Bigger than Business:
Housing associations and community investment in an age of austerity
Supplementary information Volume III
Anne Power, Eileen Herden, Bert Provan, Laura Lane, Nicola Serle
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This report is the last in a series of documents on the outcomes of a study commissioned by Orbit, which assessed the contribution of social landlords to the stability and well-being of low-income residents in disadvantaged communities alongside their contribution to society and the economy as social innovators, entrepreneurs, builders and community anchor organisations. Volume III contains supplementary information. It supplements the Summary; Volume I (overview); and Volume II (extended research report). All these document are available on the LSE Housing and Communities, and Orbit websites at:

[http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/LSEhousing/; www.orbit.org.uk]
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1. Research method and analysis

A. Our research method involved nine core components:

1. A review of literature and best practice, including national and local policy initiatives in the areas Orbit is active in, including relevant funding streams, covering the following ideas:
   - We identified and documented Big Society-related initiatives and funding streams, such as Community First managed by the Community Development Foundation; the Tenant Empowerment Programme delivered by the National Communities Resource Centre; the Community Assets Programme managed by the Big Lottery Fund; the Community Energy Saving Programme and British Gas’ EnergyShare, originating in the Department for Energy and Climate Change; the Community Organisers programme, run by Locality; and the National Citizen Service, run by the Office of Civil Society.
   - The literature review identified, documented and assessed best practice from other housing providers and similar organisations, looking in particular at different approaches to and models of community investment.
   - We tabulated different models of community intervention, drawing on the following accumulated evidence:
     - The CASE Families Study;
     - Neighbourhood renewal projects;
     - Locality Development Trusts and community action projects;
     - Trafford Hall D.I.Y. community projects;
     - Tenant management, and community co-operative projects;
     - Youth projects and other special initiatives;
     - Work and skill related projects.

2. A review of Orbit’s literature and interviews with key Orbit staff to understand Orbit’s values, goals, structures and systems:
   - Using Orbit’s available records, documents and strategies, we aimed to understand Orbit’s values, goals, structures and systems, and document these succinctly.
   - Through secondary data including local reports, we developed our initial understanding of Orbit’s communities in general and in particular regions.
   - By interviewing key Orbit staff and studying key documents, we identified the direction and components of Orbit’s strategic focus within the 2020 project and using business plans, scenario planning documents and interviews with selected senior managers, placed these within a clear framework for action.

3. Desktop research of statistical records including multiple deprivation indices, census and other data including records held by Orbit, to examine in detail the overall socio-economic profile of the areas Orbit is based in and of Orbit residents by region and area type.
4. **Selection of three different types of area for detailed case studies** in consultation with Orbit project managers. The selection reflected three different types of community or local authority area – for example: one city, one town, one semi-rural / rural.

5. **Local qualitative research** to establish the views of a representative cross-section of Orbit tenants and other community members, including local community leaders:
   a. Interviews with 30-50 residents per area (120 interviews using a short, semi-structured questionnaire);
   b. In-depth interviews with 10 residents per area (total 30);
   c. In-depth interviews with at least two community leaders per area (total 15) to get their perspective on the issues under investigation.

6. Based on the area statistics and Orbit profiles we employed a **sampling process for the resident-based survey**, using the following categories:
   - Household composition;
   - Ethnic background;
   - Work status;
   - Age;
   - Length of tenancy.
We used Orbit's records to identify and interview a target number of residents in each of the categories listed who want to participate voluntarily and are willing to share their experiences. We aimed to match our sample as closely as possible to the wider population in terms of household structure, tenure, ethnic origin and work.

7. We developed and piloted a **standard questionnaire** for resident-based interviews and a longer questionnaire for more in-depth interviews. This included questions on:
   - What is being done already in relation to social and economic development;
   - What works;
   - What doesn’t work;
   - What the local priorities are; and
   - What needs to be done.

8. **Selection and training of peer researchers**:
   - We used Orbit’s knowledge to help recruit six resident interviewers to help with as many standard interviews as possible.
   - We drew on the expertise of the National Communities Resource Centre and their quality-tested trainer network to provide training for the peer researchers. This included trialling the pilot questionnaire at the training event, and also piloting with a few selected residents.
   - The peer researchers worked closely with the LSE Housing and Communities team.
9. Developed proposals for how to invest in the future to maximise value for money.

B. Analysis

The qualitative interviews were used to provide a clear picture of social and economic problems, priorities and potential. Based on area case studies and wider findings, we proposed a framework to help Orbit assess the sustainability of its interventions in different types of areas. The following tools were used:

1. A database to analyse the interview material, making it easier to tabulate our findings and analyse the data. By tabulating the answers, we were able to show how the residents felt about a large range of issues, comparing findings across the three areas, and between different groups of residents. This form of analysis brought out any clear patterns in our findings.

2. Qualitative ‘themed’ methods – analysis of the more open-ended questions from in-depth interviews, using themes derived from issues residents themselves identified. Responses were grouped under these broad themes, thus helping us to identify particular issues that dominated or had higher priority. This allowed us to draw some more broad-based conclusions from our work, in answer to the key research questions.

3. Based on the survey findings, we identified:
   - Gaps in provision and in funding;
   - Barriers to delivery in existing projects;
   - Barriers to developing new projects.

   We examined ways Orbit can close these gaps and overcome barriers, including funding. We also identified positive measures and their social return on investment.

4. A cost benefit analysis was carried out on the peer research experience to demonstrate the added value of social and economic support in low-income communities, even without being self-funding in the short term.

5. This multi-faceted analysis allowed us to:
   - Develop a framework for delivering community-orientated Big Society-related activity;
   - Help Orbit through this framework to assess the sustainability of participative projects and approaches in different types of area;
   - Develop scenarios for the next 10 years, showing possible choices and outcomes for Orbit and for engaged residents;
   - Demonstrate, based on our findings, how the core tasks of housing management, repair, upgrading and energy efficient retrofit may complement, enhance and reinforce social, community and economic initiatives;
   - Suggest priorities that Orbit can pursue in order to enhance its contribution to the Big Society; and suggest how it can carry these out.
2. Case study areas

This section provides a detailed overview of our rural, town and urban case study areas.

1. Urban case study: Becton Place

Becton is part of the London Borough of Bexley and the estate formed part of the transfer of local authority stock that took place in 1994. Many of the current residents still remember the days when there were council tenants and resident caretakers in the blocks. The estate is compact and composed of low-rise and medium-rise blocks separated by green spaces. The area is near the main road, which is well served by buses, and is about a mile from the Barnehurst Network Rail Station. There are many local shops, services, schools, parks, and other services, and the larger centres of Bexleyheath and Erith are within a ten minute bus ride. A statistical profile is given in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Becton Place statistical profile

- Becton Place estate is within the Northumberland Heath Ward, and the Becton LSOA, part of the London Borough of Bexley.
- There are 143 Orbit properties on the estate, and around 240 residents, out of a total of around 10,800 residents in the Ward, and 1,515 in Becton LSOA, and 225,000 in LB Bexley (2012 estimate)
- 80% of homes in LB Bexley are owner occupied, with 13% rented from social landlords and 6% from private landlords. 32% of LB Bexley comprised green spaces. (2011 estimate)
- The 2011 crime rate in LB Bexley was 60 crimes per thousand population, which is considerably lower than London (105) or the nationally (75)
- Unemployment in LB Bexley in September 2012 was 7.6%, compared to 9.2% in London and 7.9% nationally.
- Bexley residents are more likely to be in administrative and skilled trades at 27%, compared to London (18.4%) or national (22%) rates;
- Retired residents make up 22% of LB Bexley’s population, compared to 9.3% in London as a whole and 16.9% nationally.

There is a clear contrast between the older residents, many of whom arrived on the estate when it was one of the more sought after council estates, and the more recent arrivals. Looking at the ages of tenants, 29% have lived on the estate since before 2000, and have an average age of 68. By contrast, 42% have moved in in the last five years and have an average age of 32. This difference is reflected in the services available, with the library and Age Concern Pop-In Centre along one of the main local roads, and a thriving school and children’s centre on the perpendicular road.

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1 All GLA and borough figures in this box are from GLA Intelligence Borough Profiles, available at [http://www.london.gov.uk/gla-intelligence](http://www.london.gov.uk/gla-intelligence)

2 Orbit tenant data
The flats are in good repair, and the blocks serviced by working entry phones. Two sources of regular complaint are the laundry rooms and the pram sheds. The former used to be places where many people met and good neighbourly relations were developed, but many no longer have working laundry machines and some have been locked due to young people and non-residents using them as informal meeting places and places to take drugs or sleep. Equally there are issues with the previous ‘pram sheds’ which are storage areas for each flat, and are located either in the basements or just outside the low-rise blocks. Several have been set on fire and others vandalised or used as informal meeting places, and many are now locked up and not available. Some tenants object to this loss of amenity, while others are just glad that there are fewer places for young people to hang about and make ‘trouble’.

2. Market town case study area: Rugby

The market town of Rugby in Warwickshire was selected as our town case study area. The two Orbit schemes identified – Brownsover and Cawston – differ in terms of history, demographics and geography and are thus interesting counterpoints. Rugby’s population of 94,200 has increased by 3.9% from 2004-2009 and is projected to increase 21.8% by 2031, placing pressure on existing services and facilities. Housing is also under pressure with the number of households on local authority registers more than doubling between 2000-2010, from 5,750 to 13,370, putting considerable demands on stock. Rugby’s current tenure profile is made up of 4% housing association, 10.5% local authority, 76.5% owner occupied with the rest falling into the private rented sector.

Furthermore, nine LSOAs in Warwickshire are ranked within the top 10% of the most deprived nationally by the IMD 2010 estimates – an increase from six LSOAs in 2007. One of these pockets of deprivation is localised in our case study area, Brownsover, which will be introduced in the following section.

Figure 2: Physical Characteristics of Rugby Schemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>No of Dwellings</th>
<th>Age of Estate</th>
<th>Type of Estate</th>
<th>History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brownsover</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>1970s and 1980s addition</td>
<td>Originally semi-detached terraced houses, maisonettes and blocks of flats, addition of detached and semi-detached houses.</td>
<td>Large estate with mix of council, housing association and some owner-occupier housing. History of drug-related crime and negative reputation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Local description - Brownsover

The biggest problem for Brownsover is its perception. Locally, if you look at the housing lists for instance, if you want to house swap it will always say – anywhere but Brownsover. So it has a reputation. (Council Community Officer)

Brownsover south and district north, where Orbit holds approximately 287 properties, is Rugby’s most deprived neighbourhood. Close to 40% of the population is under 25, and Brownsover has developed a negative image over the years, intensified a decade ago by a fatal drug-related shooting on the estate. Speaking with residents and community leaders, it seems that the biggest problem on Brownsover is its negative perception, both from outside and within. The wealthier side of Brownsover is disconnected from the rest, and residents living in houses disassociate with those living in the flats.

Figure 3: Brownsover statistical profile

- 287 units of Orbit property out of a total of approximately 5,000 homes
- Total population in Brownsover South (location of Orbit Property) is 4,147
- Housing stock distribution is 61.5% owner occupier, 17.6% local authority, 13.7% housing association, 4.9% private rented, 2.3% other
- Almost 40% of the population is under the age of 25, compare with 29.3% in Warwickshire county
- 15.6% are lone parents compare with 7.8% in Warwickshire county
- 14.2% have limited long-term illness
- 67.8% employed working age population
- 6.2% unemployment in working age males compared to 3.1% in Warwickshire county
- 31.2% have no qualifications
- 12.3% travel to work by foot, 6.1% bus and 59.6% car

As indicated, Browsover holds a mixture of housing, with several valuable homes in the newer built suburban estate and stark blocks of flats in which single and young residents live on the other end. The residents in the flats feel that they have little connection to the surrounding community, and this disconnection seems to proliferate the negative image of the housing type. The estate has a community centre, which is open three mornings a week for local CAB drop-in surgery and has shops, which are soon to be redeveloped. The shop area is both appreciated and avoided, due to groups of young people gathering around the shop entrances. However many residents very much enjoy living there. As one resident remarked:

A lot of people love it here and wouldn’t move anywhere else. You’ve got the canals, you have countryside, you have good and regular transport, and cycle routes into the town, it’s easier to get to the centre. So it’s got lots of positives. (Council Community Officer)

Orbit staff list class A and C drugs, problems with domestic violence, single parent occupancies and the ‘lost male’ population who live in properties, but are not listed on the tenancy, as the main issues on Brownsover. Community activists cite problems of perception, limited platforms for youth engagement and participation, the lack of residents willing and able to engage and give their time to the area as issues. Problems also exist around how to distribute information across the area, in order
to capture and motivate residents. A local information centre was closed several years ago, due to cuts in funding and the difficulties of running the space with volunteers.

**Local description: Cawston**

*There are some nice homes in Cawston, some would call them mansions. I suppose this place could be quite off putting for some people in the respect that it does look very upper class and like you need to have money to live here.* (Children’s Centre Manager)

**Figure 4: Cawston Statistical Profile**

- Approximately 93 Orbit units out of 1,200 total properties on Cawston Grange, projected to reach 2,000
- Total population of 29,906 in the Rugby Town West area within which Cawston is on the western fringe
- 15.9% of homes are socially rented in this area
- 3.2% are on Job Seekers Allowance and 12.8% on working benefit
- The main professions represented in Rugby Town West include managers and senior officials, elementary occupations, associated and professional technical skilled trades
- 76% of residents in Rugby Town West are satisfied with it as a place to live
- More than half of main income earners travel more than 10 miles to work

Cawston is a civil parish located south east of Rugby, which was extended in 2001 when construction on the Cawston Grange estate began. A decade later 1,200 homes projected to increase to 2,000 stand on the former green, composed of a mix of housing association and a majority of owner occupied properties ranging from £170,000 to just under a million pounds in value. In terms of demographics, the area holds many young families and the parish council reports 81% working age employment. The area is described as a satellite of Rugby, as it is a purely residential area along the Warwickshire commuter belt, with 62% of main income earners traveling more than 10 miles to work each day. Cawston sits among large tracks of open land, but as one community leader said:

*There is a lot of greenery, but before you know it there is a digger on the land building new houses... Cawston is just forever growing, any additional land they are just building on it seems.*

The main issue for this growing community is the lack of facilities. A resident commented that, “there are no facilities whatsoever apart from 1200 houses all in a big field, so it’s growing and growing but no services exist.” Many families in Cawston seem to want more facilities, but are reluctant to travel into the town centre, and for those reliant on public transportation this is felt to be a costly luxury.

The newly formed parish council has attempted to develop ‘social strategies’ to meet these needs. After surveying the residents, the council reacted to concerns by building new commercial units, which will include a Waitrose, a hairdresser, a Chinese take away and a pharmacy. Having secured the land and submitted planning permits, the council is also pursuing the building for a new community hall, which is due to be completed in two years’ time. It is hoped that an outdoor leisure
facility will complete the service offer, as well as an addition to the local school, which many say is ‘fit for bursting’.

A related issue is the sense of limited community cohesion. One parish councillor lamented the complete lack of "social interactiveness", while another commented:

   We are very much a dormitory satellite, most people have to travel outside for work and they do it by car. Most people set off at seven in the morning and get back at seven at night, so the last thing on their mind is doing something social… (Parish Councillor)

This lack of community is further intensified by a lack of cohesion or a sense of social polarization between the RSL tenants and the owner-occupiers. One Orbit staff member comments:

   The issues a in place like Cawston is that you've got a massive development of some very posh executive homes and about a hundred socially rented homes in the middle of it. And there is a 'them and us'… because whilst a tenure blind attempt is made, because you are building the properties at section 106 levels, the quality isn’t as high… So you might as well write in multicolours on the roof – SOCIAL. Because they stand out. (Orbit staff member)

A survey conducted by the parish council backs this claim, revealing that the majority of respondents felt there was no need for further housing association development, shared ownership development, or sheltered accommodation or starter house schemes.

3. Rural area case study: Suffolk and Norfolk

East regional overview
The Orbit schemes visited in the East fell within Norfolk and Suffolk counties, areas characterised by their rural and coastal geographies, significant numbers of market towns and economies known for seasonal employment.

The main issues in both counties revolve around the ageing population, with those aged over 60 comprising the fastest growing age group and the associated issues of organising old age support, dealing with a growing inefficient use of housing stock and increasing transportation and mobility needs among others are also on the rise. Furthermore, pockets of deprivation are also present, especially in coastal towns such as Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth, with the latter holding just under a quarter of its population in one of the most deprived areas in England. Associated issues such as the increase in people with learning difficulties have also grown.

Inequalities between urban and rural access to services exist in both counties. While both Suffolk and Norfolk are generally seen as rural counties, approximately half of both areas' residents live in urban areas. The rural population is generally older than the urban population and services such as transportation and broadband are lacking, with 51,100 properties in Norfolk, for instance, having no access to broadband with the knock on effects of limited business growth, access to information, skill, further education and general isolation.
Figure 5: Regional Overview - Norfolk and Suffolk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffolk</th>
<th>Norfolk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population 714,000</td>
<td>Population 853,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major sectors: public, wholesale, retail and repair, manufacturing</td>
<td>Major sectors: public, wholesale, retail and repair, manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74.3% employment</td>
<td>72.5% employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.7% economically inactive</td>
<td>20.9% economically inactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9% claimant count</td>
<td>3.3% claimant count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1% no qualification</td>
<td>12.8% no qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSL count 21,177, 8.4% of total stock</td>
<td>RSL count 41,000, 10.3% of total stock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The case study areas
While the Eastern case study provides a rural counterpart to the other regions, we also acknowledged the even split between the urban and rural population in our sample in order to portray an accurate picture of the East. We adopted the DEFRA definition or urban and rural, which characterises areas with a population of 10,000 or more as urban. We also tried to achieve a spread of the possible rural settlements, which include small towns, urban fringe, villages and scattered or dispersed dwelling. All schemes were visited by train and lay within cycling distance from the nearest train station. The use of a bicycle made the researcher more visible and often provided an easy talking point with residents. The following Orbit schemes were selected to represent these particular typologies.

Figure 6: Physical characteristics of Eastern Schemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Area type</th>
<th>No of Dwellings</th>
<th>Age of Estate</th>
<th>Property Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woolpit</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Semi-detached houses on village cul-de-sac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlton Coville</td>
<td>Urban periphery</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1995-1996</td>
<td>Semi-detached suburban houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Edmundsbury</td>
<td>Scattered dwelling</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Detached and semi-detached rural houses and bungalows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ipswich</td>
<td>Urban periphery</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Semi-detached houses and two blocks of flats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampdens</td>
<td>Satellite</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2000s</td>
<td>Semi-detached houses and maisonettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cromer</td>
<td>Coastal town</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1992-1994</td>
<td>Semi-detached houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gorelston on Sea</td>
<td>Coastal town</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Semi-detached houses and blocks of flats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwich</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>Late 1990s with additions in 2000s</td>
<td>Semi-detached houses, bungalows, and blocks of flats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catton, Norwich</td>
<td>Urban periphery</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Taken on between 1977 and 2002</td>
<td>Semi-detached houses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Suffolk**

**Woolpit, Village**
Woolpit is a village in rural mid-Suffolk, two miles from the Elmswell rail station. It has a lively main street with many amenities, and an active church. Orbit property is located on a cul-de-sac of about a dozen houses. It has old trees and pleasant landscaping and blends in well with the properties around it. The local parish is active in community engagement. The main issues among Orbit residents here are communication issues with Orbit frontline staff, the low building quality of the homes, lack of parking, and general tension between neighbours.

**Carlton Coville, Urban Fringe**
Carlton Coville is a suburban area three miles south west of Lowestoft town centre. The cul-de-sac and surrounding Orbit properties are a short walk from a local Tesco’s, a ten minute walk from the rail line and across the street from a nature preserve and marsh area. The estate is quiet and relatively well maintained, with new doors and windows. A cycle path has recently been drawn onto the estate, and the local school is visible from the cul-de-sac. The main issues among Orbit residents include the general state of disrepair of the local park and play area, discontent over high unemployment, issues relating to dog waste, high public transportation costs, and the perception that there is an ‘us vs. them’ attitude between Orbit residents and the rest of the estate.

**St Edmunsbury, Scattered Dwelling**
Orbit properties are located on a rural cul-de-sac five miles outside of Bury St. Edmunds. It is a pleasant looking scheme with attractive buildings and friendly, talkative residents. The cul-de-sac is surrounded by agricultural land, and there is no play equipment for young children. Mobility seems to be the major issue for these Orbit residents, with the bus service only running twice a day and not catering for the elderly with disabilities. Isolation is an issue for the elderly residents. There are no benches or outdoor gathering areas and parents expressed a desire to have a more structured place for their children to play. There are no facilities in the area and most residents travel to Bury St. Edmunds for services.

**Sassmundham, Market Town**
Orbit properties are located both in the town centre, in the town periphery, and in a nearby village. Saxmundham is a lively market town, surrounded by attractive countryside. The town organises a weekly famers market on the main road, and there seem to be a diverse range of shops spanning price and quality. The main street is very lively, and a small town hall sits at the end of the road. The fact that the main supermarket is a Waitrose, and the local pub has been converted into a wine bar, suggests that the town is gearing towards the middle class. The nearby village is located one mile outside of Saxmundham and contains a school and a social club. The Orbit schemes included a block of flats in the centre of town and two cul-de-sacs on the periphery. None of the Orbit residents interviewed knew their neighbours, and many complained that prices in the area were on the rise. All
those interviewed were interested in taking greater advantage of the area in terms of cycling and outdoor activities.

**Ipswich, Urban Fringe**

Orbit property in Ipswich is located in the midst of a suburban area south west of the rail station. Situated at the bottom of an estate, the road includes semi-detached homes in different states of repair and two blocks of flats. Residents say that the residential sprawl, hills and winding streets make the area feel very removed from the city centre, although a bus runs on the hour. The street is a mix of Orbit and private properties and the homes are lined with bins and fences. There is no outdoor area in which to sit, and no benches. The residents interviewed were interested in more community activities and developing a community space where people could get together and hold social events. There seemed to be little contact among neighbours.

**Norfolk**

**Hampdens, Urban Fringe**

The Hampdens is a newly built estate five miles outside of Norwich in a former green field area. Development began eight years ago and continues until this day, with roads recently completed and new homes being built in an adjacent field. The area is purely residential with no shops and amenities nearby. The bus service stops at the entrance of the estate every hour. It is a nice looking development, but residents complain that there is little social activity or social space. It was incredibly difficult to engage Orbit residents in conversation here. When contact was made the main issues seemed to be the lack of play areas for children, the lack of general services, and social isolation.

**Cromer, Coastal Town**

Cromer is a well-known coastal town, which attracts tourists during the summer season. The town’s seasonal economy caters to tourists and makes shopping and other activities difficult for local residents to access. The main street on the Orbit estate visited is across the street from a large shopping centre and local transportation. The estate is designed with half of the homes facing away from the estate centre and on to a busy road. Visiting the homes revealed varying states of repair, with the door handles in many of the units broken or wobbly, as well as leaking roofs and vents. While the residents were friendly and open, all commented on feeling disconnected to the town due to its touristic focus. All the residents interviewed were older and had issues with the stairs in their semi-detached homes.

**Great Yarmouth, Costal Town**

The Orbit scheme visited is in Gorelston on Sea, on the coast south of Great Yarmouth city centre. It is a large estate with a mix of flats and semi-detached homes. The estate is located near the local school and five minutes’ walk away from the coast. The estate has no benches or play areas and minimal landscaping attempts have been made. The area is described by residents as being too
‘samey’. The residents interviewed were all very happy with the estate caretaker and services he has provided. This position was cut in September 2012 in favour of contractors. Main issues on the estate include a division between the older residents and the newcomers, and annoyance at the cutting of the caretaker post.

Norwich, Urban
This is a large estate close to the UEA and ten minutes by bus from Norwich city centre. It has plenty of amenities, several parks in the area, the university, the city hospital and a row of shops on the local main street. The original estate was added on to recently, and this influx of new residents and increase in density seems to have caused some problems among residents. The housing quality and design seems to vary between the homes. The main issues among residents included social isolation, issues between new and old residents and structural quality issues in the homes.

Catton, Norwich, Urban Fringe
This estate of 50-60 units lies north of Norwich and has been part of rapid suburban development around the city centre. The area is close to the city’s airport and consequently traffic volumes have been a concern. There is a much appreciated conservation green space close by.
3. Finding and training peer researchers

This section provides further detail on how we identified and trained the peer researchers.

1. Identifying peer researchers

During the recruitment period we looked to engage residents who were friendly, reliable and naturally engaged individuals, who were not conspicuous community leaders, and who could therefore act as neutral observers and recorders in an interview situation. We were not interested in paper qualifications, but on the lookout for unobtrusive, level-headed residents who had relatively high availability and who were able to express themselves clearly, without feeling shy and without being pushy.

It took several weeks to prepare essential documents, secure approval from Orbit, pilot the questionnaire with residents and plan the training session. The main documents were:

- A cover letter and flyer to be distributed in the target areas;
- A job description and simple outline of the tasks involved;
- A brief description of the Big Society project and the potential role of community volunteers;
- An outline of the residential training (24 hours including an overnight stay at Trafford Hall, the National Communities Resource Centre);
- A questionnaire for resident interviewers (shorter and more schematic than our full survey questionnaire, but following the same format).

We decided to limit the peer research pilot to areas of high population density, and thus excluded Orbit’s eastern stock from the peer research method due to its dispersed rural characteristics and large geographical span, making access difficult. With the two target areas of Bexley and Rugby, we began our outreach attempts through delivering flyers door-to-door. We made special efforts to present the project and the role of the peer researcher in clear and simple way, leaving out unnecessary details while also raising the interest of the potential tenant interviewers. We wanted tenants to be convinced of the usefulness of this work and their potential contribution to the project.

The flyer drop yielded low responses in both areas; however, leading staff members pro-actively encouraged interested residents to apply and we secured several potential candidates.

Two days before the peer researcher training, we had secured five volunteers. We decided to go ahead with the training in the hope of having at least six. Twenty four hours before the training began, an additional volunteer was identified, bringing the final numbers to six peer researchers, two from Becton where recruitment proved difficult, and four from Rugby.

The recruitment process showed that it is hard to engage tenants to do things that are potentially useful and attractive, but that involve several unknown elements, and require a considerable commitment of time and effort. Tenant responses were forthcoming when staff drew on their existing
relationships and were able to introduce and explain the project and its benefits to residents individually. This is an important lesson from the pilot.

We vetted application forms and based on reference from Orbit staff and accepted all six potential interviewers. Luckily all six applicants seemed to have clear motivations, and were able to express themselves well. Figure 7 shows the important elements in achieving tenant responses.

**Figure 7: Lessons in identifying peer research volunteers**

- Staff who fully understand the project and its value and are willing and able to convey the aims of the project to residents
- A direct method of communicating what the project is about and what the peer research role involves
- Making clear the peer research requirements to staff and persuading them to draw on their existing relationships with tenants
- One-on-one introductions and discussion of the project and direct encouragement to participate seemed to be more effective than flyer drops, although the flyers have the potential to alert unengaged residents to the process
- Preparing for this step can be difficult and time consuming, but achievable

2. **Training**

The importance of a concentrated training experience in delivering this project is hard to over-state. In just thirty hours, tenants with little comparable experience to draw on were able to complete seven distinct tasks, be assessed, carry out pilot interviews, receive feedback, master the essentials for the project, receive a certificate of completion and gain real skills.

The peer researcher training was held at the National Communities Resource Centre at Trafford Hall in Chester. The centre is a registered charity offering training and support over the last seventeen years to all those living and working in low-income areas throughout the United Kingdom. The centre aims to develop community skills, confidence and capacity to tackle problems in their areas and reverse poor conditions. Trafford Hall is a Grade II listed Georgian manor house, restored with 24 eco-chalets surrounded by a Victorian sunken garden and is consequently a very special place to visit in itself.

The training was scheduled over two days and the peer researchers travelled together to Chester and were met by project staff and trainers at Trafford Hall. Group travel served to form connections between the residents and promoted a collegial spirit before the training even began. Several residents felt insecure about travelling and using public transportation and were supported by staff and other residents to make their travel to Chester possible.
An experienced trainer facilitated the session and an LSE researcher was on hand to help, alongside a Trafford Hall voluntary director with wide experience in participatory research. The twenty-four hour visit to Trafford Hall served the following purposes.

**Introduction to the project and each other**

The initial meeting with the peer researchers and introduction to the project revealed that all were confused about the aims of the research and their role in its development and viewed their attendance at Trafford Hall as a considerable worry. Thus, the introduction to the project provided a clear focus for the training and the work, and put the peer researchers at ease. Informal times were built into the training schedule during which peer researchers and staff could develop a rapport. Relationships between peer researchers and project staff were built during open introductions and discussions, as well as at communal meal times, during a ‘housing pub quiz’ at the Trafford Hall bar, and on a tour of the facility. Building relationships between peer researchers and staff proved invaluable to the success of the project, in terms of communication, reliability, and most of all enjoyment.

**Training in interview skills**

The training schedule was developed by members of the LSE team and Trafford Hall trainers and aimed to introduce and practice the interviewing and observation process, and to build resident’s confidence in recording data. Seven specific tasks were included in the training schedule and included:

- Preparing short biographies and area vignettes;
- Brainstorming and thematic organisation;
- Conducting and recording interviews;
- Considering the interviewee;
- Observing and recording ideas and impressions;
- Developing action plans to develop the project;
- Applying lessons learned during the training to the project.

**Dummy interviews**

The skills developed during all seven exercises were then applied to the Big Society questionnaire and residents practised interviews with each other, with a staff member observing and feeding back. The questionnaire was given to residents on the first day, and staff asked them to review the questions before the practice run on the following day. This and the practice interview served the purpose of familiarising the residents with the questionnaire, allowing them to ask the staff questions, and receive constructive feedback from staff after the completion of the interview. Upon completion of the practice interview, residents were also asked to evaluate themselves in light of the training they had received. The final session of the programme was a brainstorming exercise where residents write down specific ideas generated during the interview on post-it notes. They then sorted them thematically as a team in relation to Orbit’s work. This helped the peer researchers grasp what the research team were ultimately looking to do with the data generated through the questionnaires.
All along, the peer researchers were encouraged to view themselves as part of the research team. They were aware that this was a pilot method and this encouraged them to be critical and think creatively about the project. The peer researchers provided invaluable feedback to the development of the project, which is further outlined below.

**Peer research input and feedback on the project's development**

The open structure of the group discussions allowed residents to raise questions and concerns with staff and to provide feedback on the questionnaire. Many details such as issues of anonymity, reactions to specific scenarios, means of identification and the specifics behind organising interviews, were brought up through peer researcher feedback. Furthermore, going through the questionnaire as a group prompted many comments and suggestions for improvement and clarification on individual questions. The need for the questionnaire to be simplified and composed of closed and direct questions was a main outcome of the resident feedback. The residents also came up with the idea of laminated show cards, which the interviewer could use to prompt interviewees when needed.

The residents expressed a clear desire throughout the training to remain involved in the later analysis of the findings and the presentation of these findings to Orbit. This prompted the idea of holding brainstorming sessions every two weeks while the peer researchers were interviewing, and a final workshop in London during which the LSE team of researchers would present initial findings to the peer researchers for review and comment.

**Feedback on the training and follow up**

The peer research training proved to be a very positive two days with lots of energy, interest and feedback. It became clear this would be a labour intensive project for both peer researchers and LSE staff. The peer researchers would need intensive hand-holding, one-on-one feedback, and interview schedules would need to be highly organised. Hand-holding was important as people with little or no experience of performing a particular task or role need support, encouragement, advice and a friendly ear in order to develop skills, tactics and solutions to problems – it is a teaching-cum-mentoring role, played in a responsive rather than didactic way. It is crucial in a situation of serious inequality in order to close the gap in knowledge which will allow someone to progress.

Six out of six residents gave the two-day training the highest grade of ‘excellent’. This positive commentary about the course was balanced with some disappointment at how Orbit staff had initially explained the project and prepped them for what was in store. There was a feeling among all six participants that they had been left in the dark about the project until they had arrived at Trafford Hall. They felt that they took a risk on this project due to lack of information and felt that this put off many potentially interested residents. All residents, however, expressed great interest in participating in future research and training opportunities and asked whether long-term involvement was possible.
Orbit staff were not clear on what the project involved as this method had not previously been used. The LSE team were likewise trialling a research method they had not previously used.

Peer research follow up meetings were scheduled for the following week in both Bexley and Rugby. In preparation of the follow up meeting the LSE team:

- Amended the questionnaire;
- Printed certificates of attendance;
- Wrote thank you letters, mentioning areas of strength and improvement, outlining future steps, and offering the LSE as a reference for future employment opportunities;
- Printed LSE Housing and Communities ID cards;
- Printed and laminated questionnaire show cards for prompted questions;
- Bought the researchers LSE pens and notebooks for noting thoughts and reflections along with clipboards for the questionnaires;
- Created a summary document listing the points made in the brainstorming session.

The meeting summarised the key points made during the training, and introduced the group to the revised questionnaire. We went through the questionnaire question by question, noting the changes they had suggested and discussing the interview process.

The research packs were popular with the peer researchers. They were especially pleased with the LSE research team’s offer to provide them with a reference about their work and performance when needed in the future. Next steps were planned, including interviewing a family member living in Orbit housing in order to become familiar with the questionnaire while also developing information. The LSE team began setting up interviews in the same week, ringing potential tenants in the right areas until enough appointments were fixed – a day-by-day process.
Figure 8: Quotes from peer research workshop

I really do miss doing the interviews! (Laughs) – Peer researcher, Rugby

I hope Orbit don’t stick this report in a filing cabinet and forget about it – Peer researcher, Becton

Going into people’s homes was very interesting, it corrected my views on some areas – Peer researcher, Rugby

It changed my views on some people, all the mothers I visited were working and studying. I didn’t meet anyone on benefits doing nothing. For me that was a good experience – Peer researcher, Rugby

Now I feel like I can say hi to people, which is nice and I made a few friends really – Peer researcher, Becton

The training was really good. I was nervous about going into people’s houses and asking questions. If I hadn’t had the training I could not have done it – Peer researcher, Rugby

I learned about myself, I learned not to judge people… The training really did help – Peer researcher, Rugby

Trafford Hall made the training for us. It’s a relaxed atmosphere. We were all so sceptical on the way up there… That’s where the training helped us, it made us feel confident – Peer researcher, Rugby

This report is an opportunity for Orbit, if they don’t do anything it has been a waste of our time or at least if nothing happens we’re all going to question it – Peer researcher, Becton
4. Additional resident survey findings

This section supplements the resident interview chapter, providing additional details not included in Volume II.

1. Length of Residence:
About 40% of the residents responding had been in their homes over ten years. There is, however, a clear difference between new tenants in Rugby, where almost half as many than in the other areas had been there less than five years; and tenants in the East where there was a higher prevalence of long-term residents (over 50%, compared to about 25% in Rugby and 40% in Becton) (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Length of residence (% and numbers responding)

2. What residents thought about the area
Residents were asked what they thought of the area in relation to several issues including cleanliness (Figure 10), safety (Figure 11), friendliness (Figure 12), whether the area feels welcoming or hostile (Figure 13), liveliness (Figure 14), peacefulness (Figure 15), and attractiveness (Figure 16).
Figure 10: Is the area clean?

Figure 11: Is the area safe?
Figure 12: Is the area friendly?

- Becton
- Rugby
- East

Figure 13: Is the area welcoming?

- Becton
- Rugby
- East
Figure 14: Is the area lively?

Figure 15: Is the area quiet?
3. Best and worst things about the area

Figure 9 of Volume II sets out residents views on the area. We also asked what they thought were the best and worst aspects of the area. Figure 17 shows the overall views of the best features\(^3\). The findings were not particularly surprising – in Becton people are well connected to local shops and to the trains and buses of London Transport, and the “nice, peaceful” remarks reflect the overall nature of Becton estate as a small scale development in a mixed tenure suburban neighbourhood. Equally the parks and family orientation in the main Rugby estates are reflected in those responses, and the East reflects the rural nature of many of the schemes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Becton</th>
<th>Rugby</th>
<th>East</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice, peaceful</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to shops and services</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countryside, parks, natural beauty</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe, good for children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked about the worst features of the area, Becton residents cited problems with the arrival of new tenants who exhibit a range of problems, from general anti-social behaviour to issues with drug dealing. There are also problems with young people – many allegedly from off the estate - hanging around the pram sheds and laundry areas. In the East and Rugby, by contrast, issues about connectivity to shops, services, and meeting places come out clearly. This is partly because of the fact that Cawston is a new estate where shops and facilities are only now being put in place; and partly because many properties in the East are in more isolated communities. Common problems

\(^3\) Where several people mentioned a feature. We exclude individual remarks e.g. “the local Indian takeaway” or “a good TV signal"
were the issue of keeping young people constructively occupied, and not hanging around the place causing ‘trouble’, and the issue of dog mess (Figure 18).

**Figure 18: Worst features of the area - times mentioned**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Becton</th>
<th>Rugby</th>
<th>East</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anti-social tenants / drugs</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people hanging around</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing for children to do</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog mess</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of shops and meeting places</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime and burglaries</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigeons</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Community Spirit and Events**

Around a third of East residents, a quarter of Rugby, and one in ten from Becton thought there was community spirit (Figure 14 of Volume II). More older residents (over a quarter) and younger residents (almost a third) think that there is a good community spirit, whereas those aged 45 to 60 were less positive (Figure 19)

**Figure 19: Is there community spirit? by age**

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**Main services used**

Figure 17 of Volume II sets out the local services used. The difference between the main services used across the areas is seen in
Figure 20, in order of most used. Of the six, five are common to all three areas (exceptions in **bold**). We also looked at community use by age (Figure 21, Figure 22, Figure 23). Issues that residents identified as a priority (Figure 18 of Volume II) were examined by age (Figure 24).

**Figure 20: Summary of local services used**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Becton</th>
<th>Rugby</th>
<th>East</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctor or health centre</td>
<td>Doctor or health centre</td>
<td>Doctor or health centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>Park or playground</td>
<td>Park or playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycle centre</td>
<td>Recycle centre</td>
<td>Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park or playground</td>
<td>School / nursery</td>
<td>Pub or café</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pub or café</strong></td>
<td>Library</td>
<td>School / nursery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School / nursery</td>
<td>Swimming pool</td>
<td>Recycle centre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 21: Community use (numbers citing) by age - under 45**

**Figure 22: Community use (numbers citing) by age - 45-60**
4. Useful community services to be provided in the area

We also looked at the community services which each age group would find most useful (Figure 20 of Volume II) (Figure 25, Figure 26, Figure 27).
Figure 25: Most useful community services - under 45

- Youth clubs
- Job clubs
- Help to reduce fuel costs
- Community café
- Tackle anti-social behaviour
- School holiday programme
- Adult Education
- Community barbeques
- Crimewatch
- Community shop
- Energy saving packages
- Trainee schemes

Figure 26: Most useful community services – by age (45-60 years)

- Tackle anti-social behaviour
- Help to reduce fuel costs
- Crimewatch
- Tree planting
- Community barbeques
- Adult Education
- Job Clubs
- Old people social clubs
- Youth clubs
- Community garden or allotment
- Community café
- Energy saving packages
- Old people garden help
5. Which community services should Orbit provide?
Similar analysis was carried out in relation to the types of community services which different age
groups of people think Orbit should provide (Figure 21 of Volume II) (Figure 28, Figure 29, Figure 30).

Figure 28: Top ten Orbit activities - under 45
6. Voluntary activities undertaken by Orbit residents

Orbit residents are overwhelmingly involved in informal volunteering – looking after neighbours or neighbours’ children, giving to charity shops, being involved in school events – and hardly at all in the more formal types of volunteering such skills sharing, fundraising, or helping in sports clubs (Figure 31). We also looked at this by age: the younger groups are predictably more involved with school events, minding neighbours’ children, and generally looking out for their neighbours. Fourteen people cited work and family commitments as reasons not to volunteer more; and six older people explained that they had volunteered in the past but were no longer able (Figure 32).
Figure 31: Orbit residents’ engagement in volunteering

- Giving to charity shop
- Helping neighbours
- Looking out for neighbours
- Looking after sick or elderly people
- Helping at school events
- Looking after neighbours' children
- Helping with gardening in area
- Helping at church or community event
- Fundraising
- Getting more involved in Orbit
- Working in charity shop
- Helping in homework or other club
- Teaching useful skills
- Helping with lunch club
- Being block representative
- Helping at sports club
- Part of pressure group

Figure 32: Orbit residents’ volunteering by age

- Helping at sports club
- Teaching useful skills
- Helping with lunch club
- Being block representative
- Working in charity shop
- Helping in homework or other club
- Fundraising
- Getting more involved in Orbit
- Helping at church or community event
- Helping with gardening in area
- Looking after sick or elderly people
- Looking after neighbours’ children
- Helping at school events
- Looking out for neighbours
- Helping neighbours
- Giving to charity shop

Legend:
- Becton
- OHE
- East
- Over 60
- 45 to 60
- Under 45
5. Community projects in the case study areas

This section expands on the previous volumes by introducing all 25 community projects we identified in the three case study areas; and the ten projects which contributed to the development of our ingredients for successful projects also introduced in Volumes I and II and bolded in the table and described in detail below. The following community project descriptions provide more detailed examples of Orbit-led or partner-led initiatives.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Orbit or Partner Led</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cawston Parish Plan, Cawston Parish Council</td>
<td>Cawston, Rugby</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>1,200 homes surveyed to develop a five-year action plan based on resident responses. The plan identified four community priorities: to develop meeting facilities, green spaces, manage traffic and increase public transportation; address ASB; security and crime issues; and to develop shopping and commercial spaces. A quarterly magazine with news, ads and contact information is also issued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restoring railway line into cycle path, Cawston Parish Council</td>
<td>Cawston, Rugby</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Volunteers are in the process of restoring an area of old railway line and adapting it into a cycle route connecting Cawston to Rugby town centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownsover Community Association</td>
<td>Brownsover, Rugby</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Developed in 2004 to facilitate the provision of services on Brownsover and to encourage the work of other local organisations. The association aspires to develop local, community-based knowledge, and to assist in the running of community facilities. It re-opened closed a community / information centre, facilitates networking between local organisations and secured some funding for local projects. Encourages positive community work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Futures Youth Programme</td>
<td>Brownsover, Rugby</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Funded by Orbit for two years running, Positive Futures organises a youth club and youth services on Brownsover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orbit Work Club, Orbit</td>
<td>Brownsover, Rugby</td>
<td>Orbit</td>
<td>Work advisor attends local children’s centre and provides advice to young parents. Helps with CVs, finding voluntary work, education and entry-level skill development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownsover Art Group</td>
<td>Brownsover, Rugby</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>The group hopes to change the perceptions of Brownsover and highlight its positive qualities through art. They have done so through area photography and a community calendar depicting 13 scenes of Brownsover area. These scenes are showcased in Rugby library.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regenerating Brownsover Allotments, Rugby Council</td>
<td>Brownsover, Rugby</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Regenerating an old allotment site in order to pilot 10-20 plots available only to Brownsover residents. The project is in early stages, currently identifying interested people and resolving issues with lease arrangement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownsover Financial Capability Training, CAB Rugby</td>
<td>Brownsover, Rugby</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Developed as part of a research study with the University of Bristol, the project offered two one-on-one sessions with Orbit residents. The sessions cover spending habits and behaviour, advise on maximising savings and using the right financial products. 160 Orbit residents were given two 45 minutes money advice sessions, incentivised with a £10 shopping voucher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizons, CAB Rugby</td>
<td>Brownsover, Rugby</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Develops the financial capabilities of lone parents. Several Brownsover residents were nominated for national adult learner awards based on their success in the course and their desire to pass on what they had learned to others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Orbit or Partner Led</td>
<td>Description</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAB Frontline Workers Toolkit</td>
<td>Brownsover, Rugby</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Easy online referral system for frontline workers, which connect needy customers with appropriate local support organisations. Frontline staff submit brief descriptions of customer problem and the CAB refer them on to correct organisation. Smoother transition from frontline staff to support organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugby Credit Union School Banks</td>
<td>Brownsover, Rugby</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>School banks and financial learning activities set up in children's centres and schools across Rugby.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishops Itchington Community Garden</td>
<td>Warwickshire</td>
<td>Orbit</td>
<td>In an effort to tackle high levels of ASB, a community officer developed this community project to regenerate an area on the estate into a community garden. The cost of the project was approximately £13,000 and came from the Orbit Community Investment Fund. The project gets residents involved and trained in community growing, improves quality of life and includes residents in the design of the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Financial Capability Training</td>
<td>Warwickshire</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Three-hour youth training sessions on managing tenancies, consumer rights, and financial management. Fourteen to fifteen year olds are prompted on discussion about needs and wants and priorities etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mencap Food training, Orbit Stratford</td>
<td>Stratford</td>
<td>Orbit</td>
<td>Opening sheltered housing kitchen facilities to members of Mencap Stratford, an organisation for people with learning difficulties. This has been prompted due to centres for people with learning disabilities closing. It is hoped that this will give members a meaningful occupation while also entertaining and providing food to residents of the sheltered housing estate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blenheim Grange Partnership Project, Norfolk</td>
<td>Carbrooke, Suffolk</td>
<td>Orbit</td>
<td>Initiated by Orbit in order to develop partnerships on the new estate. The project group developed out of a lack of facilities and discontent on the estate. It is hopes that the project group can secure or provide services on the estate in the future. The project group has developed an action plan and has surveyed the community to identify top community priorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brough Scott Community Suite</td>
<td>Newmarket, Suffolk</td>
<td>Orbit</td>
<td>A drop in centre and community room with the goal of supporting residents in their tenancies, but additionally provides support with regard to worklessness and developing community activity / course / social groups. A part-time resident advisor organises drop-ins and sets up community projects. She provided tenants with support, courses, volunteer opportunities, and a place for community groups to meet. The aim is to bring services close to the residents. The resident advisor also started a community garden, designed and tended by Orbit residents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills Start Here, Norwich</td>
<td>Norwich, Norfolk</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Redecorates the homes of vulnerable tenants and provides training opportunities for people interested in decoration. Developed model with other housing association: train homeless in sheltered housing to decorate housing association homes in need of repair. Develop skills of sheltered residents while improving property that they may eventually live in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Orbit or Partner Led</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Trust Partnership</td>
<td>Bexley, South East</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>The National Trust work to preserve historic buildings, land, countryside, to commemorate Octavia Hill centenary. Working with Hadlow College to create work days for apprentices. Planned trips to Dover / Cobham / Outridge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South London Jobs Fair</td>
<td>Bexley, South East</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Day-long event in Croydon organised by housing associations and 3D change. Focus on getting residents into work / employment opportunities, i.e. apprenticeships / training / work experience. Involves 10+ housing associations and offers over 100 volunteer opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden Clearance Project</td>
<td>Bexley, South East</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Identifying residents who can’t manage their gardens for particular reasons, i.e. old age, disability, separation. Project hopes to develop a chargeable gardening maintenance service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlton Athletic Community Trust</td>
<td>Bexley, South East</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Working with residents aged 16-24 to gain skills / training / qualification. Once the course is completed, residents will have a F.A. level 1 football coaching qualification, and coaching experience. May lead to a sporting apprenticeship with Charlton for two applicants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project ASDA</td>
<td>Bexley, South East</td>
<td>Orbit</td>
<td>New ASDA due to open in Belvedere-next to B&amp;Q. The project tries to get local residents to prepare for jobs, i.e. H&amp;S courses, CV building, interview skills. Trains residents in job confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doorstep Learning (Step Up)</td>
<td>Bexley, South East</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Connecting residents with education/training/work experience etc. Projects are very local to residents. Trial was completed in Margate – good feedback. Need to find venues / trainers and promote project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development Apprentice (Bexley)</td>
<td>Bexley, South East</td>
<td>Orbit</td>
<td>Involving residents or members of the local community in apprenticeship programmes within Orbit / Orbit’s partner companies e.g. MITIE. Will take on apprentices when departments have the capacity / people to do so. Currently have a number of apprentices across the company eg. ORBIT – 1 year-long NVQ2 in Business Admin. Another scheme is titled Future builders - 2 years-long Level 2 NVQ in multiskills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Unions</td>
<td>Bexley, South East</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Includes Surrey Save, Croydon Savers, Kent Credit Union. Co-operative bank type company with financial advisors. The more people join, the more capital is accumulated. This gets residents into the habit of saving and being more financially aware. Credit Unions are funded by the government to begin with, and focus on specific areas / communities. There is a joining fee, but Orbit offers to pay this for residents. Incentives are given to residents – e.g. money matching of all savings up to 2 months.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Successful Orbit projects

**Brough Scott Community Suite, Newmarket**

The Brough Scott Community Suite is a drop in facility and community room located in a second floor flat in the centre of a 200 unit Orbit estate in Newmarket Suffolk. This multi-purpose facility opened two years ago and provides basic resident support, a space for local organisations to meet, courses, and computer access for Orbit residents. A part-time residents advisor is on site three days a week and the space is otherwise accessible to community groups such as narcotics anonymous, alcoholics anonymous and the crime reduction initiative. Computer courses and arts and crafts sessions are also held in this space, and with the help of tenants the resident advisor has developed a community garden area with vegetables and flowerbeds on a nearby former waste site on the edge of the estate.

*We now started putting on different classes for the community… and people are saying, well it’s the highlight of my week, it does me more good than my medication. And it’s also giving them friendship groups, which is awesome.* (Resident Advisor)

The resident advisor works closely with the caretaker, who refers issues regarding resident complaints, ASB problems and issues such as substance abuse onto the centre. The resident advisor claims:

*I know the centre is working… I kind of diffuse situations, people get very frustrated and obviously if they’re on drink and drugs it can escalate. They can come in here and rant and rave and know that I will sort out whatever it is that’s frustrating them… the atmosphere around here is so much nicer. We don’t get these highs and lows like we used to get.* (Resident Advisor)

While funding for the centre may be in jeopardy, the resident advisor is looking ahead at ways to develop. Future ideas include asking a Citizens Advice Office to hold local office hours in the centre, expanding the suite to include a kitchen from which food-training courses could be held, and one-on-one advice sessions between residents and an Orbit advisor.

**Community Garden Project, Bishops Itchington, Warwickshire**

Bishops Itchington was known as an area of high anti-social behaviour, when the local housing officer identified an area of wasteland alongside the garages on the estate. Through door knocking and drumming up support, the community officer was ultimately able to locate £13,000 through the Orbit community investment fund and ten families willing to dedicate their time to the project. Recognising that she did not have the skills required to get the garden off the ground, the community officer partnered with Garden Organic, a specialist community growing group offering training courses to residents interested in gardening and sustainability projects. The involvement of Garden Organic as a partner was important in terms of skills and expertise, but also in training residents to run the site unaided in the long-run.

*The garden is all linked in to financial inclusion, and also in terms of the age gap. I think it’s something that, when we’ve knocked doors, it’s something that’s appealed to elderly people but also to younger children. So it is something that whole community feels that somewhere down the line, they can have an input with.* (Orbit Housing Officer)
The garden has also given residents an opportunity to be involved in the design of the area. Several afternoon consultations on the site were held to sketch out areas for wildlife, as well as specific growing areas. While the site is primarily the project of ten families, it is hoped that the local primary school and community centre can get involved in using and maintaining the space in the future. The community housing officer claims that this project has made a noticeable difference in lowering reports of anti-social behaviour in the area.

**Blenheim Grange Partnership Project, Norfolk**

This project on the newly built estate provides an example of Orbit’s potential to act as a facilitator of community networks. Blenheim Grange near Carbrooke in Norfolk is a new estate of 600 units of which 120 belong to Orbit due to bankruptcy of the initial developer. Due to a total lack of services in the area and growing discontent among residents, Orbit spearheaded a partnership group to address these concerns and lead to new service provisions on the estate. Orbit rallied major partners to come together for quarterly meetings to address local issues. As the local parish councillor recalled:

> Orbit started up the local project group with all of the main actors and are trying to push things forward. So Orbit seem to be the major player in the Carbrooke project. They’ve managed to get the police together, social workers, housing associations, the developer is sitting around the table with them, SureStart, the local council and the local district council as well. They’re doing really well... and they seem to be the major players in explaining what the people say they want. (Parish Councillor)

During quarterly meetings chaired by Orbit, the project group has initiated a survey of local residents to identify the community’s top priorities, and through these responses developed an action plan on behalf of the residents. A local residents association has developed out of this process, from which an Orbit resident was elected to represent the estate on the local parish council. The partnership projects has considerably raised Orbit’s profile in the area, and generated positive activity on the new estate.

**Mencap Food Training Project**

Another positive project in early stages of its existence is Orbit Supported Living’s Stratford partnership with Mencap, the UK’s leading charity for people with learning difficulties. In the light of local community centre closures and funding cuts to Mencap facilities, Orbit Stratford had recognised that many sheltered housing schemes have wonderful facilities that are under-utilised. In this case, a sheltered housing scheme has opened up its kitchen facility to Mencap members in order to provide them with a space to develop food-handling skills in exchange for a warm meal for the members of the sheltered housing schemes. This project maximises the use of existing Orbit facilities, by providing members of the community with a meaningful occupation from which Orbit residents benefit.

Other initiatives not elaborated on in this paper but mentioned during the research period include dementia cafés and bi-weekly Orbit bus services in rural areas.
Successful external and partner projects

**Skills Start Here, Redecorating in Norwich**

Skills Start Here is a third sector organisation founded in 2009 with the dual purpose of providing redecorating services to vulnerable tenants, while also providing training opportunities for people interested in decorating skills. The founder developed the organisation out of his background in construction and teaching adult education courses in painting and redecorating. Skills Start Here primarily pairs up with local housing associations and local authorities to identify properties and people in need of services.

The organisation has recently developed a model with another housing association in King’s Lynn which identifies homeless residents in supported accommodation who might be interested in developing skills in decorating, and provides homes in need of repair. In many cases, formerly homeless volunteers worked on homes that they eventually moved into themselves. This project provided supported residents with opportunities to improve their life chances while simultaneously upgrading the housing associations stock.

> This model we just created over in King’s Lynn, I want to bring it to Norwich. I think it’s a great idea… If they are officially homeless, and some of them have been living in a bush in their own words, it’s about developing the skills first of all to give them the opportunity for housing, but also moving them closer to the work place by developing skills about getting up in the morning, time management, coming in and doing an activity, working in a group, learning new skills and obviously developing specific skills to take into the work place. (Founder)

The founder of Skills Start Here believes that the combination of training and stock improvement is a successful model that could be replicated with Orbit residents and properties.

**Brownsover Financial Capability Training**

Led by Rugby Citizen’s Advice, the University of Bristol and funded by Santander, this project aimed to provide two one-on-one hourly sessions with the Citizens Advice financial inclusion manager and Orbit residents on financial capability. Topics such as spending habits and behaviours were covered, along with prioritising certain expenditure, maximising saving and using the right financial products.

The financial inclusion officer managed to reach 160 Orbit residents with 10 pound shopping voucher incentives, of which 30 were young first-time tenants.

> For young people, they are a little bit vague about the difference between a need and a want… A lot of people were just really using the wrong bank account and were just sold the wrong type of thing. They had no idea what credit unions were, were being tempted by doorstep lenders at extortionate rates and we were able to steer them away from that. So working with the young people has been very profitable. (Citizens Advice Financial Inclusion Officer)

The programme piggybacked on the initial success of the Horizons programme, which was supported by Gingerbread and Barclays, and offered financial capability training to single parents in the

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4 For the evaluation of this project see Collard, S. Finney, A. Hayes, D. and Davies, S (2012) Quids in: The impact of financial skills training for social housing tenants, Bristol, University of Bristol
community. Several women participating in the programme from Brownsover were awarded with adult national learner awards, one of them stating:

It is very hard to put into words how this course has changed mine and my family’s life. It enabled me to make some major changes, for instance, I changed bank accounts saving me a monthly account charge; I cancelled unnecessary direct debits such as satellite cover as replacement can be brought cheaper; re-looked at my mortgage enabling me to pay off one part of it; thinking before shopping. (Participant)

While the benefits to Orbit are clear, in terms of avoided rent arrears and the benefits that ensue from having residents develop financial confidence, the project indicated that a third party was necessary for the training’s success. The Citizens Advice financial inclusion manager stated that it was difficult to get residents involved when they saw Orbit as a partner:

I think there is a reticence from tenants to have anything to do with their landlords, it was very difficult. But once they realised it was the CAB [Citizens Advice] who were providing the advice and the guidance, they were able to buy in easier. So we dropped Orbit, or the landlord part of the thing. And emphasised the fact that it was from the CAB on a research project. And they felt much more comfortable talking about their personal finances with us. (Citizen’s Advice Financial Inclusion Officer)

Funding cuts to Citizens Advice as of September 2012 mean that the Financial Inclusion manager’s post has been cut and replaced by ad hoc volunteers. With the benefits to Orbit clear, it is worth considering whether future partnerships could save this important external service.

**Charlton Athletic Youth Activities**

Charlton Athletic is one of the local football clubs nearest to Becton Place, and runs a community trust whose aim is to work in partnership with local communities to empower individuals to improve their lives and their environment. The types of programmes delivered by CACT fit under five key aims: raising education achievement, creating pathways to employment, building healthier lifestyles, bringing communities together and reducing crime.

Orbit in Bexley work closely with this programme to offer opportunities to family members of residents. The programmes are partly around football-related issues – for example gaining coaching qualifications. They are also around developing leadership skills and recognised qualifications, and the aim is to interest young people with the initial football-related offer, then build their trust and capacities to go on to developing wider skills. Orbit sees them as a key partner in this area:

There’s no doubt that the Charlton Athletic brand is more attractive to young people than the Orbit brand. They think it is cool to be on one of the Charlton programmes… But they learn much more than just about playing football… there is a real possibility for progression to qualifications that can lead to jobs. (Volunteer)

Overall this programme engages with around 7,500 young people a week, around programmes including social inclusion, education and health, pathways to employment, sports development, disability and mental health, and women’s and girls’ development. Charlton, like other local partners, would like Orbit to provide names of good candidates for their programmes direct to them, so that they can get in direct contact and market their opportunities more effectively. There appear to be issues around this, however, in that Orbit currently acts as intermediary, which may lessen the impact,
and indeed anecdotally there are fewer Orbit residents on the programmes that might be expected or wished.

**Doorstep Learning in Orbit South**

The Doorstep Learning programme provides a range of entry-level training and life-skills courses from a network of local community settings. In essence there is a team who go door to door, in a number of Orbit South estates, seeking to engage residents initially in practical activities like flower arranging or hairdressing, with the possibility of moving to more qualification based training. Courses are free and available to anyone aged 19 or over.

> The great thing is that they get people involved with small things that really interest them – like flower arranging or hairdressing – then many of them move on to courses which give them formal qualifications like computers or hairdressing level 1 and 2 (Orbit Housing Officer)

The courses are targeted at engaging harder to reach residents in areas of deprivation. It also aims to build the capacity of local voluntary and community based learning providers in local settings. The programme is funded by the Skills Funding Agency through the Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities Fund.
6. Sources of finance for developing social and community activity

This section supplements Chapter Nine of Volume II and outlines possible sources of finance. There have been many announcements of funding programmes, initiatives and sources of income that the government has tied into its flagship Big Society Project. Below we summarise the main ones:

1. The Government has announced many publicly sponsored ways of securing ‘social’ finance as follows:
   - Community finance;
   - Big Society Capital (Bank);
   - Green Investment Bank;
   - Early Intervention Foundation;

2. It has also involved the private sector in financing social enterprises on a ‘pay back’ basis:
   - Private Equity Foundation / Tomorrow’s People;
   - New Philanthropy Capital.
   These sources are strongly linked to the core idea of social return on investment.

3. There have been a few ‘public’ initiatives via local authorities, mainly through education budgets, but also through some intermediary bodies and local authorities:
   - Early Intervention Grant – via local authorities;
   - Further Education Bursary (alternative to EMA);
   - Summer School Programme (Pupil Premium Programme);
   - Youth contract work;
   - Community Learning Trusts / Budget;
   - Community budgets – via local authorities.
   These would generally not apply directly to landlord activity. Some are only pilots. But social landlords can become partners in some of them, eg. community budgets.

4. There are certain revenue streams to be tapped. The most obvious for housing associations is their own rent stream, but also some core local authority and other public funds and activities, usually on a shared basis: social care; crime prevention; child and family care; elderly care; youth diversion; skills and apprenticeships; cultural activities; anti-poverty and preventing homelessness work; climate change and energy saving etc. Orbit taps into several of these, but there is certainly scope for more, particularly on climate change and energy saving, young people and elderly care.

5. There are significant voluntary organisations and charities that Orbit partners with or could work with, e.g. CAB; ACPUL (association of credit unions); Barnardos; Age Concern; MIND; Family Support organisations; ALANON etc. Relationships with these organisations, for example,
may include scenarios in which the organisation provides services in exchange for access to Orbit facilities, access to Orbit residents and other favourable exchanges.

6. There are several grant programmes, particularly through the Community Development Foundation, and ‘soft’ loan programmes, often through ‘social’ finance, e.g.
   - Communities First (£100 million over 5 years);
   - Big Local Trust (£200 million over 10 years).

7. Corporate Social Responsibility – big companies operating in Orbit areas, e.g. Rugby, Stratford, and big banks concerned about finance and debt, or big energy companies with ECO budgets are potential supporters of some of Orbit’s social programmes. Orbit is tapping some of these possibilities. The best example is work with EON in the Midlands on energy saving. There is also considerable scope for apprenticeships in private companies, linked to the Work Programme providers, e.g. Reid (employment agency).

8. There are many models for community support and community ownership, all of which struggle for funding over time, all of which require intense, dedicated, inspirational effort, and may be basically beyond the capacity for Orbit to deliver. This is where external agencies provide a fundamental service to Orbit and its residents. External organisations provide a way of working that goes beyond what Orbit can offer. For example access courses to help young people at risk of failing to get onto a stable track: Community Trusts and Development Trusts to own and develop community assets; Co-operatives; TRAs; TMOs. The payback from these types of groups and the cost savings can be significant.

9. Orbit can support more strongly and with more dedicated staff resources many useful current work: credit unions linked to ‘jam jar accounts’; community volunteers; training and financial advice; apprenticeships and more basic job training (see our examples of Repair training as a Social Enterprise in East, and Recycling Lives Service in Social Justice section).

10. We have suggested involving residents directly in Orbit’s work, through training and volunteering:
    - Supporting elderly people;
    - Mentoring young people;
    - Befriending schemes;
    - Shopping car-shares for rural areas;
    - Community cafés in new and existing developments;
    - Community gardens in all shapes and sizes to reclaim unused patches of land (see Incredible Edible Todmorden);
    - Developing energy advice to implement and apply Orbit’s high-level commitment in this important area, using training, volunteering, social contact.
These strands of work potentially produce multiple wins at low cost. They do require Orbit to ‘hand hold’ residents while taking on new and challenging roles. Dedicated staff whose clear role is to support, organise and facilitate agreed activities need to organise proper training and follow through, monitor and take preventive responsibility for the programme.
Bigger than Business:

Housing associations and community investment in an age of austerity

Supplementary information
Volume III

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