

The Onward Newsletter

Designed with customers, for customers

January 2021



**Standing
with our
communities**

**INSIDE THIS
EDITION:**

Communities rally together
Update on your services
More support for those in most need

WELCOME.

Ready for the year ahead.

News of a fresh lockdown was a tough way to start the New Year.

The restrictions we are now living under are hard for people in lots of different ways, depending on personal circumstances. For some it is a return to home schooling, for others it is uncertainty at work or perhaps a lack of social contact.

But there are also reasons to be hopeful. The vaccination programme is pressing ahead. We can also take great heart from the way our communities pulled together in 2020 and are doing so again now.

In this newsletter you will find out about our response to lockdown and what we are doing to provide services for you and your neighbourhood.

Throughout December, Onward staff worked with our customers and local partners to deliver food parcels and Christmas presents in response to local need. Read on to find some brilliant stories about the work local charities are doing to help keep people healthy, properly fed and connected to others.

If you are worried about anything, please contact us. Whether you face difficulty in paying your rent, feeding your family, or are feeling lonely and isolated - we can help and are ready to.



Bronwen Rapley,
Chief Executive

COMMUNITIES RALLY ROUND IN SOLIDARITY.

Onward has worked with an inspirational group of community partners throughout 2020.

In December, The Florrie, a social & educational hub for the people of south Liverpool, led an initiative to pack and deliver food boxes to local families in need, while the L6 Community Centre created festive gift bags for the 26 Days of Christmas Appeal.

Meanwhile in Oldham, Oasis Hub raised money to help distribute Christmas hampers, treats and toys to local families in need.

Over at the Hyndburn Hub in Accrington, 300 Festive Feast packs were packed and delivered to over 1,000 local residents.

This winter, Onward has escalated our volunteering support to these and other projects across the North West in the fight to tackle food poverty and isolation.

82 Onward colleagues helped out at 12 different community action projects in December, providing 335 hours of volunteering support in total; preparing food parcels, creating toy sacks and delivering hot meals to those residents most in need. We look forward to stepping up our contribution in 2021.

If you manage a community project that you feel needs an extra boost, please get in touch with us at socialinvestment@onward.co.uk or apply for the Onward Community Fund now. As part of the fund, we can donate up to £5,000 to projects which benefit your neighbourhoods.

With thanks to all of our community partners, including Westhoughton Assist, the Naz Community Centre, Foundation 92, Beechwood Little Centre, Windmill Hill Community Centre, The Bread and Butter Thing, Hyndburn Baby Bank and St Matthews Primary School.



Bulb planting at
Windmill Hill, Runcorn.



Florrie food
deliveries,
Liverpool.



Toy and food hamper creation
at L6 Centre, Liverpool.



The team at
Oasis Hub, Oldham.



Food hamper
preparation at
Westhoughton
Assist, Bolton.

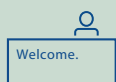


Sam, one of our
82 colleague
volunteers.

SERVICE UPDATE.

During lockdown we will provide you with services where national guidance allows. We will try to deliver as much of these services as we possibly can over the phone to avoid face to face contact and unnecessary travel. There may also be some delays as we make the best possible use of resources by prioritising need.

However, if you need one of our services and cannot wait, please contact us.



Office receptions

CLOSED



Face-to face meetings

PAUSED

Meetings will happen only where absolutely necessary.



Rent payments

OPEN

Pay online or by phone.



Repairs service

OPEN

We continue to provide a safe repairs service.



Gas safety checks

OPEN



External works

OPEN



Works on empty homes

OPEN



Communal area cleaning

OPEN



SUPPORT

We're still here for you. Get in touch, or visit the website for more information.

RESPONDING TO YOUR FEEDBACK.

In 2020, we asked you for feedback on our grounds maintenance service and thousands of you responded. You told us you wanted a clearer schedule of site visits, better quality control and a specification summary.

In response to your feedback, we have launched a new grounds maintenance service. We've increased the number of annual site visits and set out a more detailed specification for contractors.

You'll see a real difference once growing season begins, when our contractors will be more visible in your area. Look out for additional information on the changes in April.



REPAIRS UPDATE.

Our safe systems of working allow us to continue to provide our repairs service, and our frontline teams are working hard to meet demand.

We will continue to prioritise emergency repairs, but customers may be asked to wait longer for routine repairs to be dealt with.

Where we are able to attend a repair, we ask that customers please respect the safety measures we have in place to protect you and our operatives. We ask that you go into another room while the operative is carrying out the repair, leave all internal doors open and always maintain 2m social distancing guidelines.

We promise to do everything possible to keep you safe, so our staff may decline to deliver a service if they feel that all reasonable precautions aren't being taken by customers.



Your customer feedback helps us maintain and improve our repairs service. We welcome your questions, some of which are highlighted below.

“Can I share a photo of my repair with you?”	Yes. Customers can do this via the My Onward portal, email and Whatsapp.
“If I think something has gone wrong, how does it get resolved?”	Our newly formed Resolutions Team aims to tackle your repairs issues quickly and effectively first time.
“Do you check the quality of repairs?”	We regularly inspect random samples of completed repairs to ensure quality assurance.
“Will I ever hear directly from the contractor?”	Our contractors will aim get in touch with you if they need to provide you with a repair update, so please ensure you keep your contact details up to date.

If you'd like to provide regular feedback, get involved and help to improve services, join the Customer Engagement Community at customerengagement@onward.co.uk.



REPORT A REPAIR.

If you need a repair, we'll arrange a mutually convenient time to fix it.

Log you repair via the [My Onward portal](#)
Email us at customerservices@onward.co.uk
Call us on 0300 555 0600

SUPPORTING THOSE WHO NEED MORE HELP.

For many people this is a tough winter, but for some it is especially hard. There are lots of ways we can help.

CONTINUING OUR WELFARE CALLS.

Making sure our customers are safe and happy is our number one priority – something which is a whole lot harder when we can't get out and about to visit you.

That's why we've started making regular welfare calls to customers, just to say hello and check that everything is going ok.

Requests made by customers following a call have included support for essential shopping, information on local food banks, help in collecting medication and financial advice on coping through the pandemic.

We'll chat with you soon and help where you need us - we're in this together.



PREPARING FOR YOUR VACCINATION.



The covid-19 vaccination is currently being offered to individuals in priority groups. Appointments are being made via phone calls or letters. We strongly encourage you to attend your appointment.

If you have any concerns about the vaccination or need further support, please let us know.

Get vaccinated, protect yourself and let's defeat the virus.

COVID-19 SCAM WARNING.

Scammers are taking advantage of the pandemic. Make sure you don't get caught out.

A fake NHS text is circulating which looks very realistic and tells victims to click on a link to the NHS website. They're then asked to fill in a form and enter their bank details 'for verification' or payment purposes.

If you or anyone you know has been affected by this, or any other type of fraud, report it to Action Fraud on **0300 123 2040** or at www.actionfraud.police.co.uk.



MANAGING YOUR MONEY.

With covid-19 placing pressure on all of our finances, we're keen to remind you of some services and support available, if you need a bit more help.



FREE INTERNET DATA FOR KIDS

The Department for Education is working in partnership with network providers to support home learning for disadvantaged children.

If your child is, or has been, in receipt of free school meals, then you might be able to benefit from a free increase to your mobile data if you are a customer of:

EE	Sky Mobile
Three	SMARTY
Sky Mobile	Tesco Mobile
Virgin Mobile	

Contact your school or visit www.gov.uk to submit an application.

COLD WEATHER PAYMENTS

You may be eligible for a cold weather payment if you receive these benefits:

- Pension Credit
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Universal Credit
- Support for Mortgage Interest

To learn more about the Cold Weather Payment scheme, visit www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment.

RENT AND SERVICE CHARGE REVIEWS IN 2021.

In February, you'll receive a letter about a 1.5% increase to your rent from April 2021, in line with the terms of your tenancy agreement and the new Government Rent Standard. We'll also outline your new service charge breakdown (if applicable).

We're determined to make a positive difference in our neighbourhoods and offer good value for money, and these changes will help us to do that. The increase is vital for us to continue to manage and maintain your homes, build new homes to rent and invest in and support the neighbourhoods we serve.

More information about service charges, including an explanation of what they cover, can be found at www.onward.co.uk. Alternatively, if you would like to talk about your finances with a member of our team, contact us on 0300 555 0600.



INVESTING IN TECH.

Covid-19 has forced everyone to embrace new technologies. At Onward, we're one step ahead and have upgraded all of our digital services so it's easier for you to get in touch when you need us.

We've launched online chat and WhatsApp, upgraded our telephone system and improved our Messenger, Twitter and Facebook platforms.

We will continue to invest in our digital services in 2021 to ensure they are the best they can be. To find out more, visit the Onward website.



BECOME AN INFLUENCER.

Are you interested in knowing more about the services you receive, how they can be improved and what we have planned for the future?

Would you like to be involved in helping us make those improvements?

We invite you to become an influencer and join our Customer Engagement Community.

Members regularly attend feedback groups, service inspections and monitoring meetings,

covering all issues from the repairs service to grounds maintenance and customer service.

There's no pressure or obligation to take part in all of our events – we encourage members to be involved in what they want, when they want. The Community is designed to work around you.

Get in on the action and become a changemaker today. Contact customerengagement@onward.co.uk or visit www.onward.co.uk to find out more.

IN IT TO WIN IT.

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

- REPAIRS
SERVICES
BUDGETING
UTILITIES
SUPPORT
- WELFARE
ONWARD
HOME
MAINTENANCE
RENT

Send your answer to customerengagement@onward.co.uk by 12 February 2021.

A winner will be chosen at random. Good luck!

I	C	E	E	L	O	C	S	N	V	R	A	L	U
A	I	R	P	U	T	O	A	I	E	L	N	S	N
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B	S	P	R	I	F	A	W	F	G	G	N	V	S
A	U	A	A	R	U	R	R	A	O	E	A	I	S
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S	U	U	E	U	T	I	A	E	P	N	I	R	R
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