

# The Onward Newsletter

Designed with customers, for customers

March 2022



**IN THIS ISSUE:** Onward Volunteering Programme, our Working Wardrobe project, advice on energy costs, Murdishaw update.



## WELCOME.

Spring is finally with us. I'm sure we all welcome the warmer weather and, fingers crossed, a much more normal season than in recent years.

We know that money is going to get harder for some of our customers in the months ahead. In this newsletter you will find out about some of the things we are doing to help you manage money and make ends meet. Our experienced Financial Inclusion Team continues to advise and support customers on a daily basis.

We are also putting in place more resources and new services to help with the rising cost of living.

Our priority is to continue to invest in the homes we manage, and the communities we are part of, whilst taking action to help those who face the most challenging circumstances. So if you need any help, or are worried about money or your home, please contact us. We will always help and support you.

Read on for some stories about the work we are doing to help people and

communities live the fullest possible lives; from supporting people into training and work, to being active alongside our customers in their communities. We also have our usual updates on key services for you.

We will be with you every step of the way throughout the year.



Bronwen Rapley,  
Chief Executive

## SUPPORTING YOUR ASPIRATIONS.



Whether you are looking to get into work or to progress within your current role, you could be eligible for a grant of up to £500 to help support your future prospects through the Onward Employment and Training Fund.

The Fund awards grants to Onward customers to help them access work, training or educational opportunities that support future employment, self-employment or in-work progression. It can also be used to purchase equipment for a particular role, course or job, or even to help with financial support for childcare services.

Onward resident Simon Cafferty applied for support after losing his job in the pandemic. Talking about how the Fund has helped him, Simon said: "The Onward Employment Fund helped me buy equipment to start my own business, including boxing gloves and body pads. I've spent the past year focusing on my mental health, losing weight and trying to become stronger every day. Thanks to the Fund I can help other people achieve their fitness goals whilst supporting their mental health."

To find out more about the Onward Employment Fund, including if you are eligible to apply, scan the QR code or visit [onward.co.uk](https://onward.co.uk).

# ONWARD VOLUNTEERING PROGRAMME.

The Onward Volunteering Programme celebrated its first anniversary in December 2021, with Onward colleagues taking part in community projects across the North West.



Throughout December, Onward colleagues volunteered 248 hours across Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside, including:

- Packing food parcels at The Bread and Butter Thing in Greater Manchester
- Organising Christmas meals at the Community Shops in Walton, Liverpool,
- Delivering parcels from the Food Bank in Lancashire
- Supporting the first Christmas Craft Fair in Murdishaw near Halton
- Preparing food at St James Church Food Hall in Salford
- Creating and delivering food hampers at The Little Centre in Beechwood, Wirral

Our volunteering programme runs all year round and offers colleagues a range of opportunities to get involved in local projects and support the communities that we serve.

## SPRING HAS SPRUNG.

As the days get longer and the weather warms up, residents will see our grounds maintenance teams more often.

We know that green spaces are important to our customers. That's why we are committed to providing good quality grounds maintenance services to ensure that you can enjoy the outdoors.

Our Environmental Services Team is responsible for maintaining grassed areas, shrub beds and hedges, hard surfaces, wildflower sites, and trees. We also work with contractors in several of our neighbourhoods and as part of our service we've increased the number of annual site visits.

We're often asked about how we manage and maintain the trees growing on our land. We have our own tree surgery team and tree works programme, which includes inspecting our 20,000 trees every three years to keep them in a safe condition. Maintenance works such as canopy reduction and pruning are usually done during the nesting season as they generally don't impact nesting birds.

We prioritise tree removal outside the nesting season, unless works are urgent or an emergency.

Please report any grounds maintenance or tree issues via the [MyOnward Portal](#) or call 0300 555 0600.





# REPAIRS UPDATE.



Our top priority is getting your repairs fixed as quickly and efficiently as possible. Our frontline teams are working hard to meet demand and we have brought in additional contractors across the regions to help with this, but some lower priority repairs may take a little longer than expected to complete.

We are still encountering some delays as a result of operative absence with Covid-19, as well as delays with specific material supplies, however we will always aim to provide advance notice where delays are unavoidable.

We will keep you informed if your repair is delayed or the appointment has to be changed.

The easiest way to report a non-urgent repair is through the My Onward self-service portal. Once registered, you can tell us if something needs fixing in your home with just a few simple clicks – and keep track of our progress.

If your repair is an emergency call us immediately on 0300 555 0600. Emergency repairs can be reported 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

We also have a range of helpful films that provide a quick and easy step by step guide to essential home maintenance, repairs and planned works to save you waiting for minor repairs that may not need to be completed by one of our operatives. Visit [onward.co.uk](https://onward.co.uk) for more details.

## SPRING CLEANING.

At this time of year people often take the opportunity to 'spring clean' their homes.

Before discarding an item, consider if it could be donated or recycled. There are local charities that will collect items free of charge, and many local councils offer bulky waste collection or have a recycling centre.

We're working with local authorities, contractors and communities to tackle fly tipping and litter across neighbourhoods and help make it easier to dispose of waste and unwanted items.

You can report dumped rubbish or fly tipping to us on 0300 555 0600 or via the [MyOnward portal](https://onward.co.uk).

Why not help keep your local area clean by taking part in the Keep Britain Tidy 'Great British Spring Clean' project? The campaign runs from 25th March to 10th April and it is easy to get involved.

Find out more at [keepbritaintidy.org](https://keepbritaintidy.org)



# ADVICE ON ENERGY COSTS

We know that life is getting more expensive at the moment and that this is putting pressure on personal and household budgets.

- From April, energy price cap is set to rise. The current advice is not to switch suppliers but if you're thinking of switching always check the options available beforehand. Remember that exit fees may apply if you're within a contract and decide to switch.
- You may be eligible for up to £140 off your electricity bill for winter 2021-2022 under the Warm Home Discount Scheme. Contact your supplier to find out if you're eligible.
- If you're in arrears with fuel bills or unable to top up your pre-payment meter, your supplier may be able to assist with a one-off grant to help or issue an emergency hardship payment.
- The Government has recently announced financial support to help with fuel bills and council tax, as well as further discretionary funding to support households who may not qualify for the council tax rebate.
- Many local authorities have welfare assistance schemes available if you need financial support.

Further guidance and advice can be found at [onward.co.uk](https://onward.co.uk)

If you have any concerns about finances, contact our Financial Inclusion Team for free and confidential advice on **0300 555 0600** or email [FinancialInclusionTeam@onward.co.uk](mailto:FinancialInclusionTeam@onward.co.uk)

## RENT UPDATE.

You will have received a letter from us in February that outlined your new charges for 2022-23.

You received your new rent amount, which is a 4.1% increase from last year, and a breakdown of your service charges if applicable.

Setting rents at this level means that we can continue to invest in homes and communities and provide direct support for those in most difficulty.

Our Financial Inclusion Team is here to help anyone facing difficulty, so if you are worried about making ends meet, please contact them for free and friendly advice and support

If you have any questions, or if you need any support from Onward, please contact us on **0300 555 0600**.





Onward

# 1st Call

## FUNDING SUPPORT FOR 1ST CALL HUB.

Onward's Employment Hub in Lancashire has received £340,000 in funding to help tackle unemployment in the region.

The 1st Call Hub is located in Accrington's Arndale Centre and is jointly supported by Onward and not-for-profit organisation Active Lancashire. This funding will allow the new More Positive Together Steps project, aimed at helping communities to access the job market, to run for the next two years.

The project aims to help communities to access the job market and support is available to Onward and non-Onward residents. Last year over 1,200 people were supported into employment across Lancashire, including more than 330 people in the Accrington area. Thanks to this new funding, MPT Steps will run alongside a number of other projects that the 1st Call Hub runs to improve health and wellbeing, skills and employment prospects.

For more information about the 1st Call Hub, visit [onward.co.uk](http://onward.co.uk).

For more information about Active Lancashire visit [activelancashire.org.uk](http://activelancashire.org.uk)



## NEW LOCAL CENTRE FOR MURDISHAW.



As part of our ongoing investment and regeneration work in Murdishaw, Onward has been working with the local community to develop a vision for a new Local Centre, which would include a café, a new Market Square with stalls, pop up shops and space for events, and a learning hub to support training and skills. The plans also include improvements to the green spaces for recreational use

Throughout December and January, we asked Murdishaw residents to tell us what they thought about our proposals for the new Local Centre. The responses have been positive with 85% welcoming the plans, and keen to see a range of activities available including youth clubs, walking groups, parents' groups and a general advice centre.

We were delighted with the community's response and will continue to engage with them and other local partners to share knowledge and ensure that local people are at the heart of the future development in Murdishaw.

Let us know if you have any ideas for your community and find out more about our work in your local area at [onward.co.uk](http://onward.co.uk)



# WALKING IN A WINDOW WANDERLAND.

Neighbourhoods across Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside were seen in a whole new light as Onward residents lit up their windows for Window Wanderland.

In February residents across Onward's Specialist Living schemes took part in the Window Wanderland project, creating a magical outdoor gallery of unique window displays for the community to enjoy.

Windows across the schemes were lit up and transformed with the artwork and images created by residents.

St Edwards Church of England Primary in Castleton, Rochdale also lent its support, with pupils creating artwork for display at Showley Court.

The windows were lit up for local people to visit the scheme and see the displays, bringing some cheer to the cold winter nights.



## FIRST IMPRESSIONS LAST.

Supporting our customers with 'Working Wardrobe'.

In the coming months, Onward will be setting up 'Working Wardrobe', a new scheme aimed at supporting unemployed residents to access clothes and outfits for job interviews.

The scheme will be launched later this Spring at 1st Call in Accrington to help customers who may not have suitable clothing to wear for an interview.

We want to give our customers the best possible chance of making a strong first impression and being successful in getting a job. On referral, customers will receive a one-to-one appointment at 1st Call in the Accrington Arndale, where they can choose an outfit and accessories to use at the interview, at no cost to them.

As part of the scheme, customers can also bring their CV and the job description or person specification along and the team at 1st Call will help with some final interview preparation advice.

To find out more about the Working Wardrobe scheme and how you can take part, contact [1stcall-MPT-referral@onward.co.uk](mailto:1stcall-MPT-referral@onward.co.uk) or call 01254 238533.





# JOIN US!

Did you know that over 2,600 customers are now part of our Customer Engagement Community? Have you signed up yet? By becoming a member, you can influence how we do things at Onward and help to make a positive difference in your community.

As a member you will receive regular e-newsletters, invites to forums and events and automatic entry to prize draws! You are free to choose when and what you get involved in be it completing a quick survey, joining an online meeting, or coming along to a local event. The choice is yours.

**“ 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. ”**



Join this month and you will be entered into a free Prize Draw to win one of two £50 High Street shopping vouchers.

We have recently set up some new customer forums – focused on Digital Innovation, Diversity and Inclusion, and Building Safety. Interested in finding out more? Then get in touch!

Sharing your views with us helps us to deliver the best services and customer experiences. It's really easy to join the Customer Engagement Community. Scan the QR code, visit [onward.co.uk](http://onward.co.uk) or call 0300 555 0600.



## LET'S GET TOGETHER.

Residents across our Specialist Living Schemes enjoyed coffee, cake and a catch up as part of the 'Onward Get Together' in February.

The coffee morning was held across 59 schemes, with each hosting games, music and prizes, along with a celebration cake.

The Get Together was a great opportunity for residents to renew friendships and meet new people, as well as have some fun.