

# The Onward Newsletter

Designed with customers, for customers

June 2020

A young child with light brown hair is smiling and looking towards the camera. They are holding a white sheet with a colorful rainbow drawing on it. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage.

**Onward,  
coronavirus  
and you.**

As the country turns a new page and looks to a future beyond the coronavirus crisis, we outline plans for our services.

Onward is proud to support the national response of housing associations to the coronavirus crisis. This means we are committed to **keeping customers secure at home, helping them get the support they need, and acting compassionately and quickly where they are struggling.**

For more information about the national response, visit [www.housing.org.uk](http://www.housing.org.uk).

# WELCOME.

Today it seems everything has changed. One thing that remains constant is that Onward strives to be an active force for good in the communities we serve.

Onward is not waiting for this storm to pass. We are actively contacting all of our customers to find and help those who need it.

Our own everyday heroes are out in your community, doing emergency repairs and keeping shared spaces clean and tidy. A safe and stepped

escalation of our repairs service has begun.

Frontline heroes in our partner charities are extending our ability to reach vulnerable people, providing food and safe social contact. You will find out more in this newsletter.

Life will have changed for you too and we want to hear how.

What have you learnt about what is important where you live? Have you done more online?

Do you feel you can take any positives from 'life in lockdown'?

I have learnt that our communities are stronger than we knew. When we build back, we must build back better. Listening to you will help us to do that.

Take care and stay safe.

Bronwen Rapley,  
Chief Executive



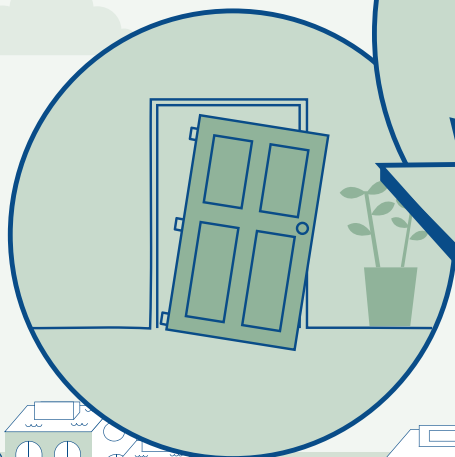
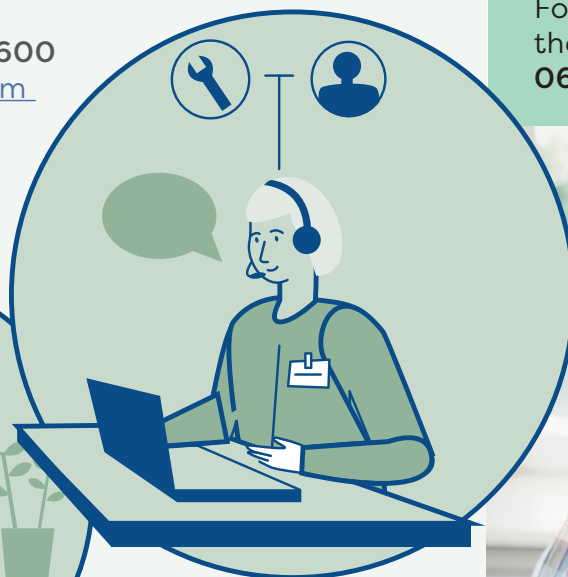
## HERE FOR YOU.

Between January and April 2020 we dealt with 110,000 customer queries through our Contact Centre and answered 90,000 calls.

Since the beginning of the coronavirus crisis we have seen an increase in calls from customers worried about their mental health and loneliness.

To ensure we are here for you when you need us most, we have extended our Contact Centre opening hours to 8am - 8pm. We are also phoning thousands of customers every week to check on their wellbeing.

Call us on **0300 555 0600** or fill out our [online form](#) to get in touch.



## GET INVOLVED.

Are you a member of our Customer Engagement Community? If not, then we invite you to join.

As a member you can help shape the future of Onward and influence our priorities. You will also be entered into a monthly prize draw!

For more information and to join, visit the [Onward website](#) or call **0300 555 0600**.





# STEPPING UP YOUR REPAIRS SERVICE.

Since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak we have been working hard to continue delivering an emergency and urgent repairs service while keeping customers and colleagues safe. Behind the scenes, we have been preparing for a stepped, safe and sustainable escalation in our repairs service as circumstances allow.

## Our priorities guiding the planned escalation in service are:

- **Ensuring safe working practices** for the health of our customers and repair teams
- **Prioritising vulnerable people** and emergency or urgent repairs
- **Dealing with existing requests** for help that came in before lockdown

We are applying these principles through our three-step route map to escalate your repairs service:

### STEP 1: Making emergency and urgent repairs

- Dealing with emergency and the most urgent repairs.
- This is where we have been since lockdown.
- Examples include a broken boiler, or serious damage that makes you feel insecure at home.
- Especially if you are vulnerable or have small children.
- If this is you, contact us now – do not wait.
- If your request is not an emergency or urgent, please wait until Step 3 to report it.

### STEP 2: Sorting out repairs requested before lockdown

- Sorting out non-emergency repairs reported to us before 16 March, but which could not be tackled before lockdown.
- We will enter Step 2 on 1 June.
- We think it is fairest to sort out repairs reported before 16 March ahead of any new non-emergency repairs.
- If you reported a repair before 16 March, it is on our system and we know you need help, so there is no need to report it again.
- Like all home providers, this will be a key period for testing our supply chains and new working practices, so we can be sure you will get an excellent service.

### STEP 3: Taking and tackling new non-emergency repair requests

- We will enter Step 3 when repairs requested before 16 March are cleared.
- Right now, we cannot be sure how long this will take due to evolving government advice and the ongoing adaptation of our supply chains.
- There will inevitably be some pent-up demand, so you may need to wait a little longer than we would aim for in normal circumstances.

Information about when and how we are moving between these three steps will be given to customers proactively through: the **Onward website**, text messages; phone calls; emails and printed newsletters.

For more information about updates to our repairs service, get in touch on 0300 555 0600 or visit [www.onward.co.uk](http://www.onward.co.uk).



# WORRIED ABOUT FINANCES?

The current crisis has impacted many of our customers' finances.

Talk to us if you have concerns - we're here to help.



Results from our recent survey, 'Supporting you through COVID-19' show that 17.6% of customers are most worried about financial stability as a result of the coronavirus crisis.

Since the beginning of the outbreak our Financial Inclusion team has been busy providing financial advice and support to customers, and we are still on hand now to offer our help.

If you are worried about your finances, please get in touch with us on **0300 555 0600** or visit the [Onward website](https://www.onward.co.uk).

We will put you in touch with one of our experienced Income Management Specialists who will be able to provide support, including advice about Universal Credit, rent payments and the organisations which can offer help with household bills and groceries.

# COMMUNITIES UNITE TO CELEBRATE VE DAY.

On 8 May, local communities came together to celebrate the 75th anniversary of VE Day and commemorate the end of World War II.

Many Onward customers got involved in the celebrations and hosted street parties and tea parties while maintaining social distancing.

Onward customers at Melbourne Court in Greater Manchester, and Vale House and Greenfield Court in Lancashire, marked the occasion by hosting an outdoor picnic while customers at Weavers Court hosted a sing-a-long.

In Bolton, customers at Crompton Court were treated to an outdoor concert thanks to students from Mytham Primary School. Local residents decked their balconies and gardens in red, white and blue bunting and raised a toast to the soldiers and civilians who sacrificed so much for our freedom.

For more information about our VE Day celebrations, visit [www.onward.co.uk](https://www.onward.co.uk).

Sonny, from Manchester, loved taking part in our virtual WW2 history lesson.



Dear Sir/Madam  
My name is Sonny I am 10 years old and I live in Manchester. I go to primary school and I am in year 5.  
Today I am learning about VE day and world war 2, and I have found it interesting. My Great Grandad George was a fighter pilot in the war, he was killed when he was flying a Lancaster Bomber. I think he was brave. I have seen photographs of him and have seen some of his medals. My Grandad has them. My grandad was a little boy when his dad was killed and he still has the letter that was sent to the them.  
I have thought of some questions for you.  
1) How old are you now?  
2) How old were you when WW2 ended?  
3) How did you feel after the war ended?





Onward donates £25,000 to Open Kitchen MCR to provide food for people in Greater Manchester.

# ONWARD HELPS FEED VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN MANCHESTER.

Open Kitchen MCR, a not-for-profit social enterprise based in Manchester, was launched in 2014. It aims to transform food, which would have otherwise been destined for landfill, into incredible catering for events and special occasions. The profits generated from the sale of its food are used to support other organisations which help society's most vulnerable people.

Since the beginning of the coronavirus crisis, Open Kitchen MCR has been flooded with requests for support. As part of its efforts to help, it has been preparing and delivering cooked meals and grocery hampers free of charge to individuals in need throughout Greater Manchester.

However, the enterprise reported fears that it might struggle to survive the coronavirus crisis due to a sharp fall in sales and income. It made an appeal for help and requested volunteers, food donations and funding.

As a proud supporter of Open Kitchen MCR, Onward pledged to donate £25,000, provide kitchen and office facilities to the enterprise and supply a van to help the enterprise make deliveries. If you would like to show your support or find out more about Open Kitchen MCR, visit [www.openkitchenmcr.co.uk](http://www.openkitchenmcr.co.uk).



If you are isolating and concerned about food and grocery supplies during the coronavirus crisis, please get in touch on **0300 555 0600**. For more information about what we are doing to support customers, visit [www.onward.co.uk/coronavirus](http://www.onward.co.uk/coronavirus).



As part of our commitment to the communities we serve, we regularly support neighbourhood initiatives.

In fact, we are donating £150,000 to transform our Onward office in Kirkdale, Liverpool into a Community Shop. The shop will supply high quality, low-cost groceries and household goods to local people who receive welfare support. For more information about the initiative, visit [www.companyshopgroup.co.uk](http://www.companyshopgroup.co.uk).

# ONWARD BUILDS BRIGHTER FUTURES AT ALT BANK HOUSE.

Alt Bank House in Knowsley, Liverpool is state-of-the-art accomodation managed by Onward which is designed to provide specialist support to homeless individuals.

The hostel can provide secure self-contained accommodation and support for up to 42 vulnerable people at any one time.

Residents can take advantage of skills training, one-to-one sessions, and access to work and education. Also, the hostel is equipped with a training kitchen, library, computer suite

and large garden with raised flower and vegetable beds where residents are encouraged to grow their own produce.

During the coronavirus crisis, Alt Bank House has adapted its service in order to meet the physical and mental needs of its residents. Where possible, it has continued to provide its service through digital channels.

Meanwhile, some residents have taken the opportunity to develop a new skill and have volunteered to help prepare healthy and nutritious cooked meals for other residents in the hostel.

For more information about Alt Bank House and the service we provide to support homeless individuals, visit the care and support pages of our website or [www.homeless.org.uk](http://www.homeless.org.uk).

Emma El- Wakil,  
Manager at  
Alt Bank House.



Alt Bank House encourages its residents to take part in The Resettlement Passport – a course which helps them to sustain their own tenancy and live independently after leaving the hostel. For more information, visit [www.resettlementpassport.org.uk](http://www.resettlementpassport.org.uk).

Over the past twelve months, 100 people have used the support available at Alt Bank House and almost 70 of these have progressed to live independently in the community.

## COMPETITION.

For a chance to win £30 of online high street vouchers, find which one of these ten words **doesn't** appear in the wordsearch:

- ONWARD
- MANCHESTER
- MERSEYSIDE
- RENT
- HOME
- LANCASHIRE
- CHESHIRE
- REPAIRS
- COMMUNITY
- NEIGHBOURHOODS

H	M	A	N	C	H	E	S	T	E	R	N	I	S
E	E	Y	R	R	N	N	H	C	M	M	A	I	A
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N	Y	O	E	I	E	A	N	S	R	H	T	A	Y
A	S	C	E	C	S	W	M	S	E	D	S	I	A
L	I	N	R	O	A	O	W	M	M	H	E	R	R
A	D	S	N	R	R	N	M	S	C	R	C	S	M
N	E	E	D	N	S	N	E	I	E	I	E	H	T
S	Y	O	C	R	M	L	H	R	N	R	R	M	N

Email your answer to [customerengagement@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerengagement@onward.co.uk)  
Don't forget to include your name and contact information so we can get in touch!



# ONWARD AND THE COMMUNITY TACKLE ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR TOGETHER.

Onward takes reports of antisocial behaviour (ASB) very seriously and is committed to taking the necessary steps to protect customers.

Onward recognises ASB to be a range of behaviours from low-level nuisance to serious harassment, which can impact quality of life and interfere with the ability of individuals to use and enjoy their home and community.

Onward colleague, Haley Jones, Safer Neighbourhoods Specialist, is leading the way in tackling ASB and has been recognised for her work in the community in Avenham, Preston.

As part of her role Haley provides support and safeguarding to some of the most vulnerable people in Avenham living with disabilities, poor mobility and deteriorating mental health. Haley regularly goes above and beyond to support victims of ASB, domestic abuse and hate crime.

To do this she works with local organisations including The Foxtan Centre, Onward colleagues and the Lancashire Constabulary.

Also, Haley is involved in coordinating a campaign to prevent organised crime groups from operating within Lancashire and is working with the local police force to organise events for young people which raise awareness about ASB, the dangers of organised crime and the consequences of possessing harmful weapons.

As a result of her commitment to protecting vulnerable people and tackling ASB in Avenham, Haley has been shortlisted as a finalist for Practitioner of the Year at the RESOLVE 2020 Antisocial Behaviour Awards. The award is presented to individuals who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to delivering change and inspiring others.

For more information about Onward's approach to ASB visit [the website](#) and to report an incident, fill out our [online form](#). Alternatively, call **0300 555 0600**.

The Safer Neighbourhoods team is a dedicated team of specialists who tackle antisocial behaviour in our communities.

To do this we work in collaboration with charities and organisations in the community, such as The Foxtan Centre based in Preston which provides support, safety and resources for vulnerable adults and young people. For more information, visit [www.thefoxtancentre.co.uk](http://www.thefoxtancentre.co.uk).



# KEN RAISES MONEY FOR THE NHS.



Onward customer Ken, aged 89, from D'Oliveira Court in Greater Manchester, has raised over £1,500 for the NHS and North West Ambulance Service by walking 500 laps of his communal garden. Ken is a military veteran and has been an Onward customer for 20 years.

Ken said: "When things get back to normal, I'm most looking forward to meeting up with family and seeing my friends from the scheme.

We're going to have one heck of a party (so the scheme manager has promised!) and will be blessed that we have come through it, when so many sadly haven't."

For the latest news on Ken's fundraising efforts, visit his Facebook page [@ggrandadken](#).

## INVESTING IN HOMES.

Despite the challenges we face, investing in homes remains a priority for Onward. We are working to safely restart our investment programmes, focusing on work outside your homes including cyclical decoration and roofing replacement works. We are also recommencing work at our development sites which will help us achieve our target of building 500 new homes each year.

If you are due to receive a new kitchen, bathroom, heating system, windows, or doors this year then we will be in touch. We would like to assure customers that we'll use safe working practices and social distancing measures while we carry out our work, but if you do have concerns please contact us on 0300 555 0600 or complete our [online form](#) and we will adjust our plans to suit you.

Ensuring that we value our vulnerable customers is part of our ethos. We don't currently anticipate carrying out any non-safety related work in our supported and sheltered homes this year.

## ADAPTING OUR SERVICES.

We know that many of our customers' circumstances have changed as a result of the coronavirus crisis. Some of you might rely on help from your community now more than ever, while others might have adapted more easily to change. You might have become more digitally savvy while others might be struggling with the new digital world. Therefore, we are looking to adapt our services and the support we offer to suit your changing needs.

Keep a look out for our survey launching soon in which we'll ask you what more we can do. If you'd like to chat to us about this or provide feedback in advance, get in touch on 0300 555 0600 or email [customerengagement@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerengagement@onward.co.uk).

