

## YOUR VOICE.

JULY 2020

**Welcome to the first edition of Your Voice. We hope that every three months this update will provide you with all the latest news you need to know as a member of our Customer Engagement Community (CEC).**

Now, more than ever before, it is essential that customer engagement remains a priority at Onward. Right across the organisation we are making great efforts to keep in contact with all of our CEC members and Regional Scrutiny Board (RSB) members so you can continue to be actively involved.

Some of our key activities like face-to-face consultations have started to take place online, and we have been sending regular invitations for

engagement via email, social media, SMS and flyers. We also recognise that for many members who are not digitally active, this time can feel isolating and frustrating and we are working to make sure these customers are not left behind!

We would like to thank all of our members who have shown great courage, spirit and unity during this difficult time and have continued to engage with us. As the county turns a new page, we look forward to a brighter future working together.

Jo Phillips,  
Customer Engagement Manager

## MEET THE TEAM.

Customer Engagement is a team of extraordinary individuals led by Jo, our Customer Engagement Manager, who work tirelessly to engage, listen and respond to customer feedback. Our Customer Service Assistant Sam and Customer Engagement Specialists Leanne, Suzanne and Val champion Onward customers and use their feedback to influence change so the organisation can deliver the best customer experiences possible.



Since the beginning of lockdown in the UK, the team have been working from home and adjusting to engaging with customers in new ways. While this has posed a challenge, they are dedicated to reaching out to you and ensuring your voice is heard.

Chat to our friendly team at [customerengagement@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerengagement@onward.co.uk) or see what they've been getting up to on the Onward website.

# PRIZE DRAW.

Each month CEC members are entered into an exclusive prize draw to win £50 of high street vouchers, just to say thanks for being a part of our community.

We are delighted to announce that the winner of the prize draw for June is Ian, from Bolton, Manchester, who has been an Onward customer for 12 years as part of our shared ownership scheme. Ian operates a small media agency specialising in leisure and tourism, and he often travels around the world. His loves in life are holidays, gin, cake and football. We can't argue with that!



*“When I wanted to buy my own home, Onward offered an affordable solution through their shared ownership scheme. This allowed me to purchase a property in an area I wanted to live which would have otherwise been unaffordable. Each time I have needed help or assistance from Onward, they've always been approachable and helpful.”*

Good luck to all of our CEC members for this month's prize draw!

## THE ONWARD NEWSLETTER.

We are delighted to announce that The Onward Newsletter – June 2020 has been published and, this time, we worked in close collaboration with a group of customers on the design and content. The customers even chose a new strapline for the newsletter: Designed with customers, for customers.

Published every three months, the newsletter aims to update customers on the issues that matter to them most and let them know about the great work we're doing in their communities.

If you would like to get involved in the next issue of The Onward Newsletter or give feedback on the June issue, please contact us at [customerengagement@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerengagement@onward.co.uk)



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.

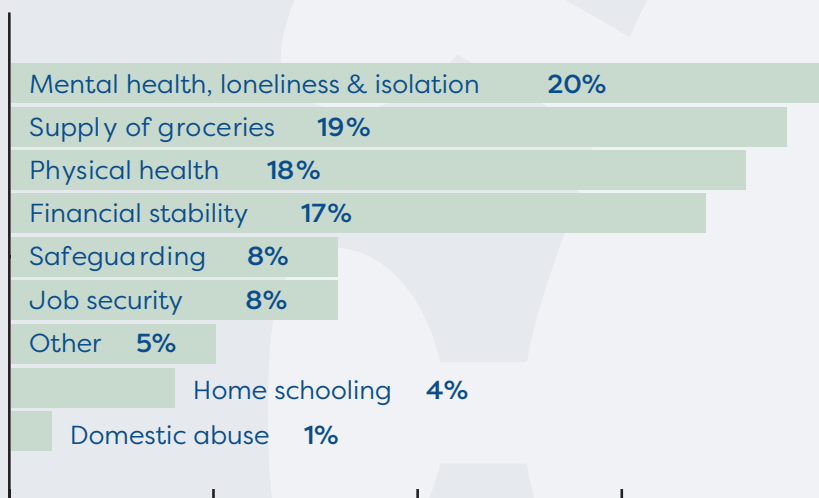
For more information about the national response, visit [www.housing.org.uk](http://www.housing.org.uk).

# HELPING YOU THROUGH COVID-19.

In April 2020, we sent a survey to CEC members asking how well they feel we are managing the coronavirus crisis and what more we can do to support them.

The survey found that most customers (72.1%) have been contacted by Onward since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak, and 60.8% of customers are satisfied or very satisfied with the information and support Onward has provided during the crisis. It also found that a fifth of customers are most concerned about mental health, loneliness, and isolation as a result of coronavirus.

## What are you most concerned about as a result of coronavirus?



Have you been contacted by Onward about coronavirus?

**YES  
72.1%**

Have you visited the Onward website or social media channels to find support and information?

**YES  
35.3%**

If you are struggling with mental health, loneliness and isolation then let us know on **0300 555 0600** so we can help. Alternatively, charities like Mind and CALM offer great support and advice.

## What are you most concerned about as a result of coronavirus?

You said	What we're doing
"Assist customers in accessing financial support, benefits and food banks"	Our experienced Income Management Specialists are on hand to provide financial advice and support to customers. They can advise on Universal Credit, rent payments and the organisations which can offer help for household bills and groceries. For more information, please get in touch with us on 0300 555 0600 or email <a href="mailto:financialinclusion@onward.co.uk">financialinclusion@onward.co.uk</a> .
"Make it clear that there will be no evictions if tenants face financial difficulties caused by the coronavirus crisis. Some tenants might be scared about raising their concerns to Onward"	We promise we will not evict any customers who have been financially impacted by the coronavirus crisis. Customers who are worried about their finances should get in touch with us on 0300 555 0600 so we can provide support and advice as soon as possible.
"Cut the grass so we can sit on our patio and get outside during isolation"	We are pleased to have restarted our grounds maintenance services, including grass cutting, while using safe systems of work. We know that our green spaces are important to customers, now more than ever.



# SHAPE OUR POLICIES.

We are looking at reviewing some of our key policies and would like to involve you in the process! Are you interested in taking part?

We will be hosting a number of engagement activities to capture your views, including online, over the phone and via email – however best suits you. Please get in touch with Suzanne at [customerengagement@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerengagement@onward.co.uk) for more information and to register interest. She looks forward to hearing from you.

## THE LATEST FROM THE CEC.

Over the past few months, our CEC members have been keeping busy during lockdown. Here's what a few of them have been up to. Let us know what you're getting up to at [customerengagement@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerengagement@onward.co.uk)

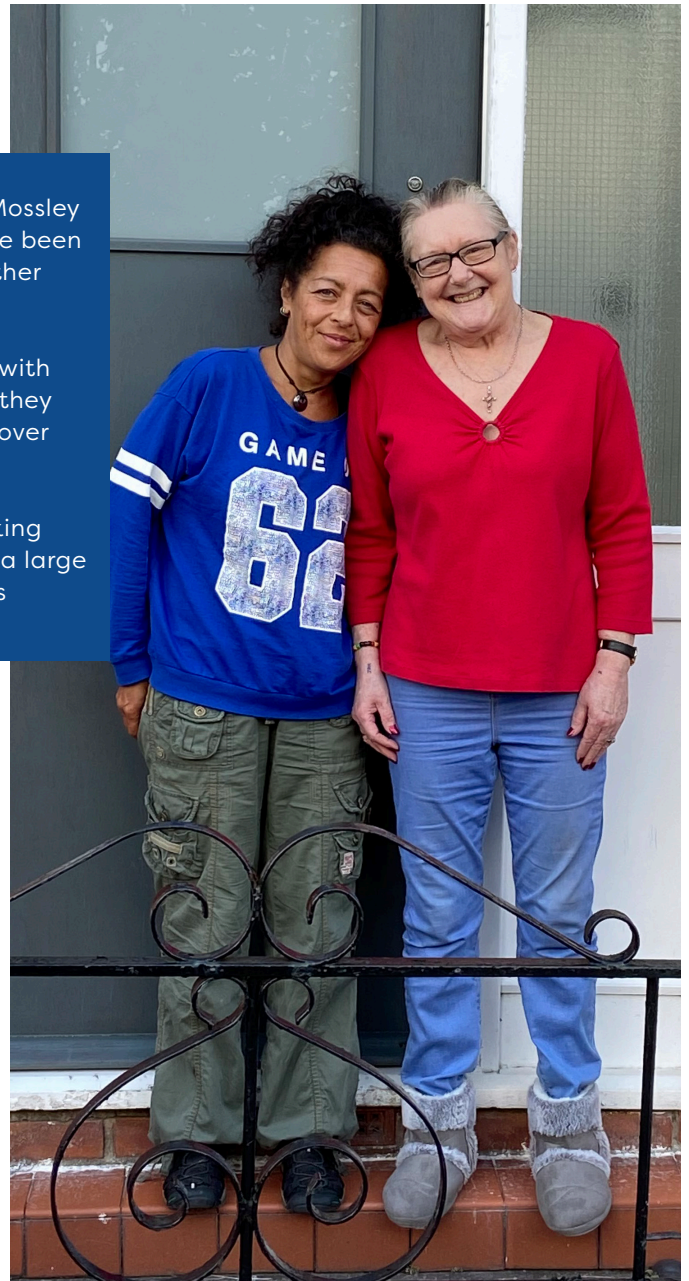


Esme, aged 8, from Ramsbottom, has enjoyed taking up gardening so she can get some fresh air and exercise. She has planted loads of flowers, including violas and wild primroses, and has received lots of compliments from neighbours.

Tara and Sylvia, neighbours from Mossley Hill, Liverpool, have been supporting each other during lockdown.

Each Wednesday, with help from friends, they host sing-a-longs over webcam.

They are also working their way through a large book of crosswords together.



Beverley from Bolton, has explored her creativity during lockdown by getting crafty and upcycling old furniture. "I just love rummaging through the house for things I don't use anymore and thinking of ways I can put them together to make new items"





Stephen from Ainsdale, Merseyside is one of our few customers who is shielding at the moment. He is using his time at home well by nurturing his talent for painting. He is also an active member of the Merseyside RSB and is involved in his local residents association.



Joyce and Peter from Handforth, Manchester are making the most of lockdown by picking up old hobbies like knitting, book folding and gardening. Most of all, they are really enjoying getting to know their neighbours better while spending time together in their communal garden and while clapping for front line workers on Thursday evenings.



# REGIONAL SCRUTINY BOARDS.

We operate three Regional Scrutiny Boards (RSBs) which comprise a diverse range of tenants from all of our three regions, namely: Lancashire; Merseyside; and Greater Manchester & Cheshire.

The RSBs meet with Onward colleagues every three months to review how our services are performing and to identify where improvements can be made.

RSB members compare our performance against targets and review customer feedback which has been gathered via surveys, reported complaints and various other channels.

Where the results and feedback highlight areas for concern, the RSBs carry out an investigation which typically lasts for six months. The findings of their investigations and their recommendations for change are formally presented to Onward's Finance and Performance Committee. In this way, the committee and RSBs are able to hold us accountable for performance improvement.

## The latest from our RSBs.

Between October 2019 and April 2020, the RSBs investigated three areas of service. Read on for an overview of their recommendations or visit the Onward website for more information.



### Merseyside

#### Planned maintenance

- Consult customers on Onward's investment strategy and investment priorities
- Be clear as to why homes are included or excluded from planned investment programmes
- Involve customers in decision making about planned maintenance programmes
- Provide more information about investment programmes on the Onward website and in print
- Improve communication with customers about maintenance works being carried out to their home, e.g kitchen replacements, particularly if plans change



## Greater Manchester & Cheshire Gas servicing

- Ensure that operatives attempt to contact customers if they are unable to access a property for an appointment
- Share necessary customer information with operatives to improve service provision, particularly to vulnerable customers
- Emphasise the importance of the gas servicing process with new customers
- Speed up the installation of carbon monoxide detectors across all Onward properties
- Record gas servicing complaints consistently to enable better analysis of data and trends



## Lancashire Adaptations

- Make the process of applying for adaptations clearer on the Onward website
- Provide links to relevant local authority Disabled Facilities Grants information
- Channel enquiries about adaptations directly to relevant departments, rather than via the Customer Contact Centre

For more information about the RSBs or to show interest in becoming a member, please contact us at [customerengagement@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerengagement@onward.co.uk)

# ONLINE EVENTS.

If you are interested in how we engage with customers and use feedback to make change, then our online events are for you. The events are also ideal for CEC members who have not yet been actively involved or those who would just like to meet other members.

The events will include a small and friendly group of customers and Onward colleagues, so grab yourself a cuppa and log on from the comfort of your sofa!



**Online via Microsoft Teams**

Wed 22nd July, 11:00 am - 1:00 pm

**Online via Microsoft Teams**

Thu 23rd July, 6:30 - 8:00pm

**Online via Microsoft Teams**

Fri 24th July, 2:00 - 4:00 pm

To register interest, to find out more or for help on how to use Microsoft Teams, get in touch at [customerengagement@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerengagement@onward.co.uk)