

A photograph of two women, one younger and one older, both smiling warmly. They are looking at a laptop screen together. The younger woman is on the left, wearing a yellow sweater. The older woman is on the right, wearing a yellow jacket and a pink and gold patterned scarf. The background is a soft-focus indoor setting.

Onward

ANNUAL REPORT

2019/20

**Our recovery
starts here!**

YOUR ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

Successes, challenges and our determination to improve your services.

The last 12 months have been full of unique challenges for our customers and for Onward.

This Annual Report reviews some of the highlights, takes stock of lessons we have learned and the efforts we are making to do better where we need to.

Our core mission is to provide good, affordable homes, but this is not just about buildings and boilers. It is about people. So, at the peak of the COVID crisis and beyond we contacted as many customers as we could. We made over 74,000 calls to check whether our customers were OK and whether they needed extra help.

I am enormously proud of the team here at Onward who kept our services running all the way through the crisis and who have quickly adapted so that we can continue to support our customers, safely.

As we look to the coming year, we know that we will have to learn to live with COVID for some time and so that resilience will still be needed.

During the next 12 months, every person working for Onward will do everything possible to make sure that whatever life throws at us, you will enjoy the security of a high performing, responsive and caring landlord.



Onward Community Fund.

Got a great idea for a community project, but need a little help to get it off the ground?

The Onward Community Fund aims to support local groups and projects. Underpinned by our mission 'To make a positive difference in the communities we serve' groups can bid for up to £5000 for their neighbourhood. Here are a couple of the successful projects awarded funding in the latest round.

Onward awarded £3000 to **Clayton Amateur Boxing Club**, a community group managed entirely by volunteers. The club provides a safe space for young people who are trying to turn their lives around, seek respite from challenging home lives or looking for a place to go in the face of cuts to youth services.



We also awarded £1000 to the **Precious Gems Knit and Get Fit** project which encourages women in the community to get active, socialise, overcome social isolation and loneliness, learn and improve skills, improve confidence, and integrate better in the community.

For more information and to submit an application, check out the Community Fund page of the Onward website or get in touch with socialinvestment@onward.co.uk.

Your repairs service.

New challenges have emerged this year in delivering home repairs.

In response, we have introduced an action plan to ensure our performance meets the expectations of customers.

We have increased our contractor capacity to undertake work, so we can tackle spikes in demand. We are also working with existing contractors intensively to get more repairs completed more quickly.

Progress has been made since we opened up our repairs service to routine repairs following the easing of lockdown in the Summer. We recognise that there is still room to improve and our commitment to you is to provide an increasingly reliable and responsive service.

The outlook around COVID remains uncertain. In response, we will always do everything possible to ensure customer and colleague safety while we complete repairs. We are working closely with contractors to ensure we have the right guidance, training and PPE in place to do this.

Thank you for your patience over the past year and we look forward to delivering a stronger repairs service to all of our customers going forward.



Giving customers a say.

Taking action to share decision-making with our customers.

Our three Regional Scrutiny Boards, in Merseyside, Lancashire and Manchester & Cheshire, give customers an opportunity to monitor and challenge our performance and decision making.

Our annual Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) has helped us understand what we are doing well and where we need to improve. Following 7,500 responses to our most recent STAR survey we are prioritising improvements to repairs and we are about to launch a new Customer Charter to make service standards really clear.

Our Customer Engagement Community, which comprises over 2,000 customers, actively shapes the way we design and deliver services. Members direct the priorities in our neighbourhood, and members gain access to personal training and development opportunities.

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 to win £50!

For more information, get in touch at customerengagement@onward.co.uk or call 0300 555 0600.



Customers shaping their services.



Our customer surveys and engagement groups are about more than just gathering feedback. We want customer voices to help determine our local priorities and the services we provide.

We will always share the results of customer surveys to encourage transparency and help you hold us to account - we want you to see that speaking up works!

Improved Grounds Maintenance Service – by popular demand!

In the Spring, we carried out a satisfaction survey of 14,476 customers so we could hear directly about your experiences of our grounds maintenance services. You told us that you want charges to reflect the quality of service delivery, as well as a clearer breakdown of what you are paying for.

Customers told us that they want:

- Clarity on what work is being completed and when
- Clarity on what kinds of work their service charges cover
- Services to be delivered consistently
- Enquiries responded to in a timely manner

The results of the survey are now being used to inform an action plan to improve performance and provide more information from January 2021.



Adding social value.

At the heart of the community: Community Shop Runcorn.



Onward has provided funding and rent-free space to social supermarket Community Shop at our Runcorn Priory House office, and more recently at our former Walton Road premises in North Liverpool.

Community Shop provides local communities with access to high-quality, low-cost food and household products, and membership is open to local people who receive welfare support.

Members can also access personal development support at the Community Hub and the Community Kitchen offers hot meals to members and their families.

Feeding the people: Open Kitchen Manchester.

Open Kitchen MCR is a waste food initiative based in our Didsbury office. As the COVID crisis escalated, Open Kitchen stepped up, working flat out to make sure there was enough food for local people in need.

More than 70 volunteers – including 15 professional chefs from Manchester! – helped prepare, pack and distribute food to those who needed it most during these difficult times.

Onward has provided significant additional financial support to Open Kitchen during the crisis, helping it reach out to many more people.



Overcoming barriers to success in Lancashire.

As part of our commitment to customers and the community, we provide training and skills development opportunities which help improve employability and confidence.

In Hyndburn, Lancashire we manage the 1st Call drop-in centre where we deliver a project called More Positive Together.

Since the beginning of the project we have helped 67 people secure paid work, 19 people move into further education or training and 12 people secure volunteering roles. We also help customers overcome barriers including mental health, anxiety, depression, and debt so that they can realise their full potential.

To discover more, get in touch at 1stcall@onward.co.uk



Building homes.



“ With shared ownership and the deposit needed, we were like: ‘Why wait? We can do this right now’. ”

Onward
living

Adam and Molly,
first-time buyers.

Onward Living delivers new homes.

Our Onward Living new homes brand was successfully launched in April 2019 and in its first year has beaten its sales targets, supported by an innovative online campaign.

Onward Living achieved income of £5.19m from 68 sales across the year, beating its target of £4m on 65 sales and selling out of stock by the end of the year.

We are now firmly positioned as a leading provider of affordable homeownership in the North West, providing a sustainable balance of affordable homes, shared ownership and full ownership to meet the range of housing aspirations in the community.



Willow Green, Scarisbrick, West Lancashire, 3-bedroom homes.



Glenavon Park, Prenton, Wirral, 3-bedroom homes.



Elizabethan Terrace, Whitefield, Bury, 2 & 3-bedroom homes.

“ We’re proud to be helping build communities with Onward. ”

Mick Cunningham,
Construction Director,
Lane End.

A long-term pipeline to deliver new homes for years to come.

Onward has secured the opportunity to deliver a new community at Basford, in Cheshire, which will enable our ambition to deliver consistently high numbers of homes.

Across the North West we have got to work on-site building 771 new homes, supported by Homes England, in line with our plans from 12 months ago and above our target of building 500 new homes a year.

An established pipeline of schemes is cementing our reputation as a developer of quality and size, with a steady flow of development opportunities.

Marshalling our resources for long-term success.

Onward is tackling the skills gap in the construction industry by establishing the Building Bricks training programme, accessed free of charge by Onward colleagues and fellow Registered Providers.

We have established a new finance business partnership with Proval that will provide stronger assurance for our expanding new homes programme.

Our property development team has grown to include 12 new members of staff, giving us more hands to deliver more homes in the years ahead.

“ Building Bricks has given me invaluable experiences through sessions led by experts in their fields. ”

Bronte Aspin-Wood,
Trainee Assistant
Project Manager.

Supporting you.



Sheltered and supported housing are right at the heart of our mission to help all of our customers enjoy their independence and get the most out of life.

Our supported housing service helps people with particular needs arising from disabilities to find the right homes for their requirements. We currently operate four Extra Care schemes and have two

“ We often see our customers flourish in confidence. Their health and wellbeing improves, and they become much more active. ”

Kelly Smith, Supported Housing Team Leader

more in development. These provide a higher-level of support for customers, with additional care staff and tailored social care packages for those with more complex needs.

Our sheltered housing service provides secure homes for older customers. We operate 4,000 sheltered properties across 26 council areas in the North West, working with support providers to help our customers live happily, safely and as independently as possible.

NEW PURPOSE-BUILT SUPPORTED HOMES.

Onward has recently opened a purpose-built, state-of-the-art supported living scheme in Merseyside. Coleman Court is operated in partnership with Cooper Noble Care and features 12 self-contained flats.

Customers will benefit from 24-hour access to support from trained professionals.

Richie has just moved into Coleman Court. Richie said: “I feel happy to have moved here, it’s really modern. I like that I can walk to the shops and I’m closer to my family so I will be able to spend more time with them.”



Things to look forward to...

The year ahead.

Next generation customer contact centre launches.

Customers will be able to get in touch with Onward in more ways than ever before. New technologies will be used to get you in touch with the right person, with all the right information, so we help you more quickly.



Launching your new Customer Charter.

Your new Charter will clearly outline what services and standards you can expect from Onward. It will also help more customers get involved in making the decisions that impact you.

Building homes across the North West,

delivering 500 new homes in our drive to meet the full range of housing aspirations held by current and future customers.



Ramping up investment in key regeneration neighbourhoods in Preston, Hattersley and Runcorn. We will invest in properties across the 55 neighbourhoods managed by Onward across the North West.

New relationships with social partners

as we expand our ability to make a positive difference in the communities we serve. Onward will build on success in areas such as tackling homelessness and widening access to good, affordable food.



The Onward Board.



In common with all housing associations, Onward is governed by a Board of experienced and senior people.

Their role is to hold the Onward leadership team to account by understanding, probing and, where necessary, challenging decisions made. First and foremost, Board members make sure that customers' interests are at the heart of all decisions.

1. Dr Neil Goodwin CBE,
Board Chair

Neil is an experienced Board Chair, leadership academic and a former chief executive. He also chairs Liverpool Health Partners, the Liverpool City region's academic health science partnership of NHS Trusts and universities. In 2007 Neil was awarded CBE for services to the NHS.



Brian Roebuck
(not pictured)

Board Deputy Chair

2. Wyn Dignan MBE

Senior Independent Director

3. Bronwen Rapley

Chief Executive

4. Sandy Livingstone

Executive Director of Property

5. Paul High

Non-executive Director

6. Michael Verrier

Non-executive Director

7. William Hewish

Non-executive Director

8. Rachel Barber

Non-executive Director

9. Mike Gerrard

Executive Director of Finance

10. Catherine Farrington

Company Secretary

Our performance.



Income

	2018/19	2019/20
Income collection	100.2%	100.92%
Current tenant arrears	4.98%	4.6%



Lettings & turnover

	2018/19	2019/20
Average relet time (excluding major repairs)	49.1 days	52.4 days
Average relet time (general needs only)	29.3 days	36.4 days



Repairs

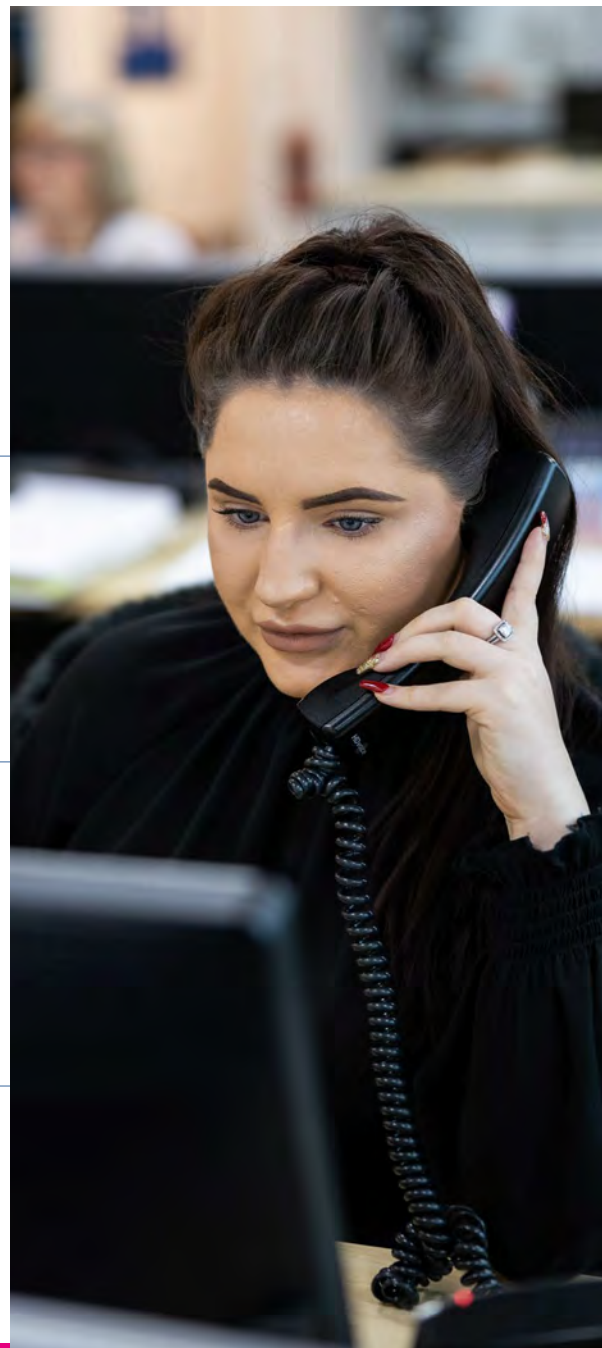
Completed within target timescales

	2018/19	2019/20
All repairs	85.5%	84.2%
Emergency repairs	90.6%	87.7%
Urgent repairs	81.1%	76.8%
Routine repairs	85.1%	85.4%



Compliance

	2018/19	2019/20
Gas inspections on time	100%	99.9%



INVESTING IN YOUR HOME.

This year we have installed..



729
new doors



1,526
new central heating
systems



416
windows



710
bathrooms



42
roofs



627
new kitchens

Responding to COVID.

Onward is looking ahead to better times and delivering improvements to your services. But no report on the last 12 months would be complete without reflection on how coronavirus impacted us and our customers.

Stepping up at a time of crisis

At the most challenging of times, and with many restrictions facing us and our customers, we had to invent new ways to do things. One innovation that made a difference to many was the introduction of automated welfare calls, followed up by specialist team members where a need for intervention was identified. We made 74,662 calls and over 1,650 of our customers asked for and received help.

For some this was about access to food, for others it was about paying rent or other financial concerns. Our financial inclusion teams continue to reassure, inform and support people facing money trouble, whilst we worked with charitable partners to get quality food to people who needed it.

In Liverpool, we continue to work alongside the Council and other housing associations to provide long term homes for homeless people given temporary accommodation at the peak of the crisis.

Delivering our services safely

Our Health & Safety team worked tirelessly to source suitable personal protective equipment (PPE) to pass on to the Environmental Services team. This enabled them to take deliveries, put together PPE packs for different service areas and drive them to wherever they were needed in the business across the North West.



Our Environmental Services Team.

Everyday heroes emerged

In the face of crisis, everyday heroes emerged from our ranks to redefine what it means to work for Onward.

From the Facilities Manager who persuaded half of the North West to donate goods to a local food waste initiative. To the cleaner who covered extra schemes and supported residents when other colleagues were isolating. And the repairs operatives who carried on when the rest of the country was working from home. Thank you.

But especially thank you, our customers, for your support and patience as we carry out our extensive plans for a brighter, healthier future beyond the COVID-19 crisis.



YOUR MONEY: HELP IS AT HAND.

Are you struggling with your finances? Onward can offer one-to-one advice and support on a range of financial issues including welfare benefits, accessing grants, utility bills, budgeting and debt management, home contents insurance, and much more!

If you would like to speak to someone about your finances, please don't hesitate to get in touch. Email financialinclusionteam@onward.co.uk or visit the Onward website.

