fund paid for a fridge freezer and the cost of moving in. Noa is very excited about the move and the prospect of an improved quality of life.

### Our outcomes

Positive Gardening In control of finances Empowered Happy Healthy  
Gardening Healthy hobbies Empowered Happy Positive

### Our Partnerships



Accessing an improved quality of life

Check out our tenancy

sustainment video by scanning the QR code here.



# Supporting and listening to customers

## Supporting our customers to live their best lives

Glyn and Alex lived in a ground floor two bed flat. Glyn was Alex's full-time carer due to progressive mobility issues and the need for support with personal care. The personal care was becoming difficult for Glyn and they were struggling with the cost of the extra bedroom.

We registered them on Gateway to HomeChoice so they could bid for sheltered housing. Meanwhile, with support from their housing officer and caretaker, they prepared to move. We applied for Attendance and Carers Allowance which they were entitled to but not claiming, LWAS to help with the cost of food and bills, and DHP to cover the cost of the first month's rent for their new home. The Rope Trust paid for the cost of moving, a new cooker and sofa and chair from the Ipswich Furniture Project and we applied for housing benefit for their new home. The couple successfully moved into sheltered housing in January.

### Our outcomes

Quality of life Settled Happy Comfortable Freedom Stress free Financially comfortable Happy Freedom Happy Financially comfortable



Supporting our customers to live their best lives

Check out our tenancy sustainment video by scanning the QR code here.

### Our Partnerships



## A managed move to better support our customers needs

Jamie and Max were living in a ground floor one bed flat and needed to move. Jamie had given up working to be a full-time carer for Max who suffered from severe mental health and mobility issues and this meant they struggled to use the standard bathroom. The flat was very small with little room to move about. Having discussed this with our Housing Management Team, we were informed there was a two-bed bungalow with level access shower that was available. After discussing this with the couple and ensuring they could afford the extra bedroom, we applied for a managed move.

The bungalow is standalone with no nearby neighbours and will give them the peace they desperately needed. The couple moved in 2023.

### Our outcomes

Freedom Quality of life Content Space Happy Secure Hobbies Hobbies Happy Safe safe Space Secure Freedom Secure Hobbies Happy



A managed move to support our customers

Watch our video by scanning the QR code here.

# Sustainability

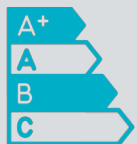
## Independent East success

In March 2023 we received notification from The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero that our Independent East Social Housing Retrofit Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) bid had been successful.

The SHDF will allow us to upgrade a significant amount of social housing homes currently below Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) 'C' up to that standard. It will support the installation of energy performance measures in social homes in England and help deliver warm, energy efficient homes and reduce carbon emissions.

We identified 120 properties suitable for a variety of improvements including loft insulation, external wall insulation, windows replacements together with heating upgrades and updated solar panels. The funding will allow us to make these improvements.

Orwell is in the early stages of its decarbonisation journey and this funding will give us the opportunity to trial some improvements whilst we continue to plan long-term.



**65%**

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

## Carbon Charter

In June 2023, we started our application for joining the Carbon Charter as a clear and visible statement of our commitment to reduce the environmental impact of our business operations.

The Charter is delivered by Groundwork East and overseen by the Environmental Agency and Suffolk County Climate Partnership. The Carbon Charter provides guidance, support and recognition to small and medium sized businesses throughout Suffolk and Norfolk as they take positive action towards Net Zero.

We provided the Carbon Charter with all our relevant data and they used this to calculate our carbon baseline position which was validated and included in our submission, together with our Environmental Policy. The submission was assessed and in November 2023 we received confirmation that Orwell had been accredited with the bronze award.

Our next step will be to achieve a minimum of 5% reduction in business carbon emissions in 2024 with a view to achieving a silver accreditation. We will also need to demonstrate measurable progress on carbon reduction.



**581** properties improved, at a cost of **£1.88 million**, contributing to our net carbon zero plans.

## 60 trees for 60 years

To mark Orwell's 60 years we have decided to plant 60 trees for every year we have existed. In the UK, trees are our biggest plants and our best allies in the fight against climate change. A fundamental part of biodiversity, the benefits of planting trees has gone beyond being a 'nice to have' to being hailed as the number one preventative solution.

Trees provide all manner of essentials, from the oxygen we breathe, to food, habitat, water, medicine, shade and more. Trees are incredible creations within their own right. Trees also act as a sound barrier, so when planted between roads and homes, they're blocking out unwanted noise pollution, as well as absorbing harmful traffic fumes.

Wildlife and natural systems depend on trees too. Woodland and forests host a rich biodiversity, with every part of a tree, from roots to leaves, supporting life in some way. From the birds that nest in branches, to thousands of insects the crawl within and upon it, to roosting bats and foraging squirrels and badgers: one single tree can support a whole myriad of activity.

In a nutshell, planting trees is good for the environment because of their ability to absorb carbon dioxide and expel oxygen through the process of photosynthesis.

Human activity has dramatically increased the levels of carbon dioxide or CO<sub>2</sub> in our atmosphere since the industrial age, via the continued burning of fossil fuels such as gas, oil and coal.

Native trees serve all the animal, bird, reptile and insect species that exist in that environment already, which is why they're so important. If we don't provide the wildlife with the host plant it needs, those species of animal, bird and insect will simply not be present anymore.

By planting a diverse range of native plants and tree species in our gardens, our commercial premises and land, we encourage a whole network of different life forms. Eco-systems thrive when there is an abundance of plant life for all types of insects. In turn, this diverse choice of insects impacts the food chain, resulting in a wider array of birds, snakes, mammals and fish. Furthermore, tree planting helps to create attractive spaces for our customers, aiding their wellbeing and contributing towards pride in their communities.



# Homelessness prevention

## Eviction prevented

Elliott was at risk of eviction due to rent arrears. They went to extreme lengths to get money to pay for heating and food and the only furniture in the bedsit was a bed. Ipswich Borough Council (IBC) homeless unit cleared their arrears, and we applied to the Rope Trust for a cooker, fridge freezer and sofa, and Orwell paid for a new washing machine out of the Tenancy Sustainment fund.

We have applied to IBC's Financial Assistance Fund to clear the already reduced £4k of council tax debt. Elliott is now able to pay their council tax for this year and we expect a positive outcome from the financial assistance. Elliott is doing really well and building relationships with family.

### Our outcomes

debt under control, more confident, change, relationships, happier, rebuild relationships, positive, change, debt under control, return to work, happier, positive, rebuild relationships, return to work

### Our Partnerships



# Homelessness prevention

## Tenancy Sustainment

Our Tenancy Sustainment team provided support to a customer who was struggling with significant mental health challenges following the breakup of a relationship, which resulted in their partner and children moving out of the family home.

Finances were extremely tight, and several household appliances needed replacing.

We supported them to arrange a replacement rental cooker and fridge-freezer, applied for funding from the Orwell Make A Difference Fund for new clothing and supplied them with some funding for fresh paint. We also supported them to apply for additional benefits.

The biggest challenge they faced was the distance between them and their children. We provided regular visits and phone calls to support them in planning a move.

We were extremely pleased when the customer called us recently. They have successfully received additional benefits, with a back payment, and moved much closer to their family support network and children. This has improved their mental health and means they can see their children regularly.



customers helped through our Tenancy Sustainment service, of which, 100% maintained their tenancy.



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



# Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Engagement 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.

## Ensuring our organisation is representative of the communities we serve

We completed our EDI survey gathering anonymised data from colleagues in January 2023, and shared the data with the National Housing Federation (NHF), along with 177 other housing associations, submitting to their EDI data tool.

This tool, designed and developed by the NHF, enables housing associations to compare workforces to the communities they serve, based on population in stock location. It looks at all nine protected characteristics as well as caring responsibilities and socio-economic background. By analysing our own data, we are able to ensure we are representative of our communities, and that we continue to strive to make Orwell as inclusive as possible so diversity can thrive.



More about the mentioned data tool can be found by scanning this QR code.



## Demonstrating our commitment to LGBTQ+ resident equality

In 2023, Orwell signed up to the HouseProud Pledge, demonstrating our commitment to providing our LGBTQ+ residents a safe place they can call home.



stonewall housing



HouseProud

The HouseProud Pledge is a scheme that all social housing providers (housing associations, local authorities and Arms Length Management Organisations) can sign up to, to demonstrate their commitment to LGBTQ+ resident equality and support. It has been developed by HouseProud and the University of Surrey in association with residents, staff members and sector leaders to address the issues raised by the findings of 'No Place Like Home?'

You can find out more about the pledge here:

<https://www.houseproud-lgbt.com/pledge>

The largest study ever undertaken to understand LGBTQ+ experiences of social housing can be found by scanning the QR code here.





# Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Engagement and Wellbeing


We achieved our Disability Confident Leader accreditation to demonstrate our commitment to attracting, recruiting, retaining and developing people with a disability.

31% of colleagues identified as having a physical/mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more and 19% claim this impacts their daily activities. We had already achieved Disability Confident Employer status, and so this was a natural next step for us.

It is important for us to be the best possible organisation that we can in support of people with a disability, in terms of attracting, recruiting, retaining and developing those colleagues.

We worked with the Papworth Trust, who supported us through the accreditation process.

You can find out more about the Disability Confident Leader accreditation by scanning the QR code.



# Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Engagement and Wellbeing

## Blue Light Card – Encouraging Financial Wellbeing for Colleagues

During 2023, The Blue Light Card recognised Orwell as a Care and Support employer and, for Orwell colleagues, this now means they can purchase their own Blue Light Card at the cost of £4.99 and use it to access discounts.

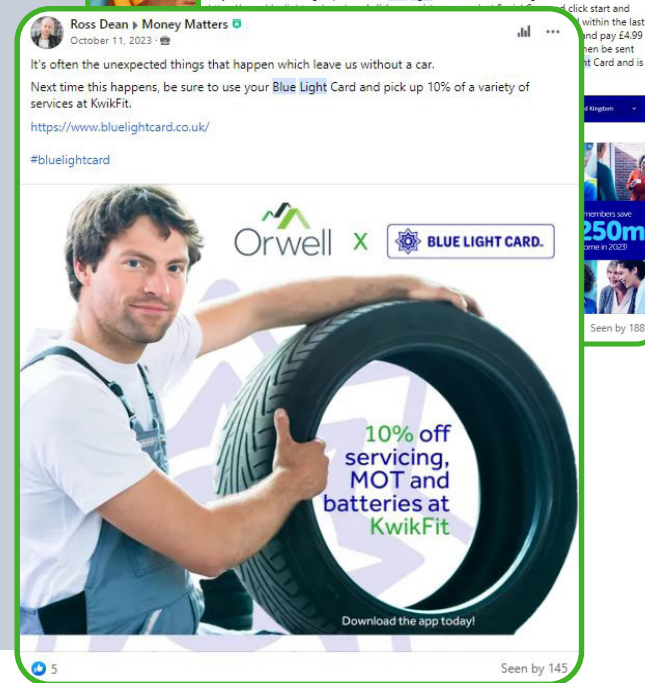
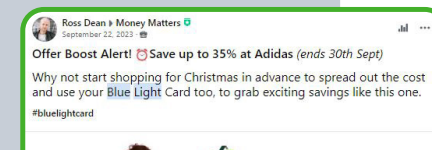
Working alongside our existing Orwell funded discounts platform, the Blue Light Card is an online discount and high street savings card. There is a wide a range of official discounts from large national retailers to local businesses in a wide range of categories including holidays, cars, days out, fashion, gifts, insurance, phones and much more with a free mobile app to help our colleagues save money.

Blue Light Cards were originally only available for people working in the emergency services, but the reach of this discount card has now been extended to people working in the social care sector.

From Orwell colleagues:

*“I saved £80 on my replacement caravan air awning using my Blue Light Card plus 6% at Hughes electrical – fantastic saving to be had and the free tickets in the ballots for local events are amazing opportunities too!”*

*“I reckon I have saved over £100 since mid-May on family meals out, cinema trips and shopping – I always ask if there is a Blue Light Card discount at the point of purchase just in case I can save!”*



# Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Engagement and Wellbeing

## Wellbeing initiatives

At Orwell we are proud to be able to support our colleagues' wellbeing. During 2023, we delivered 13 wellbeing roadshows (with plans for more in 2024), visiting our colleagues across the organisation to promote the support Orwell has to offer and gather feedback on which initiatives our people like most.

Orwell took part in a pilot for the Department of Work and Pensions, trialling a new Midlife MOT. DWP launched this scheme to help older workers with financial planning, their overall wellbeing and to assess what their skills mean for their careers and futures. Nine colleagues took up the offer and had a Midlife MOT.

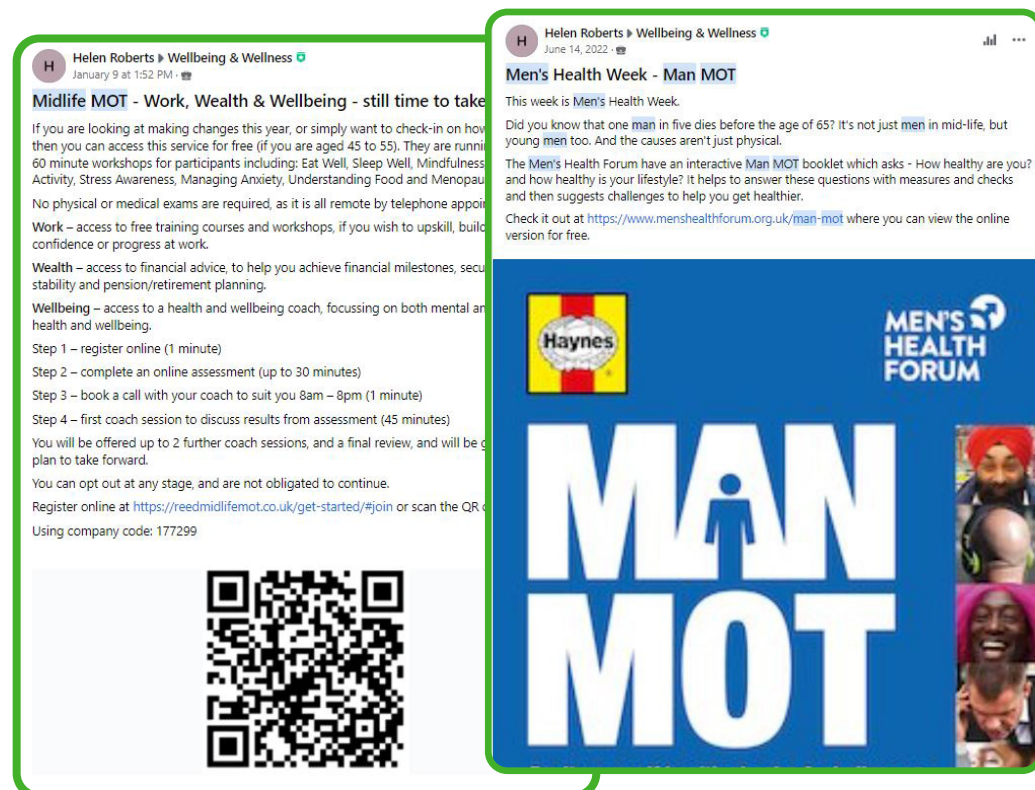
We also purchased the Man MOT booklets from the Men's Health Forum, which were sent to all male colleagues to help promote Men's health and wellbeing with a series of personal challenges, space to record current health and track changes, advice and signposting to support, and goal setting / action plans.

Colleagues can also access support from 23 Wellbeing Champions and 30 Mental Health First Aiders across the organisation.



# 30

colleagues across the organisation are Mental Health First Aiders, 24 of these trained by Orwell. They increase awareness, reduce stigma and offer support to colleagues, helping them remain in, or return to work.



# Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Engagement and Wellbeing

## 🌸 PACE & LOVE 🌸

### Our Colleague Conference 2023

In July 2023, we invited our colleagues to the beautiful Thorington Theatre for our bi-annual summer colleague conference.

The 1960's themed "PACE & Love" event was a celebration of our colleagues and the work we do in our communities as we mark our 60th birthday year.

The team from Suffolk Mind joined us in the afternoon, to present an extended version of their Introduction to The Mental Health Toolkit session, which included:

- ▲ A Mental Health Continuum Q&A
- ▲ An Emotional Needs challenge
- ▲ A 7/11 breathing demonstration, to help colleagues keep calm

Using giant Emotional Needs & Resources cards, we were given an interactive and engaging presentation while being

encouraged to think about our approach to workplace wellbeing.

At Orwell, we understand that wellbeing goes beyond physical health; it encompasses mental health, emotional and social wellbeing. By providing opportunities, like working with The Mental Health Toolkit, we aim to cultivate a culture that celebrates diversity, encourages open communication, focuses on wellbeing, and fosters a sense of belonging.

*"We found the session from Jon Neal and the team at The Mental Health Toolkit insightful and entertaining. It's important to be aware of where you are on the continuum and that there are tools out there to support people back to feeling well."*

**Wendy Evans-Hendrick, CEO, Orwell Housing Association**

**PACE & LOVE (Video not ready)**

Check out our PACE & LOVE video on our 2023 colleague conference by scanning the QR code here.



# Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Engagement and Wellbeing

## Accessible home

It was becoming increasingly difficult for Danni to climb the four flights of stairs to their second floor flat where they lived with their two children. This was due to complex health issues.

A managed move was agreed, and Danni and their children were moved to a 3-bed terraced house not far from the previous flat.

This move has had an immensely positive impact on Danni, and particularly on their daughter who suffers from self-harm. Their daughter is now getting support from Children Services and Danni is returning to work on a gradual basis.



**Orwell became Friends of ISCRE (Ipswich & Suffolk Council for Racial Equality) to engage with, and learn from, community members and leaders.**

Although Orwell have been Members of ISCRE for a couple of years, last year we signed up as Friends of ISCRE to help the group promote race equality, foster good relations between the communities of Suffolk, and to support the Staff, Trustees and Volunteers of ISCRE in achieving their purpose, which is to work towards the achievement of a fairer Suffolk for all people to live, work and visit.



As Friends of ISCRE, we hope to better engage with local communities, with a view to learning how we could best support members of our diverse communities. We trust that by engaging and learning, we will gain useful insights and build relationships with a view to better understand customer need including housing, support and employment opportunities.

# Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Engagement and Wellbeing

## Supporting our teams as they engage with each other and the wider communities

During 2023 we provided a range of Knowledge Café online events. For these events we invited people with diverse lived experience to share their experiences with our colleagues to help build understanding. These events are shared with other members of Independent East. In 2023 we have had sessions from:

- ▲ **Alex Manners** – Aspergers in the Workplace.
- ▲ **Elma Glasgow and Franstine Jones BEM** – Black History Month: The Powers of Stories, and How To Have Difficult Conversations.
- ▲ **Peter Berry** – Living with Early Onset Dementia.
- ▲ **Laila El-Metoui** – LGBTIQ+ Allyship and Inclusive Language, practical tips for supporting super diverse people.
- ▲ **Suffolk Refugee Support** – The facts, figures and reality of asylum in the UK.
- ▲ **Samira Shackle** – The complex background to hoarding.



# Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Engagement and Wellbeing

**Working with Suffolk Family Carers to provide support and training to our colleagues and leadership, and to help us build an internal network to give a central place for carers to find emotional support, advice and guidance.**

Data from our EDI survey show that 26% of our respondents provide informal care to a friend or relative. We recognise the immense strain this puts on our colleagues so we started working with Suffolk Family Carers to understand what support they could offer and how we could collaborate. We have added Suffolk Family Carers information to our Wellbeing Road Shows and held a Knowledge Cafe. We are now considering how we can continue to collaborate during 2024 to continue our support of our colleagues who care for others.



**Compassionate local support for family carers video**

Check out our community conversation video by scanning the QR code.



# Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Engagement and Wellbeing

## During 2023, Orwell Housing Association and Ipswich Town Foundation continued their partnership working to support better mental health within the local construction industry.



We want to encourage construction workers in East Anglia to talk openly about their emotions and seek help when needed and we did this by organising events in 2023.

This year, Orwell teamed up with key industry stakeholders to host events focussing on increasing awareness around support for mental health issues and how mental health issues can lead to gambling addiction.

The construction industry is known for its demanding and often high-pressure environment, which can take a toll on the mental wellbeing of those employed within it. Recognising the importance of addressing these challenges, Orwell Housing Association has continued with its important initiative to raise awareness and provide a platform for discussing mental health issues within the construction sector.

In 2020 the Chartered Institute of Building

published a report which found that 26% of construction industry professionals thought about taking their own lives, and that between 70% - 87% of respondents experienced depression or anxiety.

The event focussing on gambling addiction proved even more popular than those held in 2022, with 60+ guests attending to hear from three speakers with lived experiences. Ian Semel, from the gambling support charity Breakeven, talked about the causes and effects of problem gambling and how Breakeven can provide free support and advice to anyone affected. George Parris, former West Ham football player, shared his personal story, the impact gambling had on his life and how, with help, he overcame these challenges.

Finally, delegates heard from Combat2Coffee's founder Nigel Seaman, who shared his mental health journey and how a historic trauma while serving in the army led to struggles with post-

traumatic stress disorder and gambling – and how his recovery has driven him to help others.

Speaking about the event, Nigel said, "Mental ill health is something that can affect us all – and we can all say there have been days when we've felt better.

*"Events like this are so important in getting the message out there about how important conversation can be when it comes to mental health."*

*"Through Combat2Coffee we are showing the power of a cuppa and a chat in breaking down barriers and encouraging people to open up about their wellbeing."*

*"I hope the event will have inspired members of their team to look out for and support one another – and show that it's ok to not be ok."*



# Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Engagement and Wellbeing

**Greg Dodds, Assistant Director of Development and Growth at Orwell,** said:

*“This was the third event of its kind, and we wanted to specifically focus on the connection between mental health issues and gambling addiction because we know this is a significant concern within the construction industry. By collaborating with our partners, we aim to share support and knowledge, and promote a culture of wellbeing in construction. This is just the beginning of our efforts to drive change and create a healthier work environment both for the contractors we work with directly and for anyone else in the industry”.*

*“I am very grateful to our sponsors and partners who have helped us to reach even more people within the local construction industry and have supported us to promote open conversations about mental health and gambling. I'm also extremely grateful to our three speakers who were so open and honest and whose stories will have real impact”.*

This successful event was a partnership between Orwell Housing Association, Ipswich Town Community Trust and local contractors Elliston Steady Hawes, Needhams Contracts Ltd, SEH French Construction and Wellington Construction Ltd.



# Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Engagement and Wellbeing

## Best Employers Eastern Region Accreditation

Orwell is delighted that in 2023 it was awarded the prestigious Platinum Accreditation from Best Employers Eastern Region, at the first attempt. This recognition shows Orwell's commitment to providing an exceptional workplace for its colleagues.

Best Employers Eastern Region, a partnership between Pure Resourcing Solutions and Eras Ltd, assess workplace culture and satisfaction and by achieving a Platinum Accreditation, the highest accreditation available, Orwell demonstrates its dedication to providing a positive and engaging work environment. This accolade reflects Orwell's tireless efforts to create an atmosphere where colleagues can thrive, develop, and be their authentic selves. It acknowledges Orwell's outstanding performance in areas such as leadership, wellbeing, employee engagement, and organisational culture.

CEO of Orwell, Wendy Evans-Hendrick, said,

*“Receiving the Platinum Accreditation from Best Employers Eastern Region is a testament to the hard work and dedication of everyone who makes up team Orwell. We have always believed that people are at the heart of everything we achieve or do, and this recognition reinforces our commitment to providing a workplace where they can thrive.”*

*We took part in Best Employers because we wanted to learn more about our colleagues and how they felt about working at Orwell. It also gave us the opportunity to benchmark ourselves against other companies in the region. As a not-for-profit organisation, competing for talent is challenging, so this was a great opportunity for us to raise our profile as a great local employer. We can show current and prospective employees that we care. We will continue to review the feedback we have received from our team and continue to work to be the very best employer we can be.”*



## Best Employers Eastern Region

### PLATINUM 2023

The judges who considered Orwell's application were particularly impressed by the multi-faceted approach to reward, which they acknowledged could be challenging in the not-for-profit sector. They also said they found strong evidence of diversity and inclusion being high on Orwell's agenda with knowledge cafes providing wide-ranging information and support including around neurodiversity and menopause issues, and leaders being actively supported and developed to ensure they have the confidence to lead in ever-changing circumstances.

Best Employers Eastern Region conducts surveys and evaluations to assess the workplace culture, leadership, and employee engagement within organisations across the eastern region.

# Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Engagement and Wellbeing

## Medicash

During 2022, Orwell conducted a survey asking our colleagues for feedback about the organisation's employee benefits offer. As a result of this feedback, a new health cash plan was launched in 2023. The People and Culture Team has worked on a partnership with Medicash; a fantastic health cash plan with an extensive list of extra benefits for colleagues including:

- ▲ Dental care - covering routine dental treatments and check-ups, hygienist fees
- ▲ Dental accidents and injuries
- ▲ Eye tests, prescription glasses and contact lenses
- ▲ Specialist consultations
- ▲ Diagnostic tests and scans
- ▲ Complementary therapies for physiotherapy, acupuncture, osteopathy and chiropractic assessment and treatment
- ▲ Alternative therapies - allergy testing, homeopathy, reflexology, Bowen and Alexander technique, Reiki, Indian head massage, hypnotherapy as part of a treatment plan
- ▲ Private GP fees, chiropody, prescriptions and flu jabs
- ▲ Health screening
- ▲ 24/7 access to a GP
- ▲ Mole screening service



## Men's Monday

Launched by two Orwell colleagues during 2023, Men's Mondays are held on the second Monday of each month, bringing male colleagues from across the organisation together to chat and meet people they might not work with on a day-to-day basis.

During each session, there is time for catching up over coffee, and a talk or discussion on topical issues including anxiety, mental health struggles and support options. Sometimes external speakers share their experiences with the group.





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

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