

YOUR VOICE.

NOVEMBER 2020

Welcome to the second edition of Your Voice – the newsletter that keeps our Customer Engagement Community members up to date with latest news and activities.

As we emerge from a second national lockdown and with winter firmly here, it is essential that we remain resilient and look after ourselves and others. Check out our hints and tips for remaining resilient on page 4 and read up on how you can access further support should you need it during this difficult time.

So, what have we been up to since we last spoke? Engaging with customers continues to be our priority and the Customer Engagement team has been busy over the past three months to involve you in decision making, policy reviews, feedback

sessions and loads of other activities. For the very latest on the engagement opportunities available to you, check out the [Get Involved pages](#) of our website or read on to find out more.

Enter our seasonal quiz on page 6! Yes, it's that time of the year, so make sure you enter to be in with a chance of winning some amazing prizes, kindly donated by our contractors.

We thank you for being a member of our Customer Engagement Community. We wish you all the best for the New Year and look forward to speaking again in January.

Jo Phillips,
Customer Engagement Manager

SETTING THE STANDARD.

In October, we launched our first Customer Charter. Co-created with over 100 customers, the charter sets out our commitments to you and reaffirms our dedication to delivering exceptional customer service.

The charter focuses on six key elements: Relationships, Communication, Your Voice, Accountability, Quality and When things go wrong.

Take a look at the charter [here](#).

We invite you to monitor how we compare against the standards.

Thank you to everyone who took part in creating the charter.



Our Customer Charter.

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

GREEN FINGERS.

Would you like the opportunity to help influence and monitor our new grounds maintenance service when it commences in January 2021?

If yes, each month you will be invited to complete a short satisfaction survey about the quality of the new service in your area. Your answers will help us improve and perform better.

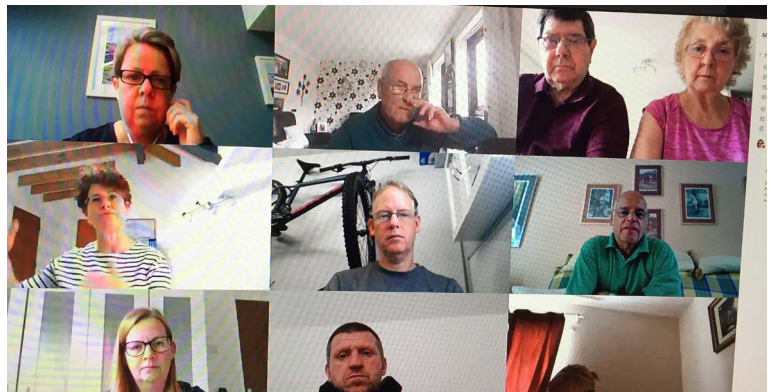
There will also be a chance to take part in feedback sessions with other customers. Sound interesting? Get in touch with our Customer Engagement Specialist Leanne at leanne.baldwin@onward.co.uk for more information.



RISING TO THE CHALLENGE.

The members of our three Regional Scrutiny Boards (RSBs) love detail and read all the small print. They look at performance figures and customer comments and use this information to challenge us to improve.

Over the last few months the RSBs have worked closely with our repairs improvement teams to look at ways to improve the service.



Their key focus has been:

- keeping customers up-to-date on appointments and improving communication
- getting repairs done 'right first time'
- introducing inspections to check the quality of completed repairs
- speeding up repairs in empty homes

"We are doing a collaborative exercise with the voids team who are currently investigating empty properties", says Dave from the Manchester RSB. Stephen says: "There is a lack of customer confidence about right first time, there is a lot of talk about it, but it doesn't always happen." Working together to identify where we can improve will boost our performance.

To continue their work through lockdown, members of the RSBs have learnt to work digitally and, for some members, this is completely new. With the support of the Customer Engagement team and by using phones, tablets and computers, the RSBs have been able to keep up to date and meet more frequently.

IMPROVING YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD.

We have now revealed our plans for your area, and we want you to [take a look!](#)

We have produced 58 unique plans for all of our neighbourhoods. The plans set out our commitments to improving services and supporting customers for the year ahead.

We developed the plans using the feedback you gave us, particularly through our 2020 STAR survey (Survey of Tenants and Residents). We hope they will make a real positive difference to your neighbourhood.

Over the next few months we will be seeking your views on how we deliver against the plans. If you'd like to be involved, get in touch at customerengagement@onward.co.uk.



ONLINE EVENTS.

“Listening gives power to the people.”



We love getting to know our customers.

To help you get to know our Customer Engagement Team better, we've been running online workshops.

The workshops focus on:

- your experiences
- involvement opportunities
- how involvement is improving services

Our latest event brought customers together from right across the North West. There were some great discussions around the importance of listening to our customers and providing them with feedback.

Here's what some of our customers said:

“Showing you are listening to your customers builds trust and people will respect the organisation more. It will encourage residents to give back to their communities and to Onward.”

“If you provide a service then you need to get feedback from the people at the sharp end, unless you get the feedback you don't know what it's like on the ground.”

Visit the website [here](#) to join our next event on 2 December, 10:00 – 12:00 or email us at customerengagement@onward.co.uk.

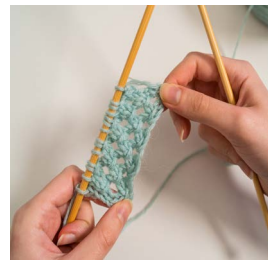
TOP TIPS FOR WINTER BLUES.

We present our nine need-to-do's for mental wellbeing during lockdown in winter.



Stay connected

It might be harder to keep in touch with friends and family, but make sure you do. Use video calls and phone calls, or go old school and write a letter!

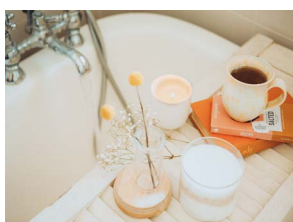
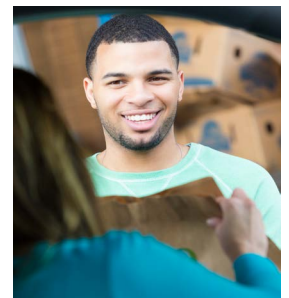


Learn

Take up a challenge by learning a new skill. This can help you feel a sense of achievement, and will almost definitely keep you busy.

Help others

Whether you're just helping around the house or supporting people from a distance, helping others makes us feel great.



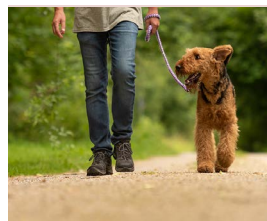
Make time for yourself

It's important to take time for self-care, like doing a relaxing activity i.e. running a bath, reading a book, doing a sudoku, knitting, or meditating.



Limit news

Limit the amount of time you spend on social media and checking the news – it can be draining.



Stay active

Keeping active is good for reducing stress and boosting our mood. It also provides an escape from work or home.

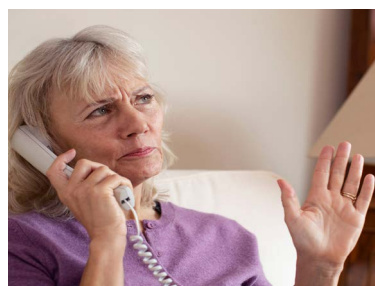
Plan your week

Structure is really good for us. By planning out activities in your week, you'll always have something to look forward to or prepare for.



Eat well, sleep well

Your health is your wealth. Try to reduce caffeine, refined sugar, carbohydrates and alcohol, and challenge yourself to drink two litres of water a day.



Ask for help

If you're struggling, the best thing you can do is seek help either through friends and family, or mental health charities and local services.

For more tips on mental wellbeing, visit www.mentalhealth.org.uk and www.mind.org. If you are struggling and need extra support as a result of lockdown, please get in touch with us on 0300 555 0600 or customerservices@onward.co.uk.

If you are worried about your finances during this time, please contact our helpful team at financialinclusionteam@onward.co.uk. They can offer support on debt, budgeting, welfare benefits, accessing grants, and utility bills.

HOUSEPROUD.

We're committed to celebrating diversity, supporting inclusion and promoting equality within Onward and our neighbourhoods.

As part of this commitment, we are pleased to support the brilliant HouseProud – an organisation which aims to empower social housing providers to improve services for LGBT+ residents. By working with them, we can become more knowledgeable about LGBT+ issues and better serve our customer's needs.

To take part in the next HouseProud 'Rainbow Roofs' Customer Forum get in touch with Customer Engagement Specialist Suzanne at Suzanne.londra@onward.co.uk.

Each month the forum brings together customers, housing professionals and agencies from across the North West, and focuses on issues that LGBT+ people face as well as organising events and celebrating diversity.

Attend this event and help make your home and neighbourhood a better place to live! Don't forget to follow @Houseproud_LGBT and @Houseproud_NW on Twitter to keep up-to-date on their great work.



IN IT TO WIN IT!

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.

October's lucky winners are John and Liz from Manchester! They are enjoying retirement but still like to keep themselves busy with painting and decorating around the house. Their experience with Onward has "had it's up and downs", but they believe things are improving.

Good luck to everyone for November's prize draw!



NO MORE TECH JARGON.

We're working with customers to improve our communications and publications.

Our Regional Scrutiny Boards (RSBs) have recently worked with colleagues and customers to improve the way we inform you about planned works in your home.

| Feedback said the letters were: | Now, we will ensure that the letters: |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • too technical • a little too formal • sometimes confusing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are simple • use friendly language • reference 'your home' rather than 'our property' • leave you clear on what will happen next |

RSB members said that short information films might help customers understand the works that will be carried out in their homes. Our first film, about what's involved in a kitchen replacement, has just been finished and more are planned. Keep an eye on our website for the latest updates.

If you are receiving any work this year such as a new kitchen, bathroom, replacement windows or boiler, then we would love to hear from you.

Volunteers will complete a diary throughout the duration of the work to tell us what is working well and what might need to be tweaked. Want to take part?

Let us know at customerengagement@onward.co.uk.

SEASON'S GREETINGS.

For a chance to win one of four prizes, including three £50 high street shopping vouchers and an exclusive hamper, find which one of these words doesn't appear in the wordsearch:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | C | O | O | T | G | N | O | S | N | G | S | V | L |
| O | C | F | O | I | C | O | S | Y | I | M | I | S | C |
| O | I | E | C | I | L | C | L | C | S | S | E | L | S |
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FROSTY
MITTENS
SNOW
GLOVES
STAR

WINTER
CHILLY
NIGHT
COSY
SCARF

Our prizes have been kindly donated by Axis, Fortem and Onward Repairs.

Email your answer to customerengagement@onward.co.uk.

Don't forget to include your name and contact information so we can get in touch!

Competition closes on 7 December.

WANT TO LEARN NEW SKILLS?

Onward is a member of Tpas, the national tenant engagement experts, and as a member our customers get access to their range of training courses and events. The courses available throughout November and December cover scrutiny, running a Tenants' and Residents' Association, engagement and equality, and complaints handling processes.

To see the latest opportunities and gain access to their training hub, visit the [Tpas website](#) and create your own tenant membership account. You will notice that some courses are free and some require funding. If you would like to attend a paid course, get in touch with us at customerengagement@onward.co.uk.

| | | |
|---|----------------|--------------|
| A New Complaint Handling Code for Housing | 25/11/20 10:00 | Tickets here |
| Tpas Virtual Members Event | 02/12/20 13:00 | Tickets here |
| A New Complaint Handling Code for Housing | 15/12/20 10:00 | Tickets here |

What other training are you interested in? In collaboration with our Social Investment team we can support you to find training, have your learning accredited and even gain certificates to support your CV and employment. For more information, email socialinvestment@onward.co.uk.

CHANGEMAKERS.

We are committed to shaping an engagement service that is accessible to all customers. We want to create a range of engagement and involvement opportunities that help us work with customers to improve Onward and the services we provide.

In October we carried out the first review of our Customer Engagement Policy. We hosted an online event and sent a survey to all CEC members, which 455 of you answered! We're working hard to analyse the results, but keep an eye on our website and in the next edition of Your Voice for how your feedback has helped us improve the policy.

POLICY INTO PRACTICE.

We recently worked with members of the Customer Engagement Community to review our Tenancy and Succession policies and we've had some great feedback. In fact, 92% of customers feel that our tenancies and our approach to succession is fair and appropriate.

We've planned several changes, following your feedback we will:

- Use plain language in our policy going forward, making it easier to read and understand
- Include detail on what 'protected tenancies' are within the tenancy policy
- Provide more clarification to the statutory and non-statutory sections of the succession policy

To take part in our next review, get in touch with customerengagement@onward.co.uk.