

CUSTOMER  
ENGAGEMENT  
STRATEGY

*At Onward we seek*

## **TO MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE IN THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE.**

We aim to ensure that all of our customers can feedback on and influence the services they receive from us. Providing a home is the core of what we do. Ensuring the services we deliver work consistently well will build our customers' trust in us.

Our approach was developed in collaboration with customers, using insight, sector best practice and with input from our operational teams.

We will respond to regulation and best practice guidance but our commitment to customer service will drive continuous improvement in any event.

This strategy applies to all Onward customers, regardless of tenure. It is important for us to understand from all customers whether we are delivering the right services to the right people in the best way we can.

### **Good customer engagement means that our customers will:**

- Be satisfied with the homes and services we provide
- When dissatisfied, be able to hold Onward to account and have a clear complaints process with named individuals dealing with their complaint
- Be able to influence the direction and decisions Onward makes
- Feel valued by Onward

### **And Onward will**

- Listen to our customers and use the insight we gain to improve homes, services and neighbourhoods
- Ensure that our customers have the ability to influence our direction and decisions and to hold us to account
- Develop a true 'customer service/customer care' culture that instils trust in Onward
- Understand what services our customers value the most
- Be able to make best use of our resources and ensure we spend our time on things that will deliver the most benefit
- Make better strategic decisions for the benefit of all our customers, present and future

## WHAT DOES CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT MEAN AT ONWARD?

We believe that developing meaningful relationships with our customers is critical to the long term success of Onward. Our customers have the best insight into how good our homes and services really are.

Customer engagement describes how we provide our customers with the opportunities to understand how our business works and to give us their views. We use a variety of methods to ensure we can hear the opinions and ideas of all those customers who want to influence how we do things at Onward.

Good engagement starts with a shared understanding of the service that can be expected, so developing clear service standards is fundamental.

Customer engagement is the responsibility of everyone at Onward – actively listening to customer feedback is the principle that should underpin every interaction between a colleague and a customer. We also have a dedicated team who lead and advise colleagues on the delivery of this strategy.

We recognise that levels of engagement can be different. Some of our customers prefer a more active role whilst others may engage only through the use of reactive services such as calling us to report a repair. We understand that not all customers want to engage with us directly and that different methods (online surveys, social media for example) will open up greater opportunities for customers to get involved. We value every opportunity to engage with and listen to our customers.

### **Our engagement activities include:**

- Scrutiny Boards where customers can formally review our performance
- A clear and personal complaints process
- Surveys seeking views and opinions on specific service areas
- Activities to shape and influence services
- Influencing local and national policy
- Social media, including comments and feedback
- Social investment and wellbeing activities
- Local initiatives (community days, coffee mornings)

### **Other forms of engagement:**

- Publications and information such as our newsletter
- A dedicated space on our website for customers to share views and opinions.
- Maintaining our website with relevant and up to date community news and information
- Tenancy and customer support provided by our colleagues and contractors on the phone or in person
- Digital and self-service solutions

The Onward Board, through its Finance and Performance Committee receive regular reports from the Scrutiny Boards and ensure that customer feedback forms part of our Board's decision making.

## HOW WILL WE MEASURE PROGRESS?

**We will measure our performance to demonstrate the value and impact of our customer engagement in many ways including:**

- Automated customer satisfaction surveys across our key service areas – Contact Centre, Grounds Maintenance and our Responsive Repairs Service.
- Reporting on and monitoring our complaints and compliments, to check the quality of our response and to learn from them.
- Social listening – we will actively seek out feedback through our social media channels.
- Scrutiny Boards will review services and provide regular ‘findings’ reports to the Finance and Performance Committee
- Colleague satisfaction – we will include relevant customer focussed questions in our annual colleague survey.
- We will invest in technology that can support and enhance the way we listen to customers and measure our progress.

We will create action plans and review our progress against this strategy each year.