

Onward

# The Onward Newsletter

Spring 2024



## IN THIS ISSUE:

Helpful information on rent and service charges and an update on how we are making The Onward Difference across our communities.

# WELCOME.

Spring is finally here. I am sure you will join me in welcoming the brighter days and warmer weather. In this edition, we talk about the changes to your rent and service charges from the start of April and explain the support that we can offer.

We know that the cost of living is still a challenge for some of our customers. We can help you in lots of different ways, from advice on emergency support, tips on managing your money or guidance on employment and training. If you're worried about the changes to your rent and service charges, please let us know.

Our priority is to continue to invest in your homes and communities. In this newsletter, we set out some of the improvements we're making to our grounds maintenance and repairs services. We also share stories of how we're making a difference across our neighbourhoods.

We are here if you need to speak to us, whether that's about your home, your neighbourhood, or your finances. We're just a phone call away so please get in touch.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bronwen".

Bronwen Rapley,  
Chief Executive

# GET INVOLVED.

We want to make sure that your voice is at the heart of everything we do and our Customer Engagement Community helps us do just that.

We already have over 3,400 customers from across the North West who help make our homes and neighbourhoods better places to live. You can join them and have the opportunity to:

- Shape and improve services
- Take part in activities to help improve your neighbourhood and local area
- Share concerns, views and ideas
- Help to shape policies and strategies
- Gain useful experiences, develop new skills and increase your confidence

This year, our involved customers have taken part in lots of activities such as reviewing the rent and service charge letters you receive and giving feedback on improvements to our repairs service.

## Want to get involved?

Please email [customerengagement@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerengagement@onward.co.uk) or visit the [website](#).



# YOUR RENT AND SERVICE CHARGES EXPLAINED.

**From April 2024, rents for most of our customers will increase by 7.7%**

From April 2024, rents for most of our customers will increase by 7.7%. Our rents are set within a limit set by government which allows for increases of inflation plus 1%. Some customers will also see an increase in their service charges, which cover extra services such as scheme managers and grounds maintenance.

Whilst inflation has eased, housing associations and businesses continue to operate in a challenging economic environment.

Although costs for utilities have reduced this year, which is reflected in service charges, gas and electricity prices remain high compared to previous years. External pressures also mean that the cost of delivering essential services such as grounds maintenance and provision of fire safety equipment has increased.

We understand that the cost of living continues to be a challenge for many, so we have applied a service charge cap for our general let and housing for older people to protect those facing the potential for highest charges.

If you have a query, please email [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk), call **0300 555 0600** or visit the [website](#).

## WE ARE HERE TO HELP.

The Customer Accounts and Money Advice Team is here to help you manage your money, household budgets and access additional support you might be entitled to. Our promise is that no one will lose their home where they are working with us to make payments.

**If you think you will struggle to pay your rent, please let us know as soon as you can by:**

✉ emailing [moneyadviceteam@onward.co.uk](mailto:moneyadviceteam@onward.co.uk)

☎ calling **0300 555 0600**

📍 visiting [onward.co.uk](https://onward.co.uk)

Our Customer Accounts Team help customers keep on track with rent and service charge payments. If you miss a payment, or your financial position changes, the team will work with you to find a solution and discuss affordable repayment plans.

Our Money Advice Team offers **free, confidential advice** to customers looking for help with their finances. This could include practical advice around managing household budgets, signposting other support you might be entitled to or providing access to emergency funds.

You may have heard these teams called Income and Financial Inclusion in the past. We've changed the name to better reflect the help we offer, but will still be offering the same services.



# #The Onward Difference

Our Corporate Plan, The Onward Difference, is all about enabling you to be your best, in a home you love and place you are proud of.

Getting the basics right and listening to you, your priorities and aspirations remains the foundation for everything we do. Here are some examples of the work we've been doing in our local communities.

## ENABLING PEOPLE TO BE THEIR BEST



In partnership with Open Kitchen, we have delivered a series of cooking classes at The Naz for the local community to help them create healthy meals on a budget. Over six sessions, local people explored low-cost recipes that can be made in a slow cooker using items from the centre's pantry and received a free recipe bag and slow cooker to take home.



Our customer David was struggling to get back into work and approached 1st Call for help. The team enabled him to secure a new job by providing emotional and practical support, from guidance on his CV to help accessing funded training through Jobcentre Plus and workwear through the Onward Employment and Training Fund.



MERSEYSIDE



In Liverpool, Plus One Community Learning CIC is set to help participants fulfil their aspirations through a six-week 'Your Time to Thrive' training programme. Thanks to a grant from the Onward Community Fund, participants will gain new skills, enabling them with a pathway to further education or employment.



## PROVIDING HOMES OUR CUSTOMERS LOVE

Birch Lea Park in Hattersley is now halfway through construction, and once complete will provide 91 new apartments for older people. We also recently handed over the keys to 15 homes for shared ownership at our nearby development, The Alders.

Not far away in Hattersley, our contractor Equans has recently handed over 27 new homes at Hare Hill Road, a development of two- and three-bedroom houses for affordable rent.



LANCASHIRE



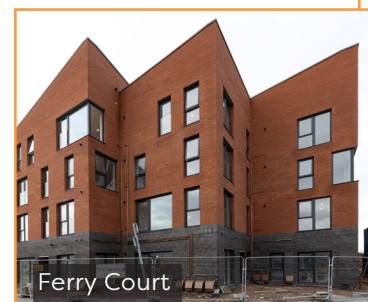
On the outskirts of Leyland, our Farrington Mews development with Keepmoat has proven consistently popular with people looking for a more affordable route onto the local property ladder. Alongside new homes, we're investing back into the local community and have supported 11 apprentices to gain new skills and experience in construction.

Over at Clayton-le-Moors in Hyndburn, our partner Watson Homes is delivering 127 new affordable homes on the banks of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. The first new homes are expected to arrive this Spring. Remember, if you live locally and want to bid on any affordable homes in your area, you need to be registered on the B-with-us portal.

MERSEYSIDE

In Wirral, our partners Kingsmead Developments are applying the finishing touches at Ferry Court, next to the iconic Seacombe Ferry terminal. As well as boasting one of the best views in Wirral, these 28 new apartments have been made available for social rent, helping even more people to find an affordable home.

Over in nearby Wallasey Village, we have partnered with local developer Starship to build 13 carbon zero homes, which will be available through Rent to Buy at the end of this year.



## CREATING PLACES PEOPLE ARE PROUD OF

In Besses, Ribble Drive Primary School is repurposing a concrete space to create a natural haven for students to explore. Designed to improve health and wellbeing by getting outdoors, the space will include raised beds for growing fruit and vegetables, bug hotels and bird houses for wildlife following a grant from the Onward Community Fund.



GREATER MANCHESTER

LANCASHIRE

We have provided funding to The PROSPECTS Foundation, a community-owned environmental charity in Hyndburn, for the delivery of a food growing project at Millerfold Community Allotment. In weekly sessions, local people have been growing fruits and vegetables in organic and wildlife friendly methods to take home and cook with.



We are making great progress at our Urban Roots project in Kirkdale, where we are working in partnership with Community Shop, CLC, Liverpool City Council, Connolly, Novus and volunteers to transform a piece of unused land into a thriving community garden.

MERSEYSIDE

To find out more about the Community Fund please visit the [website](#).

# OUR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES.

At the beginning of this year, we brought our environmental services inhouse, with these moving from contractors over to Onward. Bringing these services inhouse means that we can respond more quickly to your feedback and be more flexible in how we deliver our services.

To reflect the changes we've made, we're now calling our Environmental Services Team, Onward Environmental. Onward Environmental will provide your services including grounds and tree maintenance, cleaning and window cleaning, and waste management.

Keep an eye out for Onward Environmental who will be out and about in your neighbourhood over the coming weeks and months. If you would like to talk to us about your services, or have any feedback on how we can improve, please get in touch by calling **0300 555 0600**.



## A NEW WAY TO TRACK YOUR SERVICES!

We've now launched a quick and easy way to track the work carried out by Onward Environmental. Through our new Environmental Tracker, you can now search by your postcode to get the latest updates from Onward Environmental, including things like when we've visited, when we'll next be in the area and photos after services are carried out.

To start exploring, please visit the environmental services section on our [website](#) or log in to the [My Onward Portal](#).



## STEPPING INTO SPRING.

After a rainy start to the cutting season, Onward Environmental will be tending to grass in your neighbourhood using a cut and drop method.

There are plenty of benefits to this method, as the cut grass left behind limits weed growth and provides the soil underneath with essential nutrients whilst helping to lock in moisture during hot and dry weather.







# OUR REPAIRS SERVICE.

From time to time, you may need to report a repair in your home. It's our top priority to get these fixed as quickly as possible.

We aim to complete as many of our repairs the first time and in one visit if possible. For repairs that can be completed in one visit, we will offer you an appointment and carry this out within 20 days. Sometimes, we might need to carry out complicated repairs that take longer to complete. For these types of repairs, we will agree a time with you and carry out the work within 90 days.

## You can report a repair to us by:

-  Visiting the [My Onward Portal](#)
-  Emailing [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk)
-  Calling **0300 555 0600** between 8am - 7pm Monday to Friday and 10am - 7pm on Wednesdays
-  Contacting us via private message on social media, 8am - 5pm Monday to Friday, and 10am - 5pm on Wednesdays

If you notice any damp, mould or high levels of condensation in your home, please report this to us straight away by using the details above. For guidance on how to spot it, and details on how we will deal with damp and mould, please visit the [website](#).



## HOW TO REPORT AN EMERGENCY REPAIR.

An emergency repair includes things like a complete loss of power, faulty boilers, a flood or leak that can't be controlled.

If you need to report an emergency, please call us as soon as you can on **0300 555 0600**. You can do this 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



ONWARD  
CONNECT



# ONWARD DIGITAL CONNECT.

Our Onward Digital Connect initiative has been designed to help keep you connected online.

## DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

We can provide free digital equipment (phone, tablet or laptop) and six months free data to access training, education or to start a new business through our Digital Connectivity Fund.

This is available for those who have little or no digital skills, have no access or insufficient access to the internet, are under 25, over 75 or have a disability.

## DIGITAL SKILLS

To help you improve your digital skills, we are supporting a range of projects across the North West for our customers. From drop-in sessions to learn the basics to 16-week skills bootcamps, there's something for everyone.

We also have a range of links to digital skills support on our website where you can also find out how to stay safe online, use social media, make your business digital and more.

Interested in applying? To find out how you can get this support, please email [socialinvestment@onward.co.uk](mailto:socialinvestment@onward.co.uk) or call **0300 555 0600**.

## REPORTING ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR.

The way your neighbours behave can make a big difference to how happy you are in your home. That's why we take reports of antisocial behaviour very seriously and take the necessary steps to protect you.





You can let us know about any problems with

antisocial behaviour by visiting [onward.co.uk](https://onward.co.uk) to fill in an online form, or calling **0300 555 0600**.

You can also report crime and antisocial behaviour anonymously via Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**.

## MAKING A COMPLAINT.

We know that we don't always get things right the first time. If you feel our services haven't been up to standard and you need to make a complaint, you can do this:

-  via the [My Onward Portal](#)
-  by calling **0300 555 0600**
-  by emailing [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk)
-  by writing to **Onward, Renaissance Court, 2 Christie Way, M21 7QY**

You can also contact The Housing Ombudsman by calling **0300 111 3000**, emailing [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk) or writing to **PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ**.