

The Onward Newsletter

Enabling you to be your best, in a home you love, and a place you are proud of.

Winter 2022



IN THIS ISSUE: Advice on the cost of living, support in your area, enabling our communities and getting involved with Onward.

WELCOME.



Welcome to your Winter issue of the Onward Newsletter.

Many of you will receive this newsletter as you look ahead with some apprehension.

Costs keep going up, with food, energy and everyday items costing much more than they did even a few months ago. But I want to reassure you that we are more than just a landlord; we will do what we can to help you make ends meet and enjoy life to the fullest, despite the obvious challenges that are all around us. So, we have a clear three-point plan to support customers this Winter.

First, this newsletter includes contact details for our Financial Inclusion Team. Their job is to help you, so please contact them if you have money troubles and need someone to talk to.

Second, you will also find stories about the work being done alongside customers in their communities, from widening access to affordable food to helping people find and stay in work.

Finally, and perhaps most important, is our promise to you all that no one will lose an Onward home as a result of financial hardship, where they are working with us to get their payments back on track.

This is our plan, and our promise, to be with you every step of the way this Winter.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bronwen".

Bronwen Rapley,
Chief Executive



HELP FOR HOUSEHOLDS.

Over the Winter, we know that more of our customers may struggle with rising costs. We are here to help.

If you are worried about your finances, or just want to speak to someone, please get in touch.

Our dedicated Financial Inclusion Team offers free, confidential advice around managing your money and support that might be available to you. Remember if you are struggling to pay your rent, we can help but it is important to let us know as soon as possible.

You can contact the team by calling **0300 555 0600** or emailing customerservices@onward.co.uk Our website includes more information about cost of living support and tips on managing your money.



FINANCIAL SUPPORT.

Onward offers different types of financial support for its customers, covering emergency funds through to help with employment and training. Get in touch today to see if you are eligible.

MANAGING YOUR RENT PAYMENTS.

If you're struggling to pay your rent, or have already fallen behind with your payments, please don't ignore the problem. It's important that you let us know. Our Income Team can help you to manage your payments and work out what you can afford to pay towards any arrears. We can help you get back on track.

Our Financial Inclusion Team can help with managing rent payments. Contact them on customerservices@onward.co.uk or call 0300 555 0600.



ONWARD EMERGENCY FUND.

In extreme cases of financial difficulty, we can provide help with essential items. This fund is discretionary, so please speak to our Financial Inclusion Team for more information.

We can also provide support in accessing local grants, schemes or charities who offer free or affordable household items, including furniture packages.

Call **0300 555 0600** or click [here](#)

DAMP AND CONDENSATION.

Everyone is shocked and saddened by the tragic death of Awaab Ishak, which has featured in the news recently. We want to assure you that we will respond positively to any issues you have with damp, mould, and condensation.

If you are experiencing any problems with damp, mould or condensation, please contact our customer services team. We will work with you to agree the best course of action to sort it out. This means we will either arrange for one of our contractors to carry out work to your home or arrange a further inspection to help us work out what we need to do to tackle the issue.

We will keep in touch with you until you tell us that you are satisfied and that the problem has been fixed. But if you remain dissatisfied we will use our complaints process to try to find a way to resolve the issue to your satisfaction.

If you have previously reported problems with damp, mould and condensation, but we haven't resolved the issue to your satisfaction, please contact our customer services team and ask for your case to be reviewed. We will treat your enquiry as an official complaint and do our best to resolve the problem.





SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES

Local community and voluntary groups are eligible to receive up to £2,500 to support residents with the cost of living through the Onward Community Fund.

Launched in 2017, the £100k Community Fund aims to support local groups and projects in our neighbourhoods across Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester and Cheshire.

To ensure our customers and communities get vital support this Winter, Onward's Social Investment Team has changed the bidding criteria so groups must now also address how they will support local residents who are facing increased challenges due to the rising cost of living.

PROJECTS SUPPORTED SO FAR...



Hope Central in Handforth, Cheshire, has been awarded **£2,500** to deliver an eight-week life skills course on topics including cooking on a budget and making money go further.



A Community Kitchen in Bolton has been awarded **£2,500** towards their food bank which provides winter warmer packs.



Amber Button CIC in Merseyside was awarded **£2,340** in funding to engage with unemployed people in Beechwood, supporting them to change their lives through sessions to help build confidence, develop aspirations and overcome barriers.

Got a great idea for a community project, but need a little help to get it off the ground? Our final round of funding opens on **1st December** and closes **21st January 2023**. Apply via our [website](#)

WINTER WARMER EVENTS ACROSS OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS.

Throughout Winter, we will be hosting several 'Winter Warmer' events with a wealth of support services attending across a whole range of areas including: finances, debt, housing, food, employment and mental health and wellbeing.

In November, organisations came together at the Community Shop in Runcorn to host a series of cost of living support events along with community groups and service providers. We focused upon topics such as on how to prepare healthy meals, financial advice and guidance, wellbeing sessions and how to keep warm this Winter.

We will be holding these events across many of our neighbourhoods to reach out to residents with our partners to offer support and advice.

Check the news section of our website to find the most up to date information on when a Winter Warmer event is happening in your area.



ONWARD EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING FUND.

Looking to get into work or to progress within your current role? You could be eligible for a grant of up to £500.

The Onward Employment and Training Fund awards grants 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. It can also help with equipment you may need for a particular role, course or job, books, travel costs, clothing or childcare.

You can apply for a grant whether you are unemployed, employed, self-employed or are a student. You must be an Onward customer and over 16 years.

Click [here](#) to find out more.



KEEPING IN TOUCH.

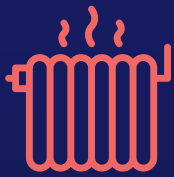
Our customer service team takes hundreds of calls from customers everyday. We are now making welfare calls to some of our customers that we know are struggling to keep up with their payments.

If you need to speak to us about your rent payments, or any other financial worries, you can request a call back from our Financial Inclusion Team. Please call **0300 555 0600** or email customerservices@onward.co.uk to find out more. You can also raise queries via MyOnward or send us a message on WhatsApp from your mobile phone.



FIRE SAFETY AT CHRISTMAS.

Let's remember the festive period for the right reasons.



Heating your home safely

- Don't heat your home with any portable device that uses a gas canister or has an open flame, as these pose a serious fire risk.
- If using oil-filled or electric radiators, always make space around them and never use them to dry clothing or other items.
- Never tamper with any gas or electrical meters in your home.
- Never leave any heat sources unattended and turn them off before bed.

Kitchen safety

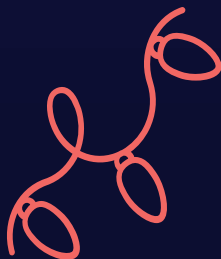


- Never leave pans cooking unattended.
- Keep the area around your cooker clear of fabric.
- Turn all appliances off before you go to bed.



Rubbish and recycling

- There may be fewer rubbish collections over the Christmas bank holiday.
- Take wrapping paper and packaging to bin stores and never leave any rubbish in the communal areas.



Fairy lights and electrics

- Check cables and power sockets for damage.
- Never overload electrical sockets or extension cables.
- Don't overcharge battery-powered devices, such as e-cigarettes or e-scooters, and never leave items charging unattended.



General safety advice

- Shut all internal doors in your home at night to prevent any fire or smoke from spreading.
- Make sure everyone in your home knows your escape plan and that window and door keys are left on your escape route when you go to bed.
- Test your fire alarm at least once a week.
- Keep candles away from decorations, children and pets. Don't leave them unattended and extinguish them before you go to bed.

If you are concerned about fire safety in your home, contact us on 0300 555 0600.



The Onward Difference

Over the Summer we launched a new Plan for customers, called The Onward Difference. It is all about enabling you to be your best, in a home you love and a place you are proud of. With the cost of living rising, and a tough Winter upon us, we think delivering this Plan is more important now than ever.

Some recent highlights of how we are delivering The Onward Difference are set out below. You can find out more by visiting our website.

ENABLING PEOPLE TO BE THEIR BEST.

In Hyndburn, Lancashire, our Social Investment Team has been working in partnership with Lancashire County Council and Hyndburn Leisure to host a free 6-week Family Team Time programme, helping local families make healthier choices by preparing nutritious meals together.

Participants got the opportunity to try new foods, play games and activities with other local families, and learn how to make savvy savings on healthy foods in the supermarket. After the success of the first 6-week programme, Family Team Time will continue to be delivered every three months until 2024.

A PLACE TO BE PROUD OF.

In Beechwood, Wirral, our Neighbourhood and Social Investment Teams have been engaging with customers to get feedback to improve the local green spaces, using customers' opinions to shape future projects in the area. The teams worked in partnership with 80 local residents to create a regular programme of clean up and planting days and have even helped set up a community gardening group in the process.



A HOME TO LOVE.

In Hattersley, Greater Manchester, we are making great progress on 70 new affordable homes for local people on three neighbouring brownfield sites at the heart of our community. Alongside homes for affordable rent and affordable home ownership, we are also progressing with making local improvements to the public spaces alongside creating 91 Housing with Care apartments.

Elsewhere in Hattersley, Onward is well underway with 27 new homes for affordable rent on land between Hare Hill Road and Porlock Avenue. This new development of 2- and 3-bedroom homes is progressing well and scheduled for completion next Summer.

Both schemes are being delivered through funding from our Strategic Partnership with Homes England, which will enable us to build 3,208 new homes across the North West.



KEEPING UP TO DATE.

More and more customers are telling us that they prefer to keep in touch digitally.

We also want to save money on printing and posting so we can spend it on better homes and services for you instead. For these reasons, from April 2023 this newsletter will mostly be sent out by email. If you want to continue to receive a paper copy, we will continue to provide it. Just let us know by giving us a call.

In the meantime, please take a moment to check you have registered your email with us or let us know if your email has changed by emailing customerservices@onward.co.uk or calling **0300 555 0600**.



JOIN AN IMPORTANT GROUP AT THE HEART OF ONWARD.

Ensuring we provide the right services for our customers and communities is ever more important as the cost of living rises. If you have a keen interest in Onward and the services we provide we may have just the role for you. The Onward Scrutiny Board is made up of customers just like you. The group checks on our service performance and makes recommendations for improvement.

Here's what some of our customers have to say about the Scrutiny Board:

“It is an important role and is respected and trusted. When we met the Onward Board of Directors, we saw that they are genuinely customer oriented and willing to listen”.

Interested? To have a chat about this role please contact customerengagement@onward.co.uk



REPAIRS UPDATE.

Our priority is getting repairs fixed as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will let you know if your repair is delayed, or if the appointment has to be changed.

As your landlord, we are responsible for carrying out most repairs, but there are some that we are not responsible for. Generally, these are the types of repairs that are not caused by wear and tear, such as replacing fuses, lightbulbs, or decorating the inside of your home. You can find out more by visiting the repairs section of our website.

The easiest way to report a repair is through the My Onward portal. You can also track the progress of your repair and access other useful information there too. Alternatively, please email us at customerservices@onward.co.uk or call **0300 555 0600**.