

20

1989 - 2009

Celebrating 20 years of practical support for vulnerable people in their homes





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“It’s about offering that little extra help when it is needed, whatever stage of life that may be.”

Patron

Lord Griffiths of Pembrey and Burry Port

Trustees

David Hucker (Chairman)

Rev. Ronald Crewes

Michael Gledson

Jim Lord

Elizabeth Phillips

Michael Stevens

Honorary Life Member Rt. Rev. Keith Arnold

Welcome



This year Orbit Charitable Trust celebrates 20 successful years helping to improve people's quality of life. And to mark that, we would like to celebrate some of the landmarks.



Throughout life, we all need a little extra support sometimes. Meet some of the people we have helped and find out exactly how much it has meant to them.



Why this matters



When our founder members toured the country 20 years ago rattling tins and spreading the word about a new charity, they knew exactly why it mattered.

All four of us (Joan Christodoulou, Keith Arnold, David Hucker and myself) had been involved in social housing either as voluntary board members or in working for Orbit Housing Association and we often came across stories of people in need of help. In setting up the charitable trust, we hoped to open up doors and offer a way of providing the things that ordinarily went beyond Orbit's remit.

Mike Stevens became the trust's first secretary and we were formally set up in October 1989.

Through my life as a Methodist minister, I had met Lord Murray of Epping Forest. Better known as Len Murray, general secretary of the Trades Union Congress, he was quite used to getting voices heard. He became our Patron and was instrumental in getting the trust off the ground.

He was an orator and one of the best people you will come across when it comes to raising money for a cause: he knew how to talk, he knew how to raise our profile, he knew, in short, what he was doing – and he was totally committed. He was a great man and sadly died in 2004.

I was delighted that our mutual good friend Leslie Griffiths agreed to take over as Patron. The Rev. Lord Griffiths of Pembrey and Burry Port, to give him his full title, shares Len's commitment to our work and we could not have asked for a better person to join us. In another change, whilst remaining as a trustee, I have handed over the reins as chairman to David Hucker and I know that the trust is in good hands as it looks to the next 20 years.

Lord Murray and the founder members were laying the foundations for something that continues to matter today: the ability to offer that little extra help when it is needed, whatever stage of life that may be. As you turn these pages, I hope you will get a sense of that.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ron Crewes', written in a cursive style.

**Rev. Ron Crewes
Founder Chairman**

Those little extras



Sometimes our work is about providing the additional touches, items that may appear small but that are in fact enabling hundreds of people to take great steps towards independence and a better quality of life.

A chance to learn

Residents at a sheltered scheme in Brandon have been able to learn all about computers – from online shopping to interactive games.

We spent £700 on a new PC for Heathcote House and ever since residents have been enjoying afternoons discovering the worldwide web.

Orbit Supported Housing Officer, Lyndsay Sawyer, said: “One lady who lives there is computer literate and she has been helping the others. Some of the residents requested it, others were apprehensive because new technology frightens people. More and more of them are starting to use it, which is good because it is a world of information.”

A chance to play

When Springfield House, a mother and baby hostel in Milton Keynes, asked us for £2,500 to provide young parents with a play area for their children we were more than

happy to help. The hostel was able to buy a wendy house and springy cat rocking horse with the money.

“The idea behind the play equipment was to help young mums to be responsible and identify dangers,” said project worker, Fiona Ward.

A chance to do things independently

As a new resident in a sheltered housing scheme it is important to feel that you still have the independence you enjoyed when living alone.

The staff at St Augustine’s Place, Gorleston, were aware that residents not having their own washing machines may be a hurdle to that so they asked us to help provide a laundry room so that people could carry on doing their own washing if they wished.

Orbit Housing Officer, Carol Holliman, said: “Tenants were unable to do their washing which was taking away their independence. Your laundry is quite a personal thing really.

**Did
you
know**

The trustees act in a voluntary capacity.

Ensuring we spend the strict minimum on administration meaning more can be spent on improving people’s quality of life.



Dealing with life's hurdles



Making a difference to family life

For some time, the Hart family's days had been punctuated by dad Les' dialysis treatment. It is a constant presence in their lives and something it is very hard to forget about, particularly as the equipment takes up a lot of room in the house.

The situation had become such a problem that the family appealed to Orbit Charitable Trust for help to extend their home to allow them some much needed space. We gave over £5,000 towards the work so that the Harts could build a new extension creating an extra room.

Wife, Julie Hart, said:

"Everything was revolving around the dialysis machine, everything was cramped. We were struggling for space and we couldn't afford to re-mortgage the house because if my husband was to become ill he could need time off work. It will make all the difference to us as a family. We will have a better quality of life."

The new space will provide the family's eight-year-old son with his own bedroom and will allow Les to

have the dialysis machine by his bed so he can have his treatment overnight rather than having to take four hours out of his daily routine.

Supporting older and disabled people in the community

Improving older and disabled people's quality of life is part of our core work. That is why we donated £12,000 to Care and Repair England, a charity that shares this ethos. Care and Repair's work involves responding to what older people state is important and innovating new services around that.

Director, Sue Adams, said:

"Core funding is invaluable as it enables us to do things that are crucial but are not in the self contained project format that other funders may prefer."

Core funding enabled Care and Repair to maintain close links with older people's groups, extend existing networks at policy level, make representations to government.



**Did
you
know**

We hire out more than 400 telephone alarms to elderly and vulnerable people. This enables them to live in their own home but with the reassurance that there is somebody on the end of the phone if they should feel vulnerable. It also provides us with an annual income.



Orbit's Care & Repair Service

Set up over twenty years ago, Care & Repair is aimed at improving the quality of people's lives by carrying out work to their homes that enable them to live independently. The current projects cover areas in the Midlands and in East Anglia, but the aim is the same wherever people live.

Jobs can range from large-scale house extensions, providing a new bathroom or bedroom, to small jobs such as security locks or smoke alarms to make the home safer for people to live in. The Trust often makes up the difference between the cost of the work and that which can be paid for by the local authority under a Disabled Facilities Grant.

In Coventry, the service also provides home safety checks and a Handyperson scheme. Two ground-breaking initiatives have been the hospital discharge scheme in conjunction with the Primary Care Trust, involving carrying out work to enable patients to return home instead of occupying much needed beds, and Crisis Support, involving very vulnerable people, many with learning disabilities or complex needs.



Before



After

What they say about Care and Repair

'The service I received from them was second to none'

'No improvements necessary'

'The Care & Repair Team was 1st Class'

'Wonderful service. You cannot improve on excellence and the level of service has been just that. Thank you'

'All the people I spoke to were kind and pleasant. I have no complaints about the service'

'I received very good service throughout. I can not think of any major change to the service I received!'

'I can't see anyway that you could improve the excellent job you are already doing. Thank you'



New beginnings



Sometimes when residents arrive at Wellington Road, a supported housing projects for ex-offenders and vulnerable homeless people in East Dereham, they only have the clothes on their backs. Our £1,000 grant buys starter packs which helps ensure that each new arrival has their own bedding, cutlery and kitchen appliances. This helps make the transition back to independent living easier.

“As most of the residents come straight from prison they have nothing,” says Vicky Garner, project manager at the hostel. “It’s a huge benefit to them to come in and have sheets, quilts, pillows, plates and cutlery. Then, when they move on to their own flat, they take the things with them.”

“I honestly do not know what we would do without this grant and the guys really do appreciate it. They are so grateful and thankful.”

Providing solid foundations

One thing we understand is an organisation’s need to be sustainable. We know it is impossible for voluntary and community sector groups to provide invaluable services to the community without knowing they have the vital funding they need just to remain in existence.

That is why we committed £20,000 of our funds to the Make It Happen project run by HACT (Housing Associations Charitable Trust). The money was used along with funding from local government to help small almshouses to build more sustainable futures.

A number of small organisations received funding for IT equipment, training and consultants’ fees and we have been told that the almshouses felt this had made a significant if not critical difference to their cause.



Almshouses



Almshouses are the oldest form of what we today call social housing and depend on voluntary support for their work. In some cases, their original purpose is not relevant in today's very different society and, in others, there are no longer people willing or able to be trustees.

It was against this background that we were approached by the Charity Commission to become the corporate trustee of the Almshouse Charity of Edmund Sawyer and Others in Kettering, Northamptonshire. The charity owned three cottages which were being upgraded with a grant from the local authority and two enlarged properties emerged from the work.

We have invested further into the properties in the last two years, spending over £40,000 on bringing them up to the Government's Decent Homes standard and they are now let on comparable rents to other social housing in the locality.

Building on our experience, in conjunction with The National Association of Almshouses, we held



a seminar for trustees in Leamington Spa in 2005, supported by the Housing Associations Charitable Trust and Orbit Group.

We also donated £20,000 to the Housing Associations Charitable Trust to enable them to work with small almshouses to build capacity to cope with the complexities of the Supporting People funding regime. The money was used for IT equipment and training and feedback from the initiative was very positive.

**Did
you
know**

Since we set up 20 years ago we have given away over £600,000 in grants to individuals, projects and organisations.

Looking into the future



When the Trust was set up 20 years ago, Orbit Housing Association was a non-charitable organisation and we felt that the time was right to establish a new body which would be the "charitable arm" of the group. Although legally independent, the Trust had close operational links with the Association and a common purpose.

Life is very different now. Since 1989, Orbit has grown and evolved into a much bigger organisation with charitable subsidiaries, but the relationship with the Trust has been maintained through funding and by acting as our agent in the provision of services to groups of our beneficiaries. We have, however, secured our own income stream outside of Orbit through the community alarm rentals which has enabled us to make significant grants to such organisations as HACT and Care & Repair England.

This anniversary has been an opportunity to both look back on what we have achieved and to look forward to a new role for the Trust. Whilst we hope to continue to assist Orbit residents and customers, we are looking at forming strategic partnerships with others and to develop more independent sources of income. As such, we will move away from predominately making grants to individuals towards project-based work, although we will always be there to support the truly vulnerable members of the community.

One avenue that we are pursuing is to work with Age Concern Warwickshire on piloting the emerging technologies for older people to enable them to live an independent life in their own homes. This partnership may, in the longer term, lead to a closer relationship but, for now, we are looking to continue working with a wide range of bodies that share our goals.

We have had stable governance throughout the 20 years, but two trustees who have stood down are Keith Arnold and Joan Christodoulou and we thank them both for their contribution. We have a responsibility to continue the work which Len Murray championed all those years ago and the current trustees are determined that we will build on his legacy.

David Hucker
Chairman

List of beneficiaries



Over the last 20 years, we have given over £600,000 to organisations and individuals, including:

- Age Concern Warwickshire
- Care & Repair England
- Coventry Church (Municipal) Charities
- Housing Associations' Charitable Trust
- Peter Le Marchant Trust
- Relief (Hastings Area Community Trust)
- Rotary Club of Coventry Breakfast
- The Foresters Fund for Children
- Volunteer Centre, Stratford-upon-Avon
- Acorn Court, Coventry
- Ashcroft Project, Sheringham
- Beauchamp House, Warwick
- Coundon Road Project, Coventry
- Coventry Mind
- Deepmore Road, Rugby
- Deneside House, Great Yarmouth
- Heathcote House, Brandon
- Jasmine Green Housing Project, Lowestoft
- Mother & Baby Unit, Bristol
- NACRO, Coventry
- Nene Valley Family Refuge, Northampton
- Optua, Kesgrave
- Rene England House, Leamington Spa
- Springfield House, Milton Keynes
- St Augustine's Place, Gorleston-on-Sea
- The Meadows Community Group, Burbage
- Warwickshire Housing/Drug Support Scheme
- Wellington Road, Dereham
- YMCA, Burton-upon-Trent

Clients of Orbit Group's Care & Repair Projects covering:

Burton-upon-Trent
Coventry
Norwich
Rugby
Stafford
Suffolk





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