

Onward

The Onward Newsletter

Autumn 2021

YOUR AUTUMN UPDATE.

Autumn is upon us and for many families it is back to school. I hope that everything goes smoothly and you enjoy getting back into the old routine, or a new one. Some of you will be more conscious that Autumn arriving means Winter is coming. Although it has been wonderful to get back to normal in lots of ways, there are of course still plenty of challenges and everything seems so fragile.

At Onward, we are preparing for anything the Winter may throw at us, whilst hoping that our customers will have a healthier, happier and freer time than last year. In this newsletter you will find updates about your services, opportunities to make your voice heard and plans to build new affordable homes.

Separately, you will also receive our Customer Annual Report, which reviews the last 12 months and looks ahead to what comes next. I hope you enjoy reading it and if you have any questions or comments, we would love to hear from you.



Bronwen Rapley,
Chief Executive



FOOD FOR THE FUTURE.

The pandemic was a shock for our communities. Now is the best time to think about new ways of doing things to help us be better prepared in future.

Onward is a founder of the Hyndburn Food Solutions Network, an alliance of the community, the Council and local partners to tackle food insecurity.

Food Ladders is a new approach being taken to tackling hunger. It brings communities together and empowers people to help themselves and each other. We want to reduce the risk of food being hard to come by, as well as making food available during crisis.

For example, we are encouraging social supermarkets, local delivery schemes, community grow-ing and more flexible ways of paying for food.

Listening to you.

MEET TIM, YOUR NEW BOARD CHAIR.

After six years in the hot seat, Dr Neil Goodwin CBE is stepping down as Board Chair of Onward Homes as his term comes to an end. Neil has overseen the creation of Onward from five separate housing providers and leaves the organisation in a strong position to serve its customers.

Tim Johnston is our new Board Chair. Tim brings extensive experience in business planning and delivery during a career spanning public services, economic development and charitable organisations.

“ Our customers deserve safe, secure and good quality homes, supported by excellent services. It is important to me, and to all of us at Onward, that you are listened to and that we always act with great transparency. Our ambition is to be the most attentive, most responsive landlord and to leave you delighted with your home and services. ”

The Board of a housing association sets standards of leadership and control and helps define the values of the organisation. More information about the Onward Board is included in our Annual Report and on our website.



MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD.

We are looking for more customers to help us develop and improve our services. Can you help?

Our Scrutiny Board is a group of customers that plays an active role in running Onward. The Scrutiny Board reviews the decisions we make and how we deliver your services. Board members have opportunities to provide feedback directly to leaders in our organisation.

Opportunities are available to join the Scrutiny Board and we are now open to expressions of interest. If you want to contribute, let us know on customerengagement@onward.co.uk

We also have a Customer Engagement Community, around 10% of our customers. Our Engaged Customers are a sounding board for ideas and help us check in on how well we are performing. If you want to be involved, we would love to hear from you.



Services update.

SERVICES REMAIN OPEN DESPITE SUPPLY SHORTAGES.

The UK is currently facing challenges with supply and delivery of a range of goods. The North West is no different, so we are proactively managing our supplies and services to meet your expectations.

Our contractors are dealing with shortages and restrictions. In some cases, the materials needed to complete repairs are in short supply. There is also a lot of competition in the labour market, which can make it hard to get the right tradespeople in place to complete work.

Our full repairs services continues to operate, so if you need a repair please report it. It may be that it takes us a bit longer than usual to sort it out, but we promise to do everything we can to complete your repair as quickly and effectively as possible.



GETTING BACK TO YOU MORE QUICKLY.

We are always trying to find new ways to apply digital technology to give you a faster and more efficient service. Customers often tell us how important it is to get a fast response to questions, comments and complaints. You are increasingly getting hold of us through online chat and social media, often using your mobile phone.

With this in mind, we are continuing to invest in the development of our website and customer portal. Register for your **My Onward** account now via our website and access a whole host of information and services quickly. You'll be able to find:

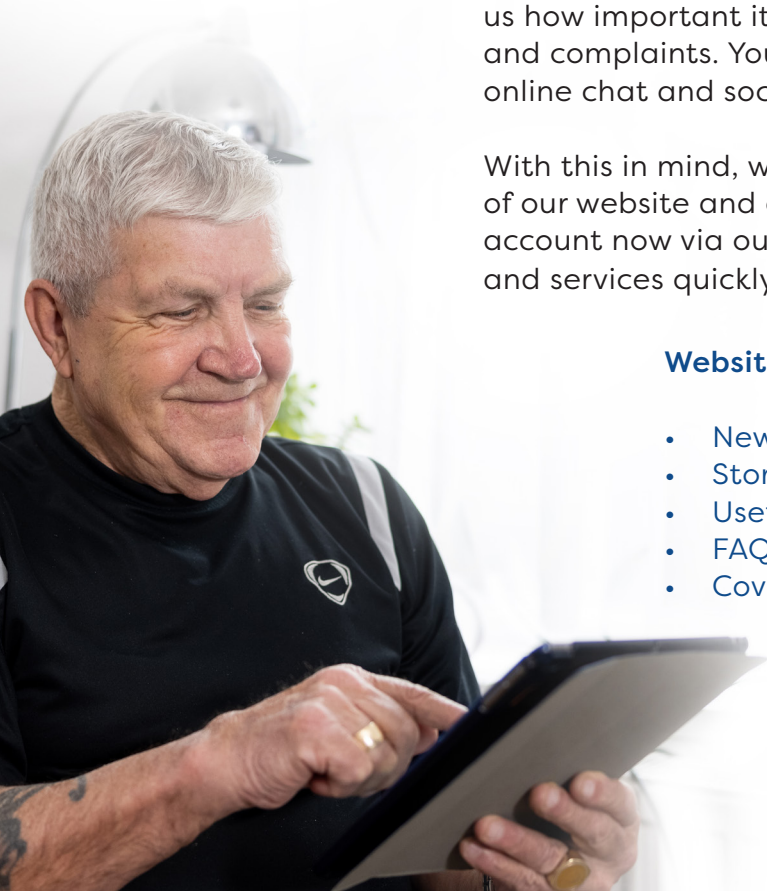
Website:

- News
- Stories
- Useful Information
- FAQ's
- Covid-19 Updates

My Onward Portal:

- Report Repairs
- Make Payments
- Search Payment Account
- Update Personal Details
- Report Complaints/ Compliments/ASB

Our online Virtual Chat Assistant is answering lots of customer questions instantly right now - give it a go!



A BUSY SUMMER.



The summer holidays saw 4 weeks of engaging activities for young people at the Oasis Hub in Oldham.

Activities included art, sports and games. Young people were given lunch and learned important skills, like how to make their own wraps.

They also tackled some tough topics like knife crime and mental health and interviewed local former boxing World Champion Anthony Crolla.

Overall this summer, 270 people took part across 14 sessions and 1151 meals were provided. Activities were supported by 17 volunteers, many of them Onward residents.

Thank you!

BUILDING NEW AFFORDABLE HOMES.

Onward has become an official partner of HomesEngland, the Government agency that helps fund new affordable housing. As part of the deal, we have secured grant funding to build 3,200 new homes in the years ahead.

Our priority is to be the best landlord we possibly can, providing our customers with the best homes and the best services. We also want to build more affordable homes, to help more people enjoy the safety and security of a good home.

The homes we are planning to build will be a mix of supported living, affordable rent and affordable home ownership, to meet the variety of housing need and aspiration.

Quality comes first and we will apply the latest building technologies to reduce carbon and keep homes warm and affordable to heat.

