

The Onward Newsletter

Designed with customers, for customers

June 2021

PLEASE KEEP A SAFE DISTANCE

A BETTER SUMMER AHEAD!

INSIDE THIS EDITION:

Onward Community Fund opportunities
Improvements to your repairs service
Investing in care for people living with dementia

Volunteers at The Bread and Butter Thing
in Hattersley, Greater Manchester.

WELCOME.

A BETTER SUMMER BECKONS

Important freedoms are returning to our personal lives this month as the Roadmap out of lockdown continues. I hope this allows you to enjoy spending more time with your friends and family.

As we move into the summer, our approach to delivering your services will be led by what is right for customers and our colleagues. We will move at the pace of people who will continue to need more protection, so we can all leave lockdown together, safely.

When we visit your home, or your neighbourhood, our colleagues will continue to use PPE. We will also maintain social distancing. Please help us keep everyone safe by doing the same.

Our plan is to help you enjoy your summer by giving you the best services we possibly can. In this newsletter you will hear more about our plans to use technology to assess repair requests more quickly, as well as a refreshed policy for dealing with complaints for when things go wrong.

You will also find out more about our plans to invest in providing care where it is needed, including a new Housing with Care Scheme and support for customers with dementia.

I hope you enjoy a wonderful early summer.



Bronwen Rapley,
Chief Executive



Liberty Farm is a Community Interest Company based in Tameside that helps people build life-skills through nature-based experiences. During a tough year when many faced isolation, the project has helped people stay connected with others and with their local environment.

Liberty Farm received a boost from Onward earlier this year so it could continue delivering Arukah Bushcraft sessions. People taking part learn traditional skills like fire-lighting, building shelters and making tools. Being engaged with nature and other people offers loads of social and health benefits and is lots of fun!



Community Fund has also supported **Metro Boxing**, based in Westhoughton. The Club brings together young people from across Bolton, with some facing tough times in their life and welcoming the opportunities provided by sport. Boxing teaches discipline, teamwork and emotional control, essential skills to getting on and building a successful life.

WORKING WITH YOU, IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOODS.

The **Onward Community Fund** is an initiative providing financial support to neighbourhood based groups and projects. In the last year, we provided around £100,000 to 37 projects, helping to deliver valuable experiences and opportunities to local people.

If you know about a group or project that could do with a boost, let us now. You could be eligible for the Onward Community Fund and be in line for a grant of up to £2,500.

Projects should aim to address one or more of the following themes:



Building stronger communities.



Supporting employment, training and enterprise opportunities.



Boosting digital inclusion so more people can interact and transact online.



Building community food resilience so no one goes hungry.



Improving youth provision to meet changing needs and create new opportunities.



Supporting mental wellbeing by providing access to support and green spaces.



OUR GREEN COMMITMENT TO YOUR COMMUNITY.



We're committed to finding new ways to deliver services that help us enhance your local environment, green spaces and tackle climate change. Our **Environmental Services** team have a big role to play in reducing our carbon footprint and improving your neighbourhood, including by:

- Introducing battery operated equipment and vehicles
- Reducing the use of chemicals, fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides
- Reducing water consumption
- Recycling green waste
- Selecting plant species which are pest and disease tolerant

We are taking action to make our neighbourhoods greener and more sustainable. For example, putting in shrub and flower beds with adaptable plant species that need less water but still look great all year round. We'll also start mulching soil with recycled bark, which will aid moisture retention and decrease weed growth.

Across the North West we manage 20,000 trees, but we want even more! We will plant more trees to help reduce the amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere.



NEW POLICY FOR HANDLING YOUR COMPLAINTS.

Last year we reviewed how we handle complaints and in January 2021 we launched a new **Complaint Resolution Policy**. The new policy is redesigned to make our complaint handling process more clear, simple and accessible to customers. We will always work hard to get things right first time, but when things do go wrong, we want to sort it out for you as quickly as possible.

We have also introduced new ways for you to raise any issues or concerns with us. By getting in touch with us using live chat on our website, Whatsapp, and SMS, we can resolve customer concerns at the very first point of contact. **Visit our website** to take a look at the new policy.



NEW SERVICE IMPROVEMENT: REPAIRS GO VIRTUAL.

We have just launched a new service that allows us to carry out inspections remotely using video calling. Many of us have got used to communicating in this way over the past year and we are finding it increasingly helpful for diagnosing all sorts of repair requests.

Some repairs are not straightforward to diagnose by phone, so we may want to visit your home to carry out an inspection. This can be the best way to help us understand the problem and take the correct steps to put things right.

In future, we will try to conduct an initial inspection using video where possible and your help in this will be greatly appreciated.

Virtual inspections will free up time for our Repairs Specialists to do more follow up visits on completed jobs, so we can be sure that the workmanship of our contractors is up to standard and you are 100% satisfied.



The Government Roadmap out of lockdown means that most businesses are subject to restrictions until July. This makes it harder for us to deliver some services because of limits to our supply chains and the availability of staff. As a result, some services are being delivered differently and we are doing as much as we can by telephone or video call, to minimise contact and travel.

Delays remain possible in the weeks ahead, so please consider whether your repair request is urgent. We are prioritising need so we can make the best use of limited resources.

If you need one of our services and cannot wait, contact us. Our established safe systems of working mean that we continue to provide most customer services effectively and safely, although it may take a little longer than usual and we will deliver services remotely where we can.



**IF YOU NEED US,
WE CAN HELP.**



HELPING CUSTOMERS LIVING WITH DEMENTIA.

We provide over 3,000 specialist homes in our sheltered and Housing with Care schemes across Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside. Within some of these, we support customers living with dementia and help them maintain their independence.

Dementia is a term used to describe a range of progressive conditions affecting the brain. There are over 850,000 people living with dementia in the UK today. Of these, approximately 42,000 suffer with young onset dementia, which affects people under the age of 65. It is estimated that the number of people living with the condition in the UK by 2025 will rise to over one million.

This is why we are committed to providing long-term support, care and housing for people with dementia, now and in the future.

PAUL'S STORY.



Paul, 68, is an amateur musician from Merseyside and has been an Onward customer for two years. After an astonishing 66 years in his

former home, Paul tells that the bungalow he now lives in was “love at first sight”.

Paul was diagnosed with dementia five years ago. Since then, he has received training to become a volunteer with Dementia Friends in his community. His work has spanned audits with Merseyrail, training for local police and presenting to school children.

He has travelled all over the UK to speak about dementia, including at The Plaza, Stockport, and has written a comedy play on the topic, which sold out the Everyman theatre for two nights! Paul is hopeful and focuses on promoting the things that people living with dementia CAN do.

“I’ve got plenty of living to do”, he says. And for any individuals living with dementia, he shares some advice: “Please get up and get out. Focus on the things you can do, and don’t sit in your armchair looking at the tele. It won’t do you any good. Get out into the fresh air, walking, and hopefully you’ll be able to live your life much longer and more happily.”

Read more of Paul’s story on the Onward website and social channels.

To find out more about Dementia Friends and how to volunteer, visit **www.dementiafriends.org.uk**.

NEW STATE OF THE ART CARE SCHEME.



Opening in July, Oaklands is a new Housing with Care scheme located in Fallowfield, near Manchester City Centre. The scheme will specialise in bespoke packages of care for individuals with cognitive and neurological conditions. It is one of the first of its kind, with on-site carers and 24/7 assistive technology. The care people receive will be excellent.

Residents will have access to a private bistro, hairdressers, communal lounges and safe outdoor spaces, including a secure roof terrace. Self-contained one and two bed apartments come ready to move into, with flooring, blinds and integrated appliances provided.

Get in touch to find out more and register interest on 0300 555 0600.



TACKLING FLY TIPPING.

We currently spend over £100,000 of rental income on tackling fly tipping each year, and in a recent survey 63.5%* of customers told us that fly tipping was a problem in their area.

Using your feedback and working in collaboration with local authorities and customers, we are determined to stamp out fly tipping in 2021.

We'll do more promotion, encourage customers to actively report incidents, respond to incidents better, and launch local initiatives.

We will also take action against perpetrators. To make a report or suggest ideas, contact 0300 555 0600.

* 481 of 757 customers who responded to the survey.



MONEY PROBLEMS? CALL US.

Life happens and money problems can quickly spiral out of control. In this situation, it's important that you get help as soon as possible.

Our **Financial Inclusion team** offer free and confidential advice to help you take control of your money, maximising your income and negotiating with your creditors. If you have a high level of debt, they can also refer you to agencies that will help.

So, if you're struggling to keep up with bills or rent payments, please contact us in confidence on 0300 555 0600.



SHAPE THE FUTURE OF YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD.

Are you interested in influencing services in your area? Or helping us to shape plans for your neighbourhood?

Become an influencer. Join our Customer Engagement Community.

Members are invited to join feedback sessions and service inspections, covering issues from repairs to grounds maintenance and customer service.

We encourage members to be involved in what they want, when they want. We are always grateful for what you can do and never bothered by what you can't. 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.

PENSION TOP UPS: COULD YOU BE ENTITLED TO MORE?

More than a million pensioners across the country aren't claiming all of the money they're entitled to. Could you be one of them?

Is there money you could access today? If you're single and your weekly income, including your pension, is below £177.10 single person, or below £270.30 if you're in a couple, you might be entitled to a top up by applying for Pension Credit. Get in touch on 0300 555 0600 for more information and support quoting reference PR1.



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:

OPPORTUNITIES

ENVIRONMENT

INVESTMENT

SKILLS

ONWARD

SUSTAINABILITY

WELLBEING

COMMUNITY

TRAINING

EMPLOYMENT

Send your answer to customerengagement@onward.co.uk by 21 June 2021.

A winner will be chosen at random. Good luck!

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M	N	M	E	G	A	R	E	T	E	U	O	I	M
B	T	E	E	G	Y	O	A	M	I	N	N	N	E
P	O	N	T	E	T	P	L	E	W	I	O	G	N
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