



# Making the Onward Difference

Our Social and Environmental Impact

OCTOBER 2022

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## THE ONWARD DIFFERENCE

**Onward is a social impact business.** We hope that this document, our first ESG report, shows the energy and passion we feel for our core purpose; providing good homes for people on low incomes.

**We are a young organisation with deep roots.** In 2018, we united five housing associations into one and in 2020 we secured top ratings for governance (G1) and financial viability (V1) from the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). We are a social landlord focused on core business within a clear geography, providing 35,000 homes for 50,000 customers in the North West.

**We completed our successful first bond issue in 2021.** In 2022, we became a Strategic Partner of Homes England, committed to building 5,000 new homes between 2022 and 2030 and delivering significant investment in our existing homes.

**Making The Onward Difference is the purpose of our organisation.** The Onward Difference is the positive difference we make by enabling people and communities to be their best. We do this by providing homes people love, in places they are proud of.

Read on to find out more about our positive social and environmental impact.

**Bronwen Rapley,**  
Chief Executive





## OUR APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING

The Onward Difference is all about the positive difference we make, which is why we are a social impact business. Our Corporate Plan explains how we plan to deliver real-world social and environmental benefits for our customers and their communities. Defining, delivering and measuring these benefits is fundamental to our business planning and culture.

*Our approach to sustainability reporting has three drivers:*

- **Transparency for customers** about the benefits we are delivering for them
- **Helping funding partners** assess our social and environmental impact
- **Supporting social housing** by aligning with the Sustainability Reporting Standard (SRS)

In line with these drivers, the purpose of this document is to provide an annual report on our sustainability performance, organised around the themes of the SRS and illustrated with stories about The Onward Difference.

Looking ahead to future bond issues, we are interested to consider lending instruments with a link to sustainability performance. This report is a significant step as we prepare to discuss sustainability measurements in more detail with funding partners.





## STRUCTURE OF OUR ESG REPORT

The Sustainable Reporting Standard (SRS) provides a strong basis for ESG reporting for Onward, the UK social housing sector and our investor partners. In its current iteration, the Standard presents 48 reporting criteria organised across 12 themes.

Although this report illustrates good performance in many areas, we are determined to accelerate our journey to become a leading environmentally friendly landlord. We know we can improve in most areas and producing this report has thrown up many learning points. The next step will be to put in place an action plan to fold these learnings back into how we run our business and demonstrate year-on-year improvements in performance.

The rest of this report is structured around the SRS themes and criteria, enabling our partners to assess our performance alongside our peers in the sector.



## OUR PERFORMANCE AT A GLANCE

	THEME	CRITERIA #	QUESTION	ANSWER	READ MORE
SOCIAL	T1 Affordability & security	C1	For properties that are subject to the <b>rent regulation regime</b> , report against one Affordability Metric: 1) Rent compared to Median private rental sector (PRS) rent across the Local Authority.	100% of our General Needs Homes rent are below the PRS average for our region. 5.7% of our Supported Homes are above the PRS average due to higher services charges increasing the total weekly rent.	<a href="#">13</a>
		C2	What is the breakdown by type of Onward's % share and number of existing homes (homes completed before the start of the previous financial year)?	As of July 2022, of our 30,546 homes we have: General needs - 20,375, 66.7%; Intermediate rent - 92, 0.3%; Affordable rent - 1,874, 6.14%; Supported housing - 1,919, 6.28%; Care homes - 72, 0.24%, Housing for older people - 3,863, 12.65%; Low-cost home ownership - 1,078, 3.53%; Others - 1,272, 4.16%	<a href="#">14</a>
		C3	What is the breakdown by type of Onward's % share and number of existing homes (homes completed during the past financial year)?	71.67% of homes completed in 21/22 were affordable rent and 28.33% were low-cost ownership.	<a href="#">15</a>
		C4	How is the housing provider trying to reduce the effect of fuel poverty on its residents?	Onward is committed to helping the most vulnerable and making a real difference. Our Financial Inclusion Team ensure that our customer receive the best energy deals and get better access to financial support. We are also actively assessing and replacing outdated heating systems.	<a href="#">15</a>
		C5	What % of rental homes have at least a 3-year tenancy agreement?	80.2% of our social-rented tenancies have been in situ for 3+years.	<a href="#">17</a>

	THEME	CRITERIA #	QUESTION	ANSWER	READ MORE
SOCIAL	T2 Building Safety & Quality	C6	What % of homes with a gas appliance have an in-date, accredited gas safety check?	99.93% of our homes with a gas appliance have an in-date gas accredited gas safety certificate. 17 are currently in the legal process to gain access.	<a href="#">17</a>
		C7	What % of buildings have an in-date and compliant Fire Risk Assessment?	99.9% of our homes are Fire Risk Assessment compliant. We have 1 overdue assessment.	<a href="#">18</a>
		C8	What % of homes meet the national housing quality standard?	98.23% meet the Decent Homes Standard.	<a href="#">19</a>
	T3 Customer Voice	C9	What arrangements are in place to enable the residents to hold management to account for provision of services?	We currently have 2,600 customers signed up to our Customer Engagement Community, that is open to all our customers, and 3 regional Scrutiny Boards. The roles of both ensure we are accountable to customers and that their voice and perspective is a part of the decision-making process.	<a href="#">21</a>
		C10	How does the housing provider measure Resident Satisfaction and how has Resident Satisfaction changed over the last three years?	Onward carries out transactional surveys for responsive repairs and contact centre call handling, routinely seeking feedback from customers across a wide range of service areas including complaints handling, planned works and moving into an Onward home.	<a href="#">24</a>
		C11	In the last 12 months, how many complaints have been upheld by the Ombudsman. How have these complaints (or others) resulted in change of practice within the housing provider?	As an organisation, we are committed to acting when we receive complaints so that we learn and improve our services in response to customer feedback. A total of 10 Ombudsman complaints have been upheld against Onward in 2021, 7 of which were service failures and 3 maladministration. From these complaints, Onward has made a series of changes in our practice.	<a href="#">25</a>
	T4 Customer Support	C12	What support services does the housing provider offer to its residents. How successful are these services in improving outcomes?	Onward helps to run hundreds of projects each year that support customers, from increasing food resilience and digital inclusion initiatives through to supporting individuals in relation to their aspirations, skills, employment, and mental wellbeing.	<a href="#">27</a>
	T5 Placemaking	C13	Provide examples or case studies of where the housing provider has been engaged in placemaking or placeshaping activities.	Our main placemaking activity focuses on our major regeneration schemes in Hattersley, Murdishaw and Preston. They focus not just on bricks and mortar, but on building and sustaining communities where people choose put down roots and stay.	<a href="#">31</a>

	THEME	CRITERIA #	QUESTION	ANSWER	READ MORE
ENVIRONMENTAL	T6 Climate Change	C14	Distribution of EPC ratings of existing homes (those completed before the last financial year).	62.7% of our homes are SAP rating A to C. Our Sustainability Strategy will set out how we will raise all our homes to EPC A to C.	<a href="#">36</a>
		C15	Distribution of EPC ratings of new homes (those completed in the last financial year).	100% of new homes completed in the last year are rated EPC B or above.	<a href="#">37</a>
		C16	Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions.	Onward is currently compiling Scope 1 and 2 emission carbon footprint data using a specialised tool produced for the Greater Manchester Housing Providers (GMHP). Currently there are gaps in our data and systems are being devised and implemented to plug these gaps.	<a href="#">38</a>
		C17	What energy efficiency actions has the housing provider undertaken in the last 12 months?	Over the last 12 months we have continued to invest in our current and new homes to improve energy efficiency. Funding updates can be found within these criteria.	<a href="#">38</a>
		C18	How is the housing provider mitigating the following climate risks: - Increased flood risk - Increased risk of homes overheating	We are currently working on updating our existing flood policy to ensure that in the event of an extreme flood event, we have appropriate protocols in place, working with the local authority and national agencies as required. A key component of Onward's Sustainable Action Plans will be climate change risk assessment of the Onward portfolio.	<a href="#">41</a>
		C19	Does the housing provider give residents information about correct ventilation, heating, recycling etc? Please describe how this is done.	We provide information to customers about correct ventilation and heating in their welcome pack when they sign their tenancy agreement.	<a href="#">41</a>
	T7 Ecology	C20	How is the housing provider increasing Green Space and promoting Biodiversity on or near homes?	Onward's Environmental Services Team is leading on a number of initiatives to create greener, more biodiverse ecosystems and green space for customers. We have two woodlands in our ownership and approximately 20,000 trees.	<a href="#">42</a>
		C21	Does the housing provider have a strategy to actively manage and reduce all pollutants? If so, how does the housing provider target and measure performance?	Onward currently evaluates and manages any significant regulated emissions as a part of our compliance function.	<a href="#">44</a>



	THEME	CRITERIA #	QUESTION	ANSWER	READ MORE
ENVIRONMENTAL	T8 Climate Change	C22	Does the housing provider have a strategy to use or increase the use of responsibly sourced materials for all building works?  If so, how does the housing provider target and measure performance?	The way in which Onward use responsibly sourced materials and how we will reduce embodied carbon will be targeted in the emerging Sustainability Strategy.	<a href="#">44</a>
		C23	Does the housing provider have a strategy for waste management incorporating building materials?	Our Environmental Services Team proactively monitor environmental crimes and collect all fly tipping across all regions as and when discovered. Our strategy for monitoring site waste and scoring the contractors will be included in our Sustainability Strategy.	<a href="#">45</a>
		C24	Does the housing provider have a strategy for good water management?	Our strategy for monitoring good water management will be included in the Sustainability Strategy.	<a href="#">45</a>

	THEME	CRITERIA #	QUESTION	ANSWER	READ MORE
GOVERNANCE	T9 Structure & Governance	C25	Is the housing provider registered with the national regulator of social housing?	Yes, our registration number is LH0250.	<a href="#">47</a>
		C26	What is the most recent regulatory grading/status?	We received G1/ V1 rating in December 2021.	<a href="#">47</a>
		C27	Which Code of Governance does the housing provider follow, if any?	We are currently following the NHF Code of Governance 31 March 2021.	<a href="#">47</a>
		C28	Is the housing provider Not-For-Profit?	Yes.	<a href="#">47</a>
		C29	Explain how the housing provider's board manages organisational risks.	We have a Risk Management Policy and procedures. An Audit & Risk Committee oversees the risk management framework. The Board reviews its strategic risks at least every 6 months	<a href="#">48</a>
		C30	Has the housing provider been subject to any adverse regulatory findings in the last 12 months (data protection breaches, bribery, money laundering, HSE breaches etc) - that resulted in enforcement or other equivalent action?	No.	<a href="#">48</a>

	THEME	CRITERIA #	QUESTION	ANSWER	READ MORE
GOVERNANCE	T10 Board & Trustees	C31	What are the demographics of the board? And how does this compare to the demographics of the housing providers residents?	Our Board gender split is currently 40% female and 60% male. The average tenure is four years, and the percentage of BAME is 10%. Our customer gender split is 58.69% female, 41.31% male, with 11.05% considered to come from BAME backgrounds.	<a href="#">49</a>
		C32	What % of the board AND management team have turned over in the last two years?	Board turnover is 38% and Executive Team turnover is 25%	<a href="#">51</a>
		C33	Is there a maximum tenure for a board member? If so, what is it?	The maximum tenure is six years with two terms of three years.	<a href="#">51</a>
		C34	What % of the board are non-executive directors?	60% of the Board are non-executive directors.	<a href="#">51</a>
		C35	Number of board members on the Audit Committee with recent and relevant financial experience.	Two of the Board members have recent and relevant financial experience.	<a href="#">51</a>
		C36	Are there any current executives on the Remuneration Committee?	No.	<a href="#">51</a>
		C37	Has a succession plan been provided to the board in the last 12 months?	No, the succession plan was provided to the board in July 2020.	<a href="#">51</a>
		C38	For how many years has the housing provider's current external audit partner been responsible for auditing the accounts?	3 years.	<a href="#">51</a>
		C39	When was the last independently-run, board-effectiveness review?	We undertake an independently run review of board effectiveness each year.	<a href="#">52</a>
		C40	Are the roles of the chair of the board and CEO held by two different people?	Yes.	<a href="#">52</a>
		C41	How does the housing provider handle conflicts of interest at the board?	Our Code of Conduct sets out expectations regarding behaviours and conflicts.	<a href="#">52</a>

	THEME	CRITERIA #	QUESTION	ANSWER	READ MORE
GOVERNANCE	T11 Staff Wellbeing	C42	Does the housing provider pay the Real Living Wage?	Yes.	<a href="#">53</a>
		C43	What is the median gender pay gap?	Our median gender pay gap is 5.1%	<a href="#">53</a>
		C44	What is the CEO: median worker pay ratio?	As of 31st March 2021, this is our CEO-work pay ratio: 25th Percentile 9.38 : 1 50th Percentile 7.22 : 1 75th Percentile 6.31 : 1	<a href="#">53</a>
		C45	How does the housing provider support the physical and mental health of their staff?	We have an easily accessible employee assistance programme and occupational health scheme available to all staff.	<a href="#">54</a>
		C46	What is the average number of sick days (both long and short term) taken per employee?	The average number of sick days taken per employee is 9.69 days.	<a href="#">58</a>
	T11 Staff Wellbeing	C47	How is Social Value creation considered when procuring goods and services?	Social Value creation is currently assessed objectively to determine what is appropriate for each contract and what the market can deliver. This is then included within our tender assessment questions. We are currently working with partners and suppliers to review our processes within procurement.	<a href="#">58</a>
		C48	How is Environmental impact considered when procuring goods and services?	Onward has established a sustainability project team which is looking at developing a strategy to align work across Onward and identifying improvements that will positively impact on procurement.	<a href="#">62</a>

# SOCIAL

We are a housing charity and our purpose is to widen access to affordable homes that people love, in places they are proud of. But we are also in the fabric of our communities, using our position, resources and partnerships to go beyond housing and enable our customers to be their best.

## T1: AFFORDABILITY AND SECURITY

This theme seeks to assess the extent to which the housing provider provides long-term homes that are genuinely affordable to those on low incomes. The theme is made up of five criteria including the tenure mix of new and existing properties, the security of tenure and how Onward seeks to help reduce fuel poverty.

Providing warm, comfortable, affordable homes is at the heart of what we do as an organisation. Please find a summary of our affordability data below.

## OUR RENTS ARE WELL BELOW REGIONAL PRIVATE SECTOR AVERAGE.

**C1. FOR PROPERTIES THAT ARE SUBJECT TO THE RENT REGULATION REGIME, REPORT AGAINST ONE OR MORE AFFORDABILITY METRIC:**

### RENT COMPARED TO MEDIAN PRIVATE RENTAL SECTOR (PRS) RENT ACROSS THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

Average Weekly Net Rent	Onward	Mean PRS weekly rent (NW average at 30th Sept 20)	Onward rent as a %
General Needs	£85.09	£144.69	58.8%
Supported, HOP excluding those with exception	£75.26	£144.69	52.0%
Supported, HOP including those with exception	£83.10	£144.69	57.4%
Average Weekly Gross Rent for Affordable Rent	£105.27	£144.69	72.8%

## WE ARE FOCUSED ON SOCIAL RENT FOR PEOPLE ON LOW INCOMES.

**C2.** Share, and number, of existing homes (homes completed before the start of the previous financial year) allocated to: General needs (social rent), Intermediate Rent, Affordable Rent, Supported Housing, Housing for Older People, Low-Cost Home Ownership, Care Homes, Private Rental Sector.

	Owned and Managed	Owned but Managed by Other
General Needs	20375	1
Intermediate Rent	92	0
Affordable Rent	1874	0
Supported Housing	1708	211
Care Homes	13	59
Housing for Older People	3863	0
<b>Total Social Rented</b>	<b>28,196</b>	<b>0</b>
Low Cost Home Ownership	1078	0
Social Leasehold	960	0
Non-Social Leasehold	169	0
Non-Social Rental (includes 143 Market Rent)	143	0
<b>Owned and Managed</b>	<b>30546</b>	<b>0</b>

## EVERY HOME WE BUILT IN 2021/22 WAS AFFORDABLE.

**C3.** Share, and number, of new homes (homes that were completed in the previous financial year), allocated to: General Needs (social rent), Intermediate Rent, Affordable Rent, Supported Housing,

<b>C3: Number of New Homes built:</b>	
<b>General Needs</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Intermediate Rent</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Affordable Rent</b>	<b>172</b>
<b>Supported Housing</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Low Cost Home Ownership</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Market Rent</b>	<b>0</b>

## TAKING ACTION TO REDUCE FUEL POVERTY.

**C4.** How is Onward trying to reduce the effect of fuel poverty on its customers?

We have a strong reputation of supporting customers to access more affordable energy and reduce fuel poverty, with support from our Financial Inclusion Team who ensure that customers are receiving the best energy deals and receiving access to financial support. Advice and guidance for customers is also provided on the Onward website, to help customers identify practical ways of reducing their energy consumption and energy bills without impacting their health and well-being.

Onward is also progressively heightening the energy performance of housing stock through retrofit programmes based on the energy hierarchy specifically, where customers may be more vulnerable to fuel poverty. We are working with a variety of stakeholders to identify opportunities to increase our support to customers struggling with the cost of their energy bills. This includes a major innovative study to look at energy sharing across a city region, identifying opportunities for cheaper energy for households on low incomes, including collaborative opportunities with our Distribution Network Operators (DNO's) to support vulnerable customers.

In addition to this, we are working to retrofit our current properties to ensure that all our homes are at EPC rating C or above by 2030. Details of how we aim to do this is detailed in the Environmental section of this report. Moving forward, all of Onward's newly built homes will be dynamically modelled to ensure our homes are designed to heighten their energy performance.



## ONWARD DELIVERS AFFORDABLE HOMES WITH LOCAL SME HOUSEBUILDER

Onward delivered 27 new, affordable homes in Whitefield, Bury, through its partnership with local SME housebuilder Watson Homes. The former site of the Lord Clive public house on Mersey Drive now offers modern, good quality, affordable homes for local people. Customers of the 21 one-bedroom apartments and six two-bedroom apartments have access to 30 dedicated parking spaces at the front of the building, and landscaped communal gardens to the rear.

The new homes at Mersey Drive have been designed to reduce ongoing energy costs for customers, with high levels of insulation throughout and Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR) systems installed – redistributing and filtering warm air throughout homes.

Mersey Drive is also one of Onward's first new developments without a connection to the local gas grid, with electric panel heaters installed in homes and low energy lighting throughout.



CASE STUDY





## MOST CUSTOMERS STAY IN THEIR HOMES FOR MANY YEARS.

**C5.** What % of rental homes have at least a 3-year tenancy agreement?

80.2% of our social-rented tenancies have been in situ 3+ years. We are committed to providing secure tenancies for our customers, creating places where they can settle down and make their own. Onward offers assured non-fixed term tenancies for all of our general needs and housing for older people homes (HOPs). These are lifelong tenancies that only end if a customer leaves or breaks the terms of their tenancies.

## T2: BUILDING SAFETY AND QUALITY

This theme seeks to assess how effective the housing provider is at meeting its legal responsibilities to protect customers and keep buildings safe. The theme is made up of three criteria: disclosing gas safety checks, fire risk assessments and meeting Decent Homes Standards.

Maintaining high quality assets is fundamental to Onward's purpose as a social landlord and makes long term business sense too.

**C6.** What % of homes with a gas appliance have an in-date, accredited gas safety check?

99.93% of our homes with a gas appliance have an in-date gas accredited gas safety certificate, which equates to 17 properties with expired appliances, out of the 25,169 properties we are liable for. The majority of these are where we are unable to access the property and are currently in the legal process of progressing to court for access.

## C7. What % of buildings have an in-date and compliant Fire Risk Assessment?

99.99% of our homes are Fire Risk Assessment compliant. We have 1 overdue assessment, which is currently with our legal department to pursue access to the property.



## INNOVATIVE SYSTEM GETS FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE SEAL OF APPROVAL

Three high-rise towers in Onward's neighbourhood of Handforth were made significantly safer for customers, thanks to an innovative sprinkler installation. The three buildings – Jubilee Court, Woodstock Court and Stanley Park Grange – have all had state-of-the-art sprinkler systems installed in homes and higher risk communal areas, as part of Onward's ongoing work to improve fire safety for all its customers.

The sprinkler system, supplied by GTM Fire Protection, was part-financed through £36k funding from Cheshire Fire Authority. Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service hailed the quality and success of this retrofit project.

Onward also invested in backup power and water supply systems at all three towers, as well as installing new fire doors to all homes. This approach has been highly successful and is one that we will seek to replicate elsewhere in our properties.

## CASE STUDY





**ALMOST ALL OUR HOMES EXCEED  
THE DECENT HOMES STANDARD.**

**C8. What % of homes meet the Decent Homes Standard?**

**C3: Decent homes**

<b>Units to which DHS applies</b>	<b>28,196</b>
<b>Total units which fail DHS</b>	<b>498</b>
<b>Fail DHS</b>	<b>1.77%</b>
<b>Meet DHS</b>	<b>98.23%</b>

### T3: CUSTOMER VOICE

This theme seeks to assess how effective the housing provider is at listening to and empowering customers. The theme is made up of three criteria that cover board scrutiny, complaint handling and customer satisfaction.

Onward has an active and engaged customer community, backed by a comprehensive Customer Engagement Policy that sets out our strategy for meaningful dialogue with our customers. We want our customers to be involved with us at every level, and it is vital that we hear their views on what we are doing well, and where we can improve.



## GIVING OUR CUSTOMERS A REAL SAY.

### C9. What arrangements are in place to enable customers to hold management to account for the provision of services?

We aspire to be a listening landlord that hears what customers want and improves our homes and services in response.

Respecting our customers and giving them a voice is important to us, which is why we invest in a Customer Scrutiny Board and a wider engaged community of 2,000 customers. These customers volunteer to take part in shaping our services and driving improvements, helping to make our homes and neighbourhoods better places to live.

Our Scrutiny Board reflects a diverse range of views with representation from customers from each of our three regions. The Board meets with Onward colleagues every three months to hold us to account, review our performance and services, and identify where improvements can be made.

During the last financial year, we have worked with colleagues and customers to set up engagement activities to ensure that customers play an active role in Diversity and Inclusion, Leasehold, Building Safety and Digital Inclusion - providing an opportunity to create and deliver inclusive services for all our customers.

Looking ahead, we aim to increase the number of engaged customers to 10% in each of our 60 neighbourhoods, to ensure a more representative range of voices will be heard.

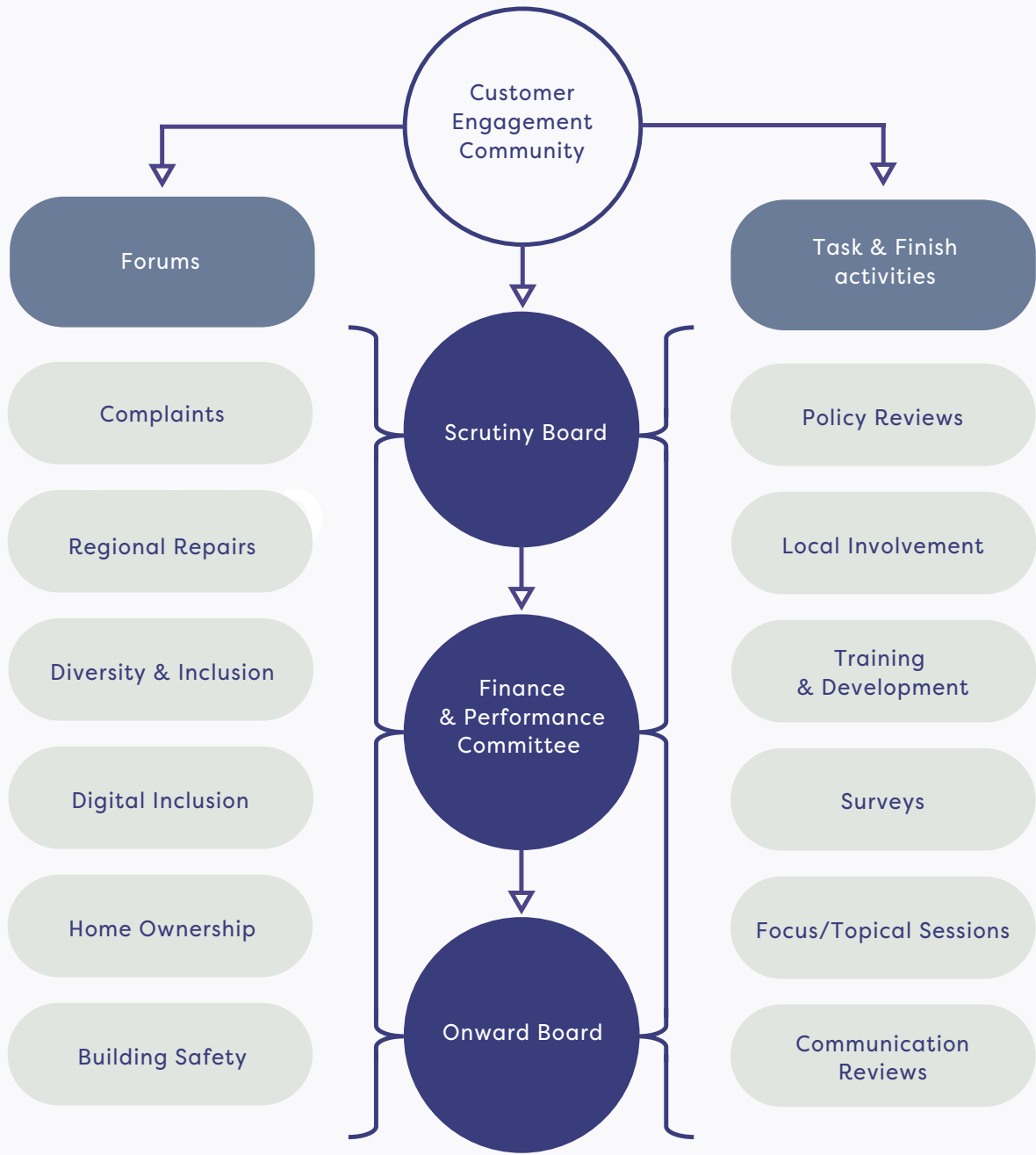
<b>Performance management</b>	Our scrutiny board is made up of customers across our 3 regions to review our performance 4 times a year to hold us to account.
<b>Governance</b>	Customers are regularly consulted on key aspects of our policies, as well as being involved in assessing our performance against the Regulatory Standard.
<b>Service Improvement</b>	Our Customer forums such as Diversity & Inclusion, Leasehold and Repairs meet several times as year to influence and shape services.

Read our full Customer Engagement Impact Report [here](#).

**2,600**  
members in our  
Customer Engagement  
Community

Our customers  
volunteered  
**2,064**  
hours of their time  
to help improve  
our services

We have  
hosted  
**42**  
engagement events  
with customers in  
the last year



Our Community Engagement Structure



## A LANDLORD FOR EVERYONE

Throughout the past year we worked on several campaigns and promoted key engagement events with the aim of sharing stories and advocating our diverse communities and our customers who live in them.

In February 2021, we announced our intention to join the HouseProud Pledge Scheme. HouseProud was set up in 2015 and its Pledge Scheme empowers landlords to be more responsive and accountable to LGBTQ+ customers. We helped LGBTQ+ customers to raise their voice and take part in the Rainbow Roofs LGBT+ Customer Forum in 2020-21 - bringing together customers, housing professionals, agencies, and local authorities from across the North West.

We shared the stories of some incredible women as part of International Women's Day 2021, like Jennifer John - an Onward customer and founder of Jennifer John Music, an organisation based in Merseyside which provides accessible music training and artistic development. Jennifer John Music was awarded a grant from Onward to help the organisation continue its great work in the community. Together, we have been able to offer free music workshops to customers.



**CASE  
STUDY**

## IMPROVEMENTS ON SATISFACTION AND MORE WORK TO DO.

**C10.** How does the Housing Provider measure Customer Satisfaction and how has Customer Satisfaction changed over the last three years?

Onward is committed to listening to our customers. We measure satisfaction by routinely seeking feedback from customers across a wide range of service areas including those that have had a repair, complaint, planned works or moving into an Onward home.

In Q4 of 2021/22, we introduced a 'customer pulse' survey where we sought feedback from a sample of 1,000 customers each month on how they feel about the overall service we provide and the quality of their home.

### OUR HIGH-VOLUME TRANSACTIONAL SATISFACTION SURVEY:

#### Gas and repairs

#### Contact centre

Year/Quarter	Customer satisfaction
Q4 2020/2021	80.2%
Q4 2021/2022	83.7%

Year/Quarter	Customer satisfaction
Q4 2020/2021	86.6%
Q4 2021/2022	83.7%

Onward carries out ad hoc survey work to support service improvement and/or to carry out engagement with customers at a local level. Examples of this include seeking feedback on how we can invest in and develop neighbourhoods and then, more broadly, obtaining customer feedback on our new Corporate Plan.

In the latter half of the last financial year, we started to ensure our approaches to complaints, planned works and new customer surveys offer more relevant and meaningful feedback. We introduced new, timelier automated survey processes.

As part of this review, we have also started to make verbatim customer comments more readily available to colleagues and will be looking to implement a new approach to understanding customer sentiment.

Our upcoming Customer Perception Survey will ensure that we have processes in place to seek feedback and report against the upcoming Customer Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), enhancing our customer insight and performance.



## LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS.

**C11.** In the last 12 months, how many complaints have been upheld by the Ombudsman. How have these complaints (or others) resulted in change of practice within Onward?

As an organisation, we are committed to acting when we receive complaints so that we learn and improve our services in response to customer feedback. A total of 10 Ombudsman complaints have been upheld against Onward in 2021, 7 of which were service failures and 3 maladministration. From these complaints, Onward has made a series of changes in our practice.

**To create a more efficient and effective service for managing complaints and improving our services in the future, we have:**

- Improved coordination and performance by tracking, assigning, resolving and assigning complaints with our Omni platform.
- Appointed an Ombudsman Champion within the Customer Resolutions team to ensure close monitoring and management of contact from the Housing Ombudsman service.
- Creating inspection records in our internal system (Orchard) to actual orders so that contractors can deliver changes.
- Scoping a self-service customer approach to booking appointment slots.
- Rolling out customer communication training across our property teams
- Established a new Complaints Forum of real customers that meets quarterly to check in on how well we are handling complaints
- Our current five-year investment plan will also be made available to all customers and staff, to provide clear and transparent information relating to homes investment programmes.

By making these changes, we have reduced the average time for resolving a complaint from 11 days last year to 8 days in 2022. Informal complaints are usually resolved in one or two days.

We are determined to make every complaint an opportunity to learn how to do better, using data and personal stories to understand what our customers want and expect. Our Complaints Report sets out how we the lessons we have learnt from our complaints to deliver better services.

Read our latest Complaints and Compliments Report for 2021/22 [here](#).



## T4: CUSTOMER SUPPORT

This theme seeks to assess the effectiveness of the initiatives that the housing provider runs to support individual customers. The theme is made up of two criteria that cover: What support is provided? How successful is it?

Onward offers a range of support services, including helping customers to build financial resilience. We want to have a positive impact on every single one of our customers, and make sure we always provide meaningful support.

## PUTTING £2.8M BACK INTO CUSTOMER POCKETS.

**C12.** What support services does Onward offer to its customers.

How successful are these services in improving outcomes?

Onward helps to run hundreds of projects each year that support our customers, from increasing food resilience and digital inclusion initiatives through to supporting individuals in relation to their aspirations, skills, employment, and mental wellbeing. Across the organisation, we have an overwhelming aspiration to do more for our customers.

**This support includes:**

- A Financial Inclusion team on hand to support customers with money issues and help claim benefit support.
- Our Social Investment team help customers get onto training and employment. We also assist customers and the community through a wide variety of initiatives including the Onward Employment & Training Fund and Onward Community Fund.
- We work with charitable partners to maximise our positive impact in the communities we serve.
- We signpost customers to other services e.g. financial advice, education, mental health advice, tenancy support, antisocial behaviour, aids & adaptations.

**In the last financial year:**

Our Financial  
Inclusion team helped

**2,097**

customers to access  
free financial inclusion  
advice, generating

**£2.83m**

in additional income.

Our Social  
Investment Team  
awarded around

**£100,100**

in community grants  
to **64** projects as  
part of the Onward  
Community Fund.

Our 1st Call  
employment service  
in Lancashire  
supported

**2,914**

customers,  
of which

**1,205**

were given  
financial support



## MAKING THE ONWARD DIFFERENCE WITH OUR COMMUNITY FUND

The Onward Community Fund was launched in 2017 to provide support to community organisations and projects in our neighbourhoods across Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester and Cheshire. Organisations can submit a funding application of up to £2,500 for a project that tackles one of our four investment themes including work, food, green and digital. We have supported dozens of projects across our communities and an example from Greater Manchester is provided below.

Based in Hattersley, Ark of Hope applied for £1,437 of funding to provide resources to facilitate meetings for local people to learn more about African culture. The group will organise activities such as sewing classes to teach traditional crafts, host a drumming circle and will provide Nigerian food so participants can taste some of the national authentic dishes.

**CASE  
STUDY**



## HOW WE HELPED SIMON SET UP HIS OWN BUSINESS

The Onward Employment and Training Fund awards grants of up to £500 to people who live in Onward properties to help them access work, training or educational opportunities that support future employment, self-employment, or in-work progression. The fund has been used by our customers for a variety of different reasons to help remove some of the barriers they have faced when seeking employment.

Onward customer Simon Cafferty applied to the Employment Fund after losing his job as a magician in the pandemic. Throughout lockdown, Simon used the time at home to work on his health and fitness, losing a total of 95 pounds. He found a passion for exercise, particularly Muay Thai boxing, that also helped improve his mental health by reducing anxiety, depression, and negative mood – overall improving his self-esteem. With the help of Onward's Employability Fund, Simon has been able to purchase equipment to help start up his own personal training business.

**CASE  
STUDY**



## OUR LANCASHIRE CUSTOMERS' 1ST CALL FOR EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

1st Call is Onward's flagship support programme; here to help our customers with employment & training support, financial support & applications, and general housing advice.

A team of seven provide tailored 1-2-1 support to customers living in Lancashire, giving them an opportunity to engage in a range of activities that will help improve their overall health and wellbeing and move them closer to the labour market. The support offered is open to the whole community and is tailored to the individual's needs to make sure we have the maximum positive impact.

At the heart of 1st Call is an ambition to support the customers of Lancashire into employment and help improve their overall health and wellbeing. Our flagship unit in Accrington supported over 2,914 people in 2021/22, including 330 people through the More Positive Together Project.

Of these, 120 gained employment, and over 100 moved into job search, with the team achieving all their targets in that particular project eight months ahead of the last financial year. Due to the great success of the provision in Accrington, the team will be extending their offer into Preston and Hattersley.



CASE  
STUDY

## T5: PLACEMAKING

This theme seeks to highlight the wider set of activities that housing providers undertake to create well-designed homes and places that meet local needs and provide great places for people to live and enjoy. The theme is made up of one criterion, with space for the housing provider to give examples of their placemaking or place shaping work.

Much of our placemaking activity focuses on our major regeneration schemes in Hattersley, Murdishaw and Preston. All of these focus not just on bricks and mortar, but on building and sustaining communities where people choose to stay or put down roots. They also ensure that existing customers benefit in socio-economic terms.



## CREATING PLACES PEOPLE ARE PROUD OF.

### **C13.** Provide examples or case studies of where Onward has been engaged in placemaking or place shaping activities.

Throughout our Onward neighbourhoods, we work closely with customers to transform their area. We recognise that each community requires different services and support, so our neighbourhood specialists have been working hand in glove with customers to tailor our services to specific local needs through our Neighbourhood Plans initiative.

Masterplanning exercises have been completed for transformative investment in our three priority regeneration areas of Hattersley, Murdishaw and Preston, with major works across the projects due to start before the end of this financial year (2022/2023).



## CASE STUDY

# OUR TRANSFORMATIVE COMMUNITY RENEWAL PROGRAMME IN PRESTON

Onward owns and manages around 700 homes in the Queen Street area of Preston, including three tower blocks and an adjacent low-rise neighbourhood. Onward is developing proposals to lead a transformative community renewal programme to tackle some of the social, environmental and economic challenges that the area currently faces. The first step in this journey is the demolition of the three tower blocks in the neighbourhood: Lincoln, Carlisle and Richmond House.

Having been built in the 1960s, the tower blocks do not reflect modern housing requirements and demolition presents an opportunity to provide high-quality homes that better reflect local housing needs. Working with local partners, our ambition is shape a strong sense of place by delivering major improvements to the local environment and bringing family housing back into the city centre, supporting Preston City Council's aspirations to regenerate the wider area.







## A PEOPLE POWERED PARTNERSHIP IN MURDISHAW

Onward owns and manages around 500 properties across the Murdishaw neighbourhood and is committed to ongoing investment to regenerate the area and deliver major economic and social benefits to the community for years to come. A key aspect of this regeneration programme is the creation of a new local centre in Murdishaw.

Rather than adopting a top-down approach, Onward worked in partnership with the local community to develop a set of proposals driven by their experiences and knowledge of the area, encouraging place shaping. This culminated in the creation of a Community Design Team, which brought together a group of community representatives at the start of the design process to engage with the community and other stakeholders, drafting proposals for the area.

Before we moved forward with the Community Design Team's plans, Onward wanted to seek the views of the wider community on the proposals, including how they would use the local centre, and what services they would find useful. As such, a public consultation was launched with the entire neighbourhood. The public consultation received an overwhelmingly positive response, with feedback showing that customers would like something to be done with the space and would use the facilities shown on the team's proposals. At the time of writing, the local centre proposals are subject to the relevant planning approvals.

Moving forward, Onward is committed to working alongside the Community Design Team and Halton Borough Council to continue to make positive changes and invest in Murdishaw.

## CASE STUDY





## COMMUNITY SHOPS IN THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITIES

Onward has supported three new social supermarkets to open across our Merseyside neighbourhoods in partnership with Community Shop. Working with Community Shop, we spotted an opportunity to deliver a unique concept that would provide critical support in the heart of our neighbourhoods, transforming disused spaces into community resources.

Community Shop is an award-winning social enterprise giving members access to high-quality, low-cost food and household products. Membership is open to local people who receive welfare support. Community Shop is also played an active role supporting vulnerable people during the coronavirus crisis, making sure the community could access essential good, safely and affordably.

In Runcorn, we've supported thousands of customers by providing £50,000 of funding along with rent-free space at our Priory House office and in our former Walton Road office in Kirkdale, Liverpool, by providing £150,000 of funding and rent-free space. In June 2021 we also helped facilitate a third community shop opening in our Beechwood neighbourhood, alongside Ocado, Little Centre, Tranmere, Big Local, Be Wirral and Wirral Council.



CASE  
STUDY

# ENVIRONMENTAL

Our ambition is to be a leading environmentally friendly landlord providing warm, safe and affordable homes for all of our customers. A determination to tread lightly on the environment also runs through everything we do. We are equally determined that our customers will enjoy the benefits of the green economy, not pay the costs of it.

## T6: CLIMATE CHANGE

This theme seeks to assess how the activities of the housing provider are impacting on climate change, and how they are mitigating the physical risks of climate change. This theme considers current practice, as well as the changes being made to improve performance in the future. The theme is made up of six criteria, including the distribution of EPC ratings, emissions data, climate risk mitigation plan and environmental strategy.

Here at Onward, our stock age ranges from listed Georgian properties to terraces built before the first world war, 1960s tower blocks, and non-traditional houses. Most were built to very different standards and with different materials than we would use today. Reducing the energy demand of these properties is an important step for Onward to help tackle climate change, and in years to come Onward will be working collaboratively with our partners across the North West to improve our carbon footprint.

## TWO THIRDS OF OUR HOMES ARE ALREADY ABOVE EPC C.

### C14. Distribution of EPC ratings of existing homes (those completed before the last financial year)

The energy efficiency of our homes is measured by the Government standard known as SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure). SAP is measured on a scale of 1-100 and determines the A-G rating for the EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) which each new home must now have.

Please find below a table demonstrating the number of existing homes that we have in each of the SAP ratings with A being rated the most efficient to G being the worst.

This picture will continue to change as we look to improve the processes for receiving EPC data for void properties and cross-reference our properties with the latest EPC register data.

SAP band	Count of properties
A	18
B	2,401
C	16,733
D	5,669
E	531
F	74
G	17

# HOMES PEOPLE WILL LOVE.

**C15.** Distribution of EPC ratings of existing homes (those completed in the last financial year)

All new build homes completed in the last financial year are EPC rated B or above.



## ONWARD HOMES STANDARD

We want our customers to be happy, safe and secure in the place they live. The quality of our customer's homes has a huge impact on their quality of life. Our aim is to meet and exceed national housing standards, reaching the **Onward Homes Standard**. Our Home Standard outlines how we aim to:

- Create modern homes
- Help customers live independently
- Ensure homes are warm and are energy efficient
- Make customers feel safe and secure

We will ensure that every home meets the Onward Homes Standard by 2030. Our Standard is regularly reviewed and updated so it is always a clear step above regulatory requirements and the Decent Homes Standard set by Government.



**CASE  
STUDY**

## C16. Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions

Onward is currently compiling Scope 1 and 2 emission carbon footprint data using a specialised tool produced for the Greater Manchester Housing Providers (GMHP). Currently, there are gaps in our data and systems are being devised and implemented to plug these gaps.

Scope 3 emissions for our homes data will be extrapolated based on EPC data as direct energy consumption records for customers cannot be obtained. Similarly supply chain Scope 3 emissions cannot currently be robustly collected and analysed but will be progressively addressed through our developing sustainable procurement initiatives, specifically the Sustainable Supply Chain.

## INVESTING IN WARMER HOMES.

### C17. What energy efficiency actions has Onward undertaken in the last 12 months?

Over the last 12 months we have continued to invest in our current and new homes to improve energy efficiency. Some examples of what we are currently doing to offset our carbon emission by improving our current stock, making greener homes, and improving our offices, include:

- Retrofit of existing stock through insulation, double glazing, new heating systems. Many of our retrofitting projects will be taking a 'fabric first' approach, which means we will be focusing on priority properties' thermal performance to make them warmer and more comfortable for customers.
- In our offices, we use careful energy monitoring and BMS integration programmes to identify energy saving opportunities.
- Onward has secured £2.2m to help improve the energy performance for 384 homes across Merseyside through the European Regional Development Fund. We will be applying external wall insulation and replacing poor performing double glazing with triple glazed windows throughout the properties, with work due to start by November 2022.
- We have two schemes on site to deliver homes off the gas grid, also we have recently taken handover of a refurbished institutional building (to high environmental standards) with no funding from Homes England so funded entirely by Onward to deliver 14 shared ownership apartments.



## INSTALLING SOLAR PANELS AT OUR HEAD OFFICE

In a bid to reduce our carbon footprint as an organisation, we installed solar panels on the roof of our head office in Didsbury, Manchester. The system produces around 42,000kWh of clean electricity per year. Virtually all of this is used on-site, thereby offsetting the cost and carbon associated with grid electricity.



## OUR EMERGING SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

Onward has just completed a period of business transformation as five housing associations became one. With a united organisation now in place, our new Corporate Plan was launched in 2022. Our new Sustainability Strategy is a key part of this Plan and our foundation for a long-term commitment to becoming ever more sustainable.

Our vision is all about treading lightly on the environment and ensuring that our customers enjoy the benefits of the green economy, not pay the costs of it.

In view of the current economic situation, we are taking some extra time this year to calibrate our emerging Strategy. We will balance our environmental ambitions with consideration of how our customers are coping with pressures on the cost of living. But there is still lots of activity underway.

A number of sustainability-enhancing practices are already woven into many of the everyday things that we do. Our new Sustainability Strategy brings this progress together and plants sustainability deeply into our DNA. It is the basis for further action, as we identify and tackle the additional steps needed to fulfil our ambition to be a leading environmentally friendly landlord.

Our Sustainability Strategy is organised around four key themes for action:

1. Existing Homes
2. New Build Homes
3. Corporate operations
4. Customers, Community, Neighbourhoods & Environment

Onward



SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY  
2022

CASE  
STUDY



## RETROFITTING OUR CUSTOMERS' HOMES IN MURDISHAW

Onward has been successful in securing £1.5 million to deliver energy efficiency upgrades in its customers' homes. The funding secured is part of the wider Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's bid for over £11 million from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF), set up to help decarbonise the UK's social housing stock to tackle fuel poverty, reduce carbon emissions and increase the energy efficiency of homes.

Many of the bungalows in Murdishaw have been identified as requiring improvements to enhance energy efficiency. The funding will be used to retrofit 132 bungalows in the area, creating more sustainable, greener and energy efficient homes for customers. Onward plans to use this funding to install external wall, cavity and loft insulation, energy efficient glazed windows and doors. We have also installed non-intrusive building monitoring equipment to support our customers to maintain their homes at optimum levels to heighten their health and wellbeing. All these factors will make properties warmer and more comfortable for customers.

The investment is another important milestone in Onward's programme of regeneration for Murdishaw. Onward is currently working with customers and partners on a community-led approach to community renewal, with proposals to deliver quality home improvements, improved green space and new facilities.



CASE  
STUDY



**C18. How is Onward mitigating the following climate risks: Increased flood risk, Increased risk of homes overheating?**

We are currently working on updating our existing flood policy to ensure that in the event of an extreme flood event, we have appropriate protocols in place, working with the local authority and national agencies as required. This will include the identification of where local property flood defence systems may be required or how to make representation for national flood defence improvement schemes.

A key component of Onward's Sustainable Action Plans will be climate change risk assessment of the Onward portfolio. These assessments will consider opportunities to mitigate a range of risks and will utilise the expertise of Onward's Environmental Services to heighten the application of ecological measures in the form of sustainable urban drainage, shading through tree planting, drought resistant plants.

**C19. Does Onward give customers information about correct ventilation, heating, recycling etc.**

We provide information to customers about correct ventilation and heating in their welcome pack when they sign their tenancy agreement. We also provide guidance on our website with a useful video for customers with hints and tips for ventilating the home and reducing condensation. We encourage customers to get in touch with their local authority for guidance on recycling.

In our Murdishaw neighbourhood, we are currently trailing a digital system called Homelink, which monitors temperature, humidity and carbon dioxide. This system can be used by accessed by customers to see how they can manage their homes to help improve the health of their homes.

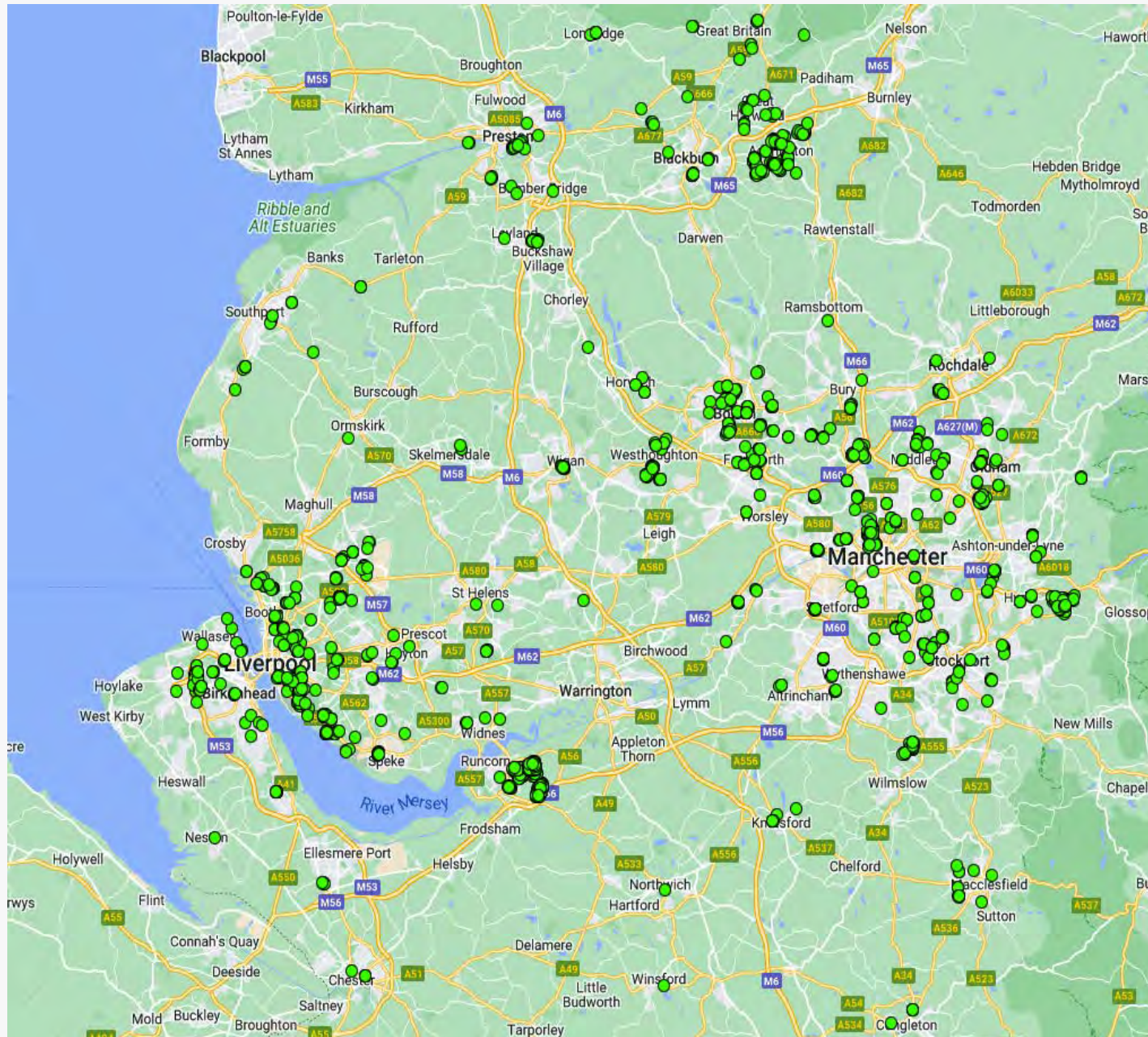
**T7: ECOLOGY**

This theme seeks to assess how the housing provider is protecting the local environment and ecology. The theme is made up of two criteria around managing pollutants and increasing biodiversity.

Onward believe protecting the environment is an integral part of a high-performing, successful organisation. We will continue to reduce the environmental impact of our activities and protect our local environment and ecology through effective management of our assets enhancing and maintaining biodiversity.

# GROWING THE ONWARD FOREST.

## C20. How is Onward increasing Green Space and promoting Biodiversity on or near homes?



Onward's Environmental Services Team is leading on a number of initiatives to create greener, more biodiverse ecosystems and green space for customers.

We currently have approximately 20,000 trees in our ownership, and we plant roughly 2,000 trees per year in our neighbourhoods across all regions.

We also plan to create an Onward Forest of 40,000 trees across the North West.



Onward has two woodlands in our ownership, both of which have ecology surveys and woodland management plans in place. In Hattersley Clough, there are badgers and deer in residence. We have also planted four areas of wildflowers across the North West, have planted an Orchard in Runcorn and plan to plant another in Manchester. We also have software that manages all our tree stock, this will soon be able to report on the amount of carbon sequestration that all our trees, shrubs and grassed areas contribute to in a monetary value.

**We have in our ownership the below land/ tree and shrub measures that we maintain:**

- Amenity grass **1,168,503 m<sup>2</sup>**
- Meadow grass **29,531 m<sup>2</sup>**
- Woodland **250,991 m<sup>2</sup>**
- Hedges **169,620 m<sup>2</sup>**
- Shrub beds **71,459 m<sup>2</sup>**

**C21. Does Onward have a strategy to actively manage and reduce all pollutants?  
If so, how does Onward target and measure performance?**

Onward currently evaluates and manages any significant regulated emissions as a part of our compliance function.

Other emissions resulting from our operations are being progressively evaluated to identify opportunities to prevent, reduce and mitigate impact.

## **T8: RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

This theme seeks to identify the extent to which the housing provider has a sustainable approach to materials in both the construction and management of properties. The theme is made up of three themes that cover sourcing materials, water management and waste management.

**C22. Does Onward have a strategy to use or increase the use of responsibly sourced materials for all building works? If so, how does Onward target and measure performance?**

Onward recognises that building new homes potentially carries an increase of direct and indirect environmental footprint, particularly through the increased use of raw materials and production of waste from building and construction works.

The way in which Onward use responsibly sourced materials and how we will reduce embodied carbon will be targeted in the emerging Sustainability Strategy.



## ONWARD'S FIRST MODERN METHODS OF CONSTRUCTION (MMC) DEVELOPMENT

Onward has approved plans for a development that will see the delivery of 19 factory-built affordable homes in West Derby. All the homes will be delivered alongside Highall Developments, and 'OSCO homes', a subsidiary of the procurement consortium Procure Plus, that aims to deliver affordable houses constructed offsite at a factory based in HM Prison Hindley.

Manufactured in a prison facility and using prison-based labour, the OSCO system is about much more than just excellent offsite construction. The scheme provides training and opportunities to those who may have taken a wrong turn in life but are keen to change, offering rehabilitation to the prison staff working for them. This has proven a great success and lowered re-offending rates by 90%.

Homes manufactured in a factory can be built in half the time of those built using traditional construction and building homes in factories will be crucial in helping Onward and housing associations across the country deliver more affordable housing.

In addition, the quality-controlled factory process means MMC builds are airtight and more energy efficient, which will help reduce household bills for our customers. Rather than being connected to the national gas grid, all of the homes will be powered by an air source heat pump, helping reduce the overall carbon emissions of the development.

### **C23.** Does Onward have a strategy for waste management incorporating building materials?

If so, how does Onward target and measure performance?

Our Environmental Services Team proactively monitor environmental crimes and collect all fly tipping across all regions as and when discovered. We also use green skips or all green waste.

Our strategy for monitoring site waste and scoring the contractors will be included in our Sustainability Strategy.

### **C24.** Does Onward have a strategy for good water management? If so, how does Onward target and measure performance?

Our strategy for monitoring good water management will be included in the Sustainability Strategy.

# GOVERNANCE

We are a listening landlord that places the voices and experiences of our customers at the heart of how we run our business. Our Onward Values provide a golden thread running through our decision-making, culture and our relationships with partners.

## T9: STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

This theme seeks to assess the housing provider's overall structure and approach to Governance. The theme is made up of six criteria covering the Regulator, code of governance, risk management and ownership.

### **C25. Is Onward registered with a regulator of social housing?**

Yes, we are regulated with the Regulator of Social Housing. Registration No. LH0250.

### **C26. What is the most recent viability and governance regulatory grading?**

We received G1/ V1 rating in December 2021.

### **C27. Which Code of Governance does Onward follow, if any?**

We are currently following the NHF Code of Governance 31 March 2021.

### **C28. Is Onward Not-For-Profit? If not, who is the largest shareholder, what is their % of economic ownership and what % of voting rights do they control?**

We are a Not-For-Profit housing provider.

**C29.** Explain how Onward board manages organisational risks.

We have a Risk Management Policy and procedures. An Audit & Risk Committee oversees the risk management framework. The Board reviews its strategic risks at least every 6 months. The Executive Team reviews strategic and operational risks every quarter. Operational risk registers are owned by the relevant director.

**C30.** Has Onward been subject to any adverse regulatory findings in the last 12 months (e.g. data protection breaches, bribery, money laundering, HSE breaches or notices) – that resulted in enforcement or other equivalent action?

Onward has not been subject to any adverse regulatory findings.



## T10: BOARD AND TRUSTEES

This theme seeks to assess the quality, suitability and performance of the Board and trustees. The theme is made up of eleven criteria including demographics of the board and the experience and independence of the board.

### **C31.** What are the demographics of the Board? And how does this compare to the demographics of Onward’s customers, and the area that they operate in?

Onward’s Board was made up of twelve members as of April 2022. It is currently 40% Female, with four members of the Board being executive directors. The average age of the board is 59. The average tenure is four years.

The table below provides a comparison of demographics between the Board, our colleagues and our customers.

	Board	Colleagues	Onward Customers
WOMEN	40%	57.88%	58.69%
BAME	10%	12.05%	11.05%
DISABILITY	10%	3.64%	14.73%

## CASE STUDY

# ONWARD TO A BRIGHT FUTURE FOLLOWING APPOINTMENT OF OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Onward has appointed a new Board Chair and members as we look to build upon strong foundations to deliver ongoing improvements for customers.

Tim Johnston has been appointed as our new Board Chair for an initial 3-year term, beginning in October. Tim brings extensive experience of advising on business planning during a career spanning public services, economic development and charitable organisations.

Alongside Tim, Cadent Chief Information Officer Kate Jones, Independent Interim Director for Revision Property Solutions Ltd Dena Burgher and former Lancaster City Council Chief Executive Kieran Keane have joined the Onward's board as Non-Executive Directors.

Onward is looking to the future with these senior appointments as we build on our successful bond issue and deliver on our strategic partnership with Homes England. They will strengthen us at an important time as we focus on delivering results for customers and defining our new corporate plan.



**C32. What % of the board and management team have turned over in the last two years?**

Board turnover is 38% and Executive Team turnover is 25%. In the period since March 2020, 4 Board members have left, which equates to one Executive and three Non-Executives.

**C33. Is there a maximum tenure for a board member? If so, what is it?**

We follow the NHF Governance Code 2020, therefore the maximum tenure is six years with two terms of three years.

**C34. What % of the board are non-executive directors?**

67% of the Board are non-executive directors.

**C35. Number of board members on the Audit Committee with recent and relevant financial experience**

Two of the Board members have recent and relevant financial experience. Wyn Dignan has banking and finance experience, and Mike Verrier has chartered accountant and corporate treasurer experience.

**C36. Are there any current executives on the Remuneration Committee?**

There are no current executives on the Remuneration Committee.

**C37. Has a succession plan been provided to the board in the last 12 months?**

Yes, a succession plan was provided to our Nominations & Remuneration Committee in March 2021 and August 2022.

**C38. For how many years has the Housing Provider's current external audit partner been responsible for auditing the accounts?**

Our current external audit partner has been responsible for auditing the accounts for three years.

**C39. When was the last independently-run, board-effectiveness review?**

We undertake an independently run review of board effectiveness each year.

**C40. Are the roles of the chair of the board and CEO held by two different people?**

Yes, the roles of the Chair of the Board and CEO held by two different people.

**C41. How does the Housing Provider handle conflicts of interest at the board?**

Our Code of Conduct sets out expectations regarding behaviours and conflicts. Board members are asked to provide a mandatory annual declaration of interest for board even if nothing to declare. We also have a Probity Policy in place. Each board and committee agenda has Declarations of Interest as a standard item to prompt any declarations in items to be discussed.

## T11: STAFF WELLBEING

This theme seeks to assess how staff are supported and how their wellbeing is considered. The theme is made up of five criteria including salary information, additional support for staff and average sick days.

Onward strives to be the employer of choice. We're committed to building a diverse, gender balanced and rewarded workforce. As a result, our colleagues are passionate about what do, are listened to, and feel Onward is a great place to work.

### C42. Does Onward pay the Real Living Wage?

Yes, we pay staff the Real Living Wage. The Real Living Wage is calculated and set by [www.livingwage.org.uk](http://www.livingwage.org.uk)

### C43. What is the gender pay gap?

Our median gender pay gap is 5.1%. We provide a gender pay gap report.

### C44. What is the CEO-worker pay ratio?

**As of 31st March 2021, this is our CEO-work pay ratio.**

25th Percentile	<b>9.38:1</b>
50th Percentile	<b>7.22:1</b>
75th Percentile	<b>6.31:1</b>



## SUPPORTING OUR COLLEAGUES.

### **C45.** How does Onward support the physical and mental health of their staff?

Onward has a number of initiatives that are used to encourage physical and mental wellbeing of colleagues. Each colleague has access to SimplyHealth whereby they can claim for the costs of medical treatment, prescriptions, and dental treatment. As part of this all colleagues also have access to our Employee Assistance programme where they can have a confidential conversation around matters concerning financial and mental health issues.

We offer occupational sick pay to support any colleagues while they are not able to work. In addition to this we also utilise the services of Occupational Health, Dyslexia Assessment Provider and Advanced DSE Assessment provider to assist us in providing the appropriate support to colleagues.

Onward has rolled out Mental Health First Aid training and as a result we have 30 Mental Health First Aiders within the business who are on hand if required. In addition to this, we have trained a large number of colleagues in mental health awareness.

Along with generous annual leave entitlements and compassionate leave, we offer flexible working to colleagues to assist with work life balance and more recently have started to publish 'wellbeing' articles that colleagues across the business can access at any time.



## INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

Onward secured the Investors in People (IIP) Silver Award accreditation that recognised our work to improve colleague experience. IIP is a highly regarded international accreditation, recognised across more than 75 countries, for businesses looking to assess the experience of colleagues and find new ways to improve. We believe the award will help us understand what we are good at and what we can do to make Onward an even better place to work.

The IIP process came in three steps. We began with the opportunity for all colleagues to contribute to a survey on what it's really like to work here. More than half of the business (57%) completed the survey, a strong return rate that has given us terrific insight into the views of colleagues across our organisation. The second step was a series of interviews and focus groups, including more than 40 colleagues from different corners of our business. The final step was a number of showcase presentation sessions that highlighted some of the great work delivered by colleagues.

Following this detailed process, Onward not only achieved Investors in People status, but was also accredited with the prestigious Silver standard. This is a fantastic achievement, made even better by our assessor telling us that our survey benchmark score was higher than the overall average benchmark score, not only in the Housing Sector, but the IIP Benchmark too.





## HIGHLIGHTING OUR COLLEAGUES' ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE 'ONAWARDS'

Colleagues at Onward consistently go above and beyond and work hard to achieve and surpass their job objectives and goals. The OnAwards give all colleagues the chance to reflect on the past year, highlight their teams' accomplishments and acknowledge those who inspire and encourage others.

**Colleagues nominate each other for awards, such as:**

- Creative Thinking Award
- Exceptional Service Award
- Inspirational Colleague Award
- Inspirational Leader Award
- Apprentice / GEM of the Year Award
- Outstanding Team of the Year Award
- Unsung Hero Award
- Courageous Curiosity Award

In 2022, we hosted our first in-person awards ceremony since the Covid-19 pandemic started at our colleague roadshow 'The On-Show' in June.

## CASE STUDY







## LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

We want colleagues to feel valued, empowered and enabled to do the very best that they can for the organisation and themselves, therefore we have several learning and development initiatives in place. For our leaders and those aspiring to be in the future, we have a Leadership Development Programme consisting of People Management Skills courses, Leadership Skill Builders modules, Aspiring Leaders Programme and Coaching.

In addition to the mandatory and compliance training that colleagues are required to complete, we provide a number of opportunities to attend courses for personal development and growth and offer funding for Professional Qualifications. We have an e-learning system in place which enables colleagues to learn remotely and tap into the wider learning available through the additional courses that are on offer.

To help support the learning culture in place, colleagues are also able to apply for the Learning for Life fund where Onward will pay towards courses unrelated to their role.

We also provide opportunities for people to join Onward as they are starting their careers through apprentices and a graduate training scheme. In addition to supporting Apprenticeship placements through the Apprentice Levy we fund a number of professional qualifications for our existing colleagues to ensure that we are utilising the fund as much as possible.



**CASE  
STUDY**

#### **C46. Average number of sick days taken per employee.**

The average number of sick days taken per employee is 9.69 days.

### **T12: SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT**

This theme seeks to assess if the housing provider procures responsibly. The theme is made up of two criteria assessing how social value and environmental impact are considered.

Onward is conscious of the impact our procurement choices make on people and the wider environment, which is why we are developing sustainable procurement practices.

#### **C47. How is Social Value creation considered when procuring goods and services?**

Social Value creation is currently assessed objectively to determine what is appropriate for each contract and what the market can deliver. This is then included within our tender assessment questions.

We are currently working with partners and suppliers to review our processes within procurement, to gather social value from tenders and align them to our key Social Investment themes and Corporate Plan.



## PUTTING OUR CUSTOMERS AT THE HEART OF PURCHASING DECISIONS

We have great ambition and will provide more homes and services over the next five years. To achieve this, we will need to procure and manage over £300m.

Spending this wisely, maximising the benefits of our spend in the North West and for the communities we serve is our goal. Our suppliers are an extension of us and the way we buy and manage these key relationships will underpin this.

Our Procurement Strategy sets out how achieving value not only requires us to be an informed and intelligent purchaser, it also requires that we find a common purpose and understanding with our suppliers and demand their best.

### To support this, we will:

- Engage with our markets, understand them better, identify ingenuity, who is best placed to deliver and how best to secure them.
- Consider whether in-house provision or the market is providing the service best.
- Seek and drive Social Value for the communities we serve, seek diversity in our supply chain with the aim of supporting suppliers in the North West.
- Collaborate with organisations, or procure independently where this is in our best interests and will derive greater benefits for Onward.



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## DEVELOPING NETWORKS WITH EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

Onward is developing a new network, The Onward Academy, that will enable us to facilitate apprenticeships, training and work experience opportunities for our customers. This will lead them into good work and help our own staff develop new skills and qualifications. Overall, this will increase the social value we offer, help deliver our Sustainability Strategy and growth plans, and tackle some of the challenges and gaps the construction sector faces.

In Q2- Q3 of 2022, The Onward Academy will be running the first 3 pilots of this new scheme with the Learning Foundry, Positive Footprints Network and Procure Plus.



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## PROVIDING SOCIAL VALUE THROUGH OUR CONTRACT WITH SOLO PROTECT

Through our contract with Solo Protect, we will be providing essential personal safety training for our customers and local community groups.

We want our colleagues to be safe, and as individuals, we all expect to go home safely at the end of our working day. Unfortunately, that isn't always the case. Last year, Onward contracted Solo Protect to introduce a new lone worker protection device, allowing our colleagues to have increased safety when working alone in their neighbourhoods.

As part of this contract, Solo Protect will be fulfilling social value requirements by providing training to some of Onward's customers and local community groups to help tackle several issues to do with personal safety. The first module is set to launch in Spring 2022 and will discuss and raise awareness of domestic violence and abuse. Other topics the programme will cover deal with issues around knife crime, stalking and sexual harassment.



CASE  
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#### **C48. How is environmental impact considered when procuring goods and services?**

Environmental impact is assessed in a similar way to above, with the addition of a more detailed review internally on available sustainable options (materials, design, transport etc), for specific contracts. These are set as objectives when scoping out the contract specification.

Onward has established a sustainability project team which is looking at developing a strategy to develop this further by aligning work across Onward and identifying improvements that will positively impact on procurement. This work is linked to the business transformation goals.



## **SUPPLY CHAIN SUSTAINABILITY SCHOOL**

## **CASE STUDY**

In April 2022, Onward joined the Supply Chain Sustainability School, an award winning sustainability collaboration. The School is a common approach to assessing supply chain and workforce sustainability competence, as well as developing suppliers' and workforce sustainability knowledge. It works together with its partners and members to provide an online and in-person community to improve the knowledge of the built environment sector.

With over 3,800 online learning resources available, the School's learning pathways are a tool for us to embed sustainability learning within Onward and throughout to our supply chain. The resource allows us to allocate specific learning in a way that is fully customisable to our requirements as a business, which we will be setting out over the next year.



## CONTRACT WITH AO REDUCES OUR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Onward has secured a contract with AO until November 2024 to supply, install and recycle our white goods (cookers, fridges, freezers, dishwashers, washing machines, tumble dryers) for both sheltered and supported living schemes across our region. Onward is committed to diverting waste from landfill and currently work with AO to ensure that all our white goods are recycled and used to make new products as part of a closed loop system.

Unfortunately, fridges can have the most significant environmental impact, as older fridges can contain substances that are 1,000 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub>. We are working with AO to ensure that all our old fridges are carefully collected and handled, extracting pernicious substances harmful to the environment, and then utilising the remaining raw materials to manufacture new and more environmentally friendly products. In total, AO has recycled 200 appliances for Onward since the start of the contract - that's 200 appliances that have not gone to landfill.





## CONCLUSION

Onward is a social impact organisation and our purpose is to deliver real-world social and environmental benefits that are experienced by our customers and their communities. Defining, delivering and measuring these benefits is fundamental to our business planning and culture.

Onward is committed to reporting in line with the Sustainability Reporting Standard and using this process to drive better business outcomes. Plans for continuous improvement across the SRS themes are in place throughout the organisation, as part of our work to deliver our Corporate Plan. Further reports on our progress will be published annually.

For more information about sustainability impacts, reporting and our Corporate Plan, please contact:

**Mike Gerrard** Executive Director Of Finance

**Rob Loughenbury** Director of Strategy