

Onward

# YOUR VOICE.

December 2023

Welcome to your latest edition of Your Voice, and the last one for 2023.

Last month membership of our Customer Engagement Community went past the 3000 mark! Currently at 3,188 we now have 11.5% of our customers signed up...welcome to our new members.

To celebrate reaching this amazing milestone we awarded the 3000th member to sign up with a £30 gift voucher, well done to our winner Patricia Bushell from Bury who was thrilled to be our 3000th customer to join the Customer Engagement Community.

Read on to find out more about the latest opportunities to share your views with us and how customers have been involved over the past few months. We have also introduced a couple of new features including our Customers Have Talent. So if you have a hobby or talent that you want to share with us, then get in touch.

Thank you to all our members who have got involved, shared their views with us, or read Your Voice over this past year. Best wishes for the festive season. See you in 2024!

Jo Phillips,  
Customer Engagement Manager

## SHAPING OUR REPAIRS SERVICE.



Listening to our customers is extremely important to us, so we are involving more customers than ever before to work with us to shape our Repairs service. There has been lots going on behind the scenes to ensure you have more choice to get an appointment that is suitable for you and we have the best chance of fixing straightforward repairs on the first visit.

### So far customers have :

- Provided feedback on the revised Repairs Handbook and website content.
- Given us questions and scenarios to test out on a new, improved appointments system - this will be rolled out in Lancashire in the new year.

We will be shortly be taking a relook at our new approach to damp and mould cases - to ensure we are getting this right for the winter.

If you think you could help us to improve the service (mainly online or reading information) and could spare some time - contact [val.alker@onward.co.uk](mailto:val.alker@onward.co.uk) we would love to hear from you.

# WE ARE LISTENING TO YOU!

We have been looking at how we deliver key aspects of our Customer Engagement service.

We want to make sure that we are providing plenty of opportunities for all our customers to share their views with us, on things that matter to them most.

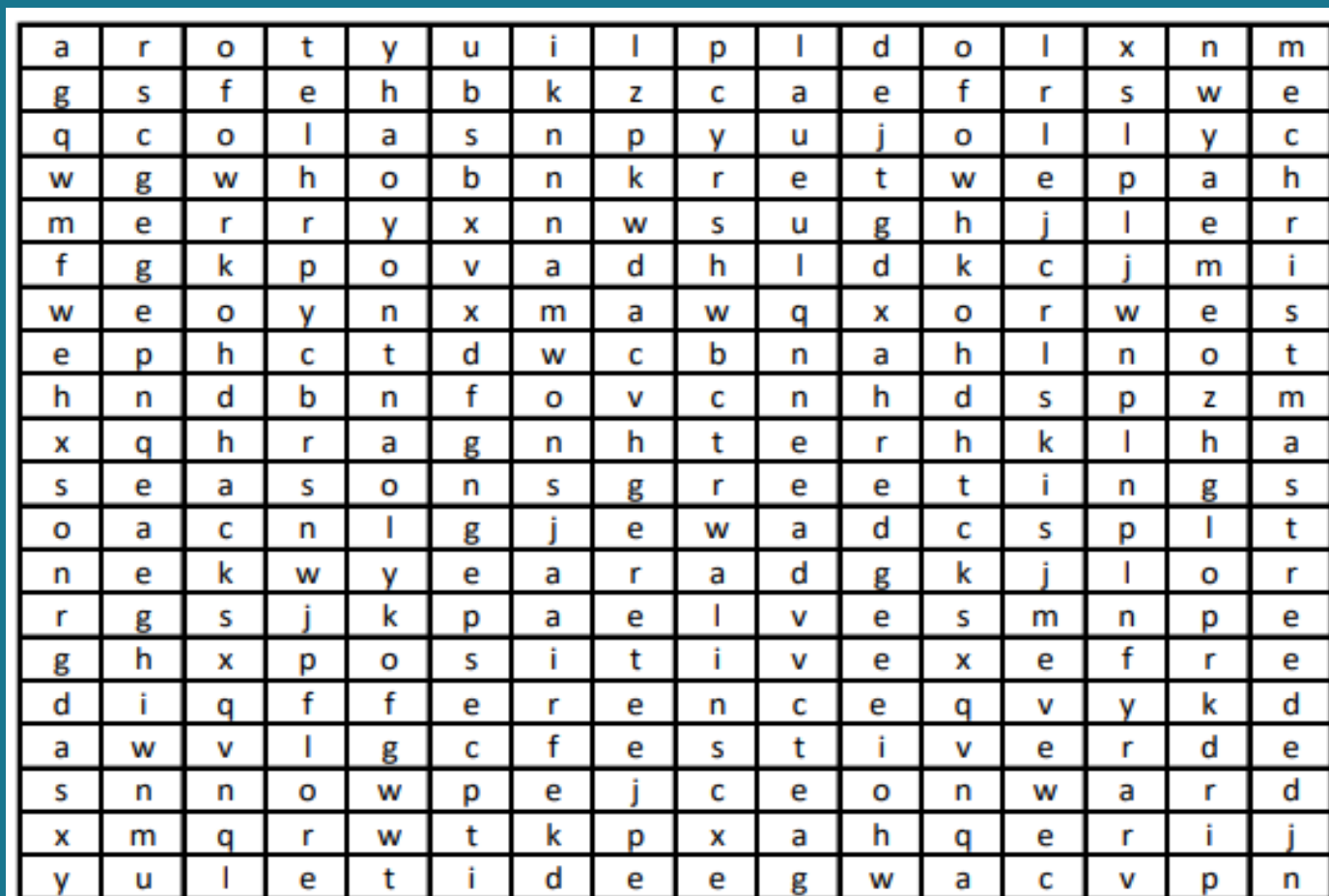
We have met with customers and colleagues to get their views, exploring what is working well and if we could do anything differently.

Discussions focussed on involvement activities, support and training and incentives and rewards. Thank you to those of you who completed our survey, we are currently collating all the feedback and will share our findings with you soon along with our revised Customer Engagement Policy.

## IN IT TO WIN IT.

One of these words does not feature in the wordsearch, let Leanne know the missing word by Friday 15th December to be in with a chance to win £30, £20 or £10 worth of high street vouchers.

[Leanne.baldwin@onward.co.uk](mailto:Leanne.baldwin@onward.co.uk)



### To find:

Seasons Greetings	Yuletide
Holy	Snowman
Merry	Rudolph
Festive	Elves
Jolly	Christmas Tree

# OUT AND ABOUT IN OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS.

The Customer Involvement team have been working closely with Neighbourhood Teams to involve and engage locally with our customers. Over the summer period various events and local inspections/walkabouts took place that allowed colleagues to engage with customers on local issues and priorities.

Some examples of local involvement activities include:

## MANCHESTER.

We have been working closely with the Neighbourhood teams at Parrs Court to address issues facing residents. We are holding a drop-in session at Parrs Court every 6 weeks, allowing residents to come and speak to their Neighbourhood Specialist to discuss issues and raise any concerns. Taking on board customer feedback, new benches have recently been installed and new signage for the car park has been ordered.

## MERSEYSIDE.

Customers joined the Environmental Services Team and Customer Engagement Specialist on a walkabout to look at ground's maintenance issues at Kelton Park in September. Customers were happy to hear that the grounds maintenance service for the estate will be delivered by Onward staff from January 2024 and were reassured by the Team's commitment to improve service delivery.

## LANCASHIRE.

Teams from right across Onward came together with local partners to deliver an action day in Preston Avenham and Queen Street. Fun activities and delicious food were on offer to encourage customers to come and talk to us.

The event offered colleagues the opportunity to have conversations around key messages including the importance of fire safety, reporting ASB and also the support we can offer to tenants affected by the high-rise regeneration project.

Customer gave us feedback about their top neighbourhood priorities and these included addressing the issue of gangs/groups hanging around, poor lighting and lack of activities for children.

The neighbourhood team will consider the feedback when shaping future priorities.



# SCRUTINY BOARD UPDATE.

Two members of our Scrutiny Board recently attended the annual Tpas Scrutiny Conference in Loughborough in October. The conference took part during Tpas National Scrutiny week. They enjoyed a day of presentations from other housing providers and the Regulator of Social Housing and brought back lots of ideas to share with the rest of the Board including, how to organise what they do and listen to more tenants in the process. It was also great to hear that they felt scrutiny at Onward seems much better supported than at many organisations they had spoken to.

## Scrutiny Week

#ScrutinyWeek



### At their last meetings they

- Heard from the Director of Repairs about the new approach to the service, and were pleased to hear that scrutiny recommendations for improved customer communication are being built into plans
- Questioned the time taken to let homes and whether the rise in rent and service charges is having an impact
- Asked about planned maintenance programmes and the decisions on who gets what and when

### Like what you have heard and want a role that really makes an impact?

The Onward Scrutiny Board plays a significant role in ensuring that the customer voice is at the heart of Onward. Members play a full part in Customer Committee meetings, and oversee the performance of all customer services. With the ability to question if targets aren't reached the Scrutiny Board can also carry out their own research and make recommendations for improvements.

The group meet online and in person at least once every three months (with online always an option). New members are supported to learn about the role, understand the information that is shared with the group and join in at a pace they feel comfortable with.

If you are interested or want to find out more reply to [Val.alker@onward.co.uk](mailto:Val.alker@onward.co.uk)

*'In scrutiny I feel I can express myself and I do, I have only been involved for 6 months but I feel our approach is where it should be.'*

**Steve**

*'It's important to be able to scrutinise an organisation, to hold them to account and make them a better organisation for their customers.'*

**Kathy**

*'We get Heads of Service and directors to come to meetings to answer our questions. Our scrutiny approach is now very well connected to the Board and managers.'*

**Edith**

*'Being involved in the scrutiny board helps me understand the decision-making process better. I am glad I can support decision makers to do their work better.'*

**Iwona**



We are committed to promoting and celebrating diversity and inclusion, as part of this commitment we work with HouseProud an organisation which aims to empower social housing providers to improve services for LGBTQ+ customers.



# HouseProud

The HouseProud 'Rainbow Roofs' Customer Forum brings together customers, housing professionals and agencies from across the Northwest. The group meet every six weeks to raise the voices of LGBTQ+ customers and issues impacting them.

During the summer we proudly supported Pride events across our regions.



Would you like to be part of the Rainbow Roofs Northwest group?  
To find out more get in touch with Leanne [Leanne.baldwin@onward.co.uk](mailto:Leanne.baldwin@onward.co.uk)



# OUR CUSTOMERS HAVE TALENT!



## MEET PAUL ...

Paul is an active member of our Diversity and Inclusion Forum and regularly shares his experiences of living with dementia.

As a keen musician Paul was approached by a Japanese film company who were researching how music is a wonderful tonic for People living with Dementia (PLWD).

The company travelled over to meet up with Paul and his friend Tommy to film a day in his life. Paul goes to Runcorn fortnightly to local pub to meet his ex-band members and have a jam all afternoon. The film Company paid to take over the pub which was wonderful surprise and lots of fun.

Paul said the film company 'Were fun to be with and very polite so I'll now look forward to the documentary next year'

Support for those living with dementia can be found [here](#).

## CUSTOMERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Neil is a Customer Engagement Community member of Byron Close, Oswaldtwistle was visiting Accrington Town Centre when he came across a stand representing the Prospects Foundation who provided him with information regarding funding that may be available to local community projects.



The resident's group that meets at the community centre discussed this information at their weekly coffee afternoon and decided to apply for funding to create a community garden through the Prospects Foundation Windfall Fund.

The group were successful in receiving a grant to help towards the cost of the garden. Hyndburn Council also donated funds to the community centre for activities.

Another member of the group Tom secured volunteer support from BT and working with the Scheme Manager Carol, Neighbourhood Specialist Maya and Onward colleagues cleared the garden of all unwanted shrubs, waste and jetwash all the flags.

With the garden ready to be transformed the tenants began the hard work, measuring up, ordering materials and planning.

Neil with the help of others built a fantastic greenhouse from scratch and there is also a planter for flowers which will be shared with the community.

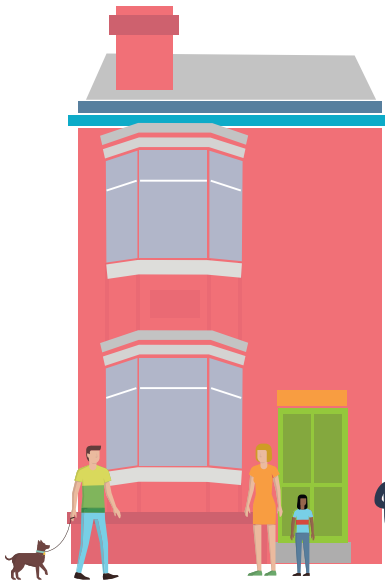
They decided they wanted to grow their own vegetables and encourage the community to come along and take part in this adventure.

The group was also successful in securing funds from our Onward Community Fund as they have a resident's association. Do you have a [Tenant and resident association](#) who could access some funds from Onward , find out more [here](#)

The tenants would like to thank the Prospect Foundation and Onward for the funding, Asda, and Tesco in Accrington for donations for the Grand Opening of the garden and all the willing volunteers who made this idea a reality!

**Do you have a talent or hobby to showcase to your fellow Customer Engagement Community members, email Leanne: [leanne.baldwin@onward.co.uk](mailto:leanne.baldwin@onward.co.uk)**

# COULD YOU BE A CHAMPION?



A big project to provide energy efficiency improvements for 400 homes in the Kirkdale area of Liverpool is just starting. If you live in Kirkdale and are receiving the improvement works, then this opportunity could be something that you are interested in. We are looking for volunteers to act as 'Champions' for their street.

Champions stay in touch with us during the works and let us know how the works are progressing for them and their neighbours, it's a really interesting role and helps to ensure that works run smoothly.

Email [val.alker@onward.co.uk](mailto:val.alker@onward.co.uk) to let us know if you want a chat about this. Similar projects will be starting in Lancashire and Greater Manchester in the new year, if your home is included you too could be a Champion.



**DIGITAL  
ONWARD**

## DIGITAL CUSTOMER FORUM.

As part of our Onward Strategy we have committed to exploring new technology and using better data to make our customers lives easier. Over the past several months Onward have been working on a new Customer App, with some of our Digital Forum customers ready to be among the first to test it! They have also been involved in reviewing the communications planned for the launch of the app, and have given us some excellent feedback about the best way to promote the new app to customers. For more information on how you can get involved then contact [Samantha.Amis@onward.co.uk](mailto:Samantha.Amis@onward.co.uk)

## HOME OWNERSHIP FORUM.

Members of our Home Ownership Forum have been working hard behind the scenes, meeting regularly to review performance of our Home Ownership service and providing us with feedback on everything from policies to newsletters. They have recently worked with the Home Ownership team on the production of new colleague induction booklets – the forum suggested information that should be included that they thought would be useful for new colleagues. The forum pressed upon the fact that it is vital that our new colleagues are introduced to customers, and the importance of working together and having an open line of communication. For more information on the work of the forum contact [Samantha.Amis@onward.co.uk](mailto:Samantha.Amis@onward.co.uk)

## COMING SOON...

In 2024 we will be launching a new service for our customers and their families – the Onward Learning Lab.

The Onward Learning Lab will give you access to a range of online learning resources – so whether it's brushing up your knowledge of health and safety or designing your CV there will be something for everyone.

**Watch this space!**