

Onward

YOUR VOICE.

FEBRUARY 2023

Welcome to the latest edition of Your Voice – the newsletter that keeps members of our Customer Engagement Community updated on how customers are getting involved.

It's great to see lots of you getting involved over the last couple of months, we have seen the membership increase in all our customer forums.

As the weather begins to improve more and more of you are venturing out to join us on our neighbourhood walkabouts, these are a great opportunity to meet up with Onward colleagues and discuss local issues.

Jo Phillips,
Customer Engagement Manager

MEETING OUR CUSTOMERS NEEDS: TAILORING OUR SERVICES.

The Diversity and Inclusion forum has welcomed new members to the group, we now have 24 members!

The meetings give customers an opportunity to share views on and raise broader awareness of Diversity & Inclusion.

At the last meeting the group looked over Onward's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#), customers focussed on a key aspect of the policy :

‘We will use customer information to tailor our services according to their individual needs.’

Members were in agreement that capturing relevant customer information can help Onward provide a better service, they suggested that it should be captured in various methods e.g., online meetings, face to face, via surveys and over the phone, it can then be used to deliver services to customers in ways that meet their needs.

Customers are clearly enjoying being part of this group, with one member commenting ‘Oh my what an amazing meeting!’.

Would you like to join our next meeting? Contact Leanne.baldwin@onward.co.uk

GROWING OUR COMMUNITY.



Are your Onward friends, neighbours, and family part of our Customer Engagement Community? If they scan the QR code with their phone, they can become a member.

We can then keep them updated with our monthly email and quarterly newsletters. Allowing them to get involved in helping shape Onwards services. They will also be entered into our monthly prize draws.

CELEBRATING LGBTQ HISTORY MONTH.

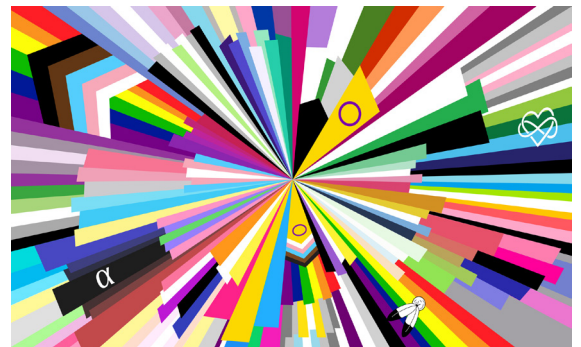
This February we are highlighting the fantastic work of Rainbow Roofs, The Northwest social housing LGBTQ customer forum.

The group provides LGBTQ tenants an opportunity to get together and share best practice and advice and discuss how housing related policies and procedures can impact the LGBTQ community.

Recently the group have been involved in various projects, most notably being invited to speak at a panel tackling the stigma associated with living in social housing. The group has grown in strength it has become much more customer led, with group members steering the direction of the group and the projects that it wants to get involved in.

It's been fantastic to see how group members have grown in confidence and have the ability to challenge the status quo and really challenge the ways housing services are delivered.

If you want to find out more or get involved with this fantastic group, then please get in touch with Daniel.Gregson@onward.co.uk



DIGITAL ONWARD.



**DIGITAL
ONWARD**

Earlier this month, Onward's Digital Customer Forum met for their quarterly meeting. They were updated on our 'Systems for our Future' project, working with key teams on our 'must have' requirements for our new systems.

It was great to see some of the previous suggestions from our forum members being picked up and implemented such as including information on online safety and security on our website, with lots of exciting initiatives coming soon to help our digitally excluded customers.

The forum was also given a demonstration of Onward's new Customer App, which is the early stages of development. There were some great discussions, and forum members are ready to get stuck in with testing the app over the next few months.

"What a brilliant meeting! Good things coming for the future, and I can't wait to be a part of it all"

Amanda, Digital Customer Forum member.

LEARNING FROM CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS.

We are looking for new members to join our amazing forum of customers who look at how we deal with customer complaints. The Customer Resolutions Forum meet bi-monthly to talk about the performance of our complaints service, complaints case studies and other relevant topics. Recommendations and actions are taken away from the meeting to help improve the service.



Quotes from our members:

'The customer resolution forum looks at the related statistics an insight to find solution for possible changes. Your voice will help!'

'Onward has a complaints team who work really hard to solve the problems tenants experience when they deal with the landlords. The thing is, they can't do this effectively unless tenants tell them, honestly, about how that process feels, and what they expect the organisation to do when things go wrong.'

'Your experience as a tenant is the most important qualification that Onward needs when discussing the complaints process. If you're prepared to set aside a couple of hours per month to have a discussion with the staff and other involved tenants in a meeting you can make a really positive contribution to the process and learn how the system works.'

'The meetings are generally in the early evening from your home, but there's practical help if you need to go to the offices, or if you're not confident online. You'll be welcomed and listened to, and you can make a real difference.'

Contact Leanne to find out more leanne.baldwin@onward.co.uk



MEET SOME OF OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD CHAMPIONS FOR MURDISHAW.

Customers have been working closely with Onward for the last two years on plans to improve 130 bungalows on the estate and make them more energy efficient. The work includes external wall insulation, new double-glazed doors and windows, high performance flat roofs, triple glazed sky lights and mechanical ventilation.

Improving energy efficiency in this way is known as 'retrofitting'. The first blocks will be complete this month. The customer 'Neighbourhood Champions' have influenced the design of the works and the way the improvements are carried out.

Working closely together has made a real difference to the programme. This project was partly funded by Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

A CLOSER LOOK AT HOW ONWARD COMMUNICATES ABOUT YOUR REPAIRS.

We told you in the November edition of Your Voice that the Onward Scrutiny Board had decided to take a detailed look at how Onward communicate with you when you report a repair. The group are now looking at how Onward can keep you better informed throughout your repair.

They noticed through looking at customer complaints and feedback from surveys that communication is one of the main things that cause you to be unhappy with the service.

The group have talked to a range of Onward colleagues since the project kicked off. They chatted to our Head of Customer Services and one of our Senior Repairs Managers about how Onward use repairs complaints to pinpoint what needs to be improved.

They then spoke to one of our colleagues who deals with customer complaints who had talked to their team about ideas they had to improve communications and make you happier about the service.

They also invited colleagues from our Neighbourhood teams to hear about repairs issues customers were raising with them when they were out and about in their neighbourhoods.

Our Head of Maintenance and Commercial Assets gave the Scrutiny Board an overview of the repairs improvement project that will run throughout 2023 looking at the whole service.



This month members of the group will be listening in to repairs calls that customers make into the Contact Centre in Accrington (with the customers permission of course) and talking to managers and operatives from the main contractors Axis, Fortem and Onward Repairs.

The group hope to make their recommendations to improve communications about repairs in April.

REPAIRS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT.

In the scrutiny update we mentioned that there is a large repairs improvement project taking place over this year. The Repairs Working Together Groups will play a part in this project, most recently they have shared their views on tenant's repair responsibilities. There will be a growing role for customers on this project over the year so we would love you to get in touch if you:

- **Have an interest in repairs?**
- **Have ideas for improvement or want to find out more about our proposals?**
- **Are not already on the Repairs Working Together group for your region?**

Get in touch with Val val.alker@onward.co.uk

OUT AND ABOUT IN OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS.



Our team are regularly getting out and about in our neighbourhoods, connecting customers with neighbourhood teams and making sure your voices are heard. We have highlighted below a few of our recent neighbourhood activities:

Manchester: Bolton South

We have recently been out in Bolton South at Clifton Court, with our colleagues from the Neighbourhood and Safer Neighbourhood teams, to work together to find solutions for issues affecting customers there. Customers identified issues with trees, external repairs and grounds maintenance and we will track the progress in tackling these issues over the coming months to ensure that they are resolved.

We also discussed the importance of using our Contact Centre (0300 555 0600 [Contact us - Onward](#)) to report any individual or issues. Our Contact Centre is trained to try and help resolve your query first time, if they can't they'll get the message to the right team.

Lancashire: Oswaldtwistle

The newest member of the Neighbourhoods Team in Lancashire, Maya was eager to start creating a difference on her patch! She arranged a litter pick on Wordsworth Close alongside Hyndburn Borough Council who kindly helped. We are committed to making a positive difference in our neighbourhoods and your help is always appreciated. Taking pride in our neighbourhoods will help us achieve this together.

Merseyside: Wirral

In Westbourne Road Birkenhead we supported our Neighbourhood Team on a block inspection. We talked to customers on their doorsteps about issues of concern and let them know about the Customer Engagement Community. Two new members of the Community were signed up on the day - so hello new members!

Your involvement is helping us create positive spaces. Thank to those who have got involved and if you haven't yet, look out for your estate inspection invite.