

Onward

# HOME OWNERSHIP MATTERS

November 2022

I am Natalie Lewis, Head of Home Ownership at Onward and Contour Property Services (CPS).

Welcome to the first edition of Home Ownership Matters. You asked us to improve the way we communicate with you and this newsletter is the start of that journey.

We will be sending out a newsletter twice a year and we really want to hear your views about the information you would like us to include, so please get in touch if you have any ideas.

In this first edition, I'll tell you about some of the things the team has been up to and how you can get involved in our work.



## YOUR HOME OWNERSHIP TEAM

The Home Ownership Team deliver services to developments across the North West. You may see your Home Ownership Specialist out on site, carrying out scheme inspections to check the quality of service being delivered. If you see them out and about, please stop and say hello. The team can also provide advice on extending your lease, selling your property or buying further shares in your home (if you are a shared owner), as well as responding to requests for permission to do things like keep a pet or carry out an alteration to your home. You can get in touch with us at [homeownership@onward.co.uk](mailto:homeownership@onward.co.uk).

We will tell you more about the team and introduce your dedicated Home Ownership Specialists in the next newsletter.



## STAIRCASING

If you purchased your property on a shared ownership basis, you have the option to purchase further shares, which is known as 'staircasing'. Some leases will allow you to buy 100% and own your property outright, others may restrict to a maximum percentage share that can be bought.

If you are considering staircasing contact us at [homeownership@onward.co.uk](mailto:homeownership@onward.co.uk) for more information.



## RESPONDING TO YOUR VIEWS

We have listened to your feedback about the repairs and maintenance services we provide and are committed to improving in this area. We have already begun the consultation about a new repairs contract, and we are also planning to consult you about cleaning and window cleaning soon.

It is important that we get your feedback on these services, so please take the opportunity to respond to the consultation documents when you receive them. These will be in the form of a Section 20 notice and will include guidance on how you can provide feedback.

We recently removed the Contour Property Services (CPS) Portal. This portal was only accessible by our CPS customers and was not reliable. Because of this we removed access to the portal so we could develop one that works for all of our customers, is reliable and has the functionality customers have told us they want. We are now starting to develop that portal and will be working with the Homeowners' Forum over the next few months to come up with a design that meets customers' needs. We are also working on our website. Over the next few months leaseholders will start to see more content on the Onward Homes website.



# DON'T LET YOUR MONEY GO TO WASTE!

You have recently received your year-end account statement and some of you will have noticed significant costs associated with waste management. We want to reduce these costs and we can only do it with your support. In 2021/22 we spent over £250,000 on waste management across all the properties we manage, much of which was attributable to fly tipping and bin contamination.

To help us reduce these costs, please report any instances of fly-tipping to us as soon as you can. Tell us as much information as you know about the fly tipping, so that we can try to recover costs from those responsible.

To help us reduce these costs, please:

- Use the correct bin for your waste or recycling
- Report any broken or missing bins to us
- Donate unwanted items to local charities
- If you sublet, make sure your tenants know where to dispose of rubbish correctly
  - incorrect rubbish disposal and fly-tipping encourage pests and are costly to fix
- Don't overfill bins or leave bags or rubbish at the side of bins
- Take excess waste to the tip or for bulky items, arrange a collection
  - details can be found on your local authority's website
- Report fly tipping to us as soon as you notice it

We have recently worked with Bury Council to secure a prosecution against a resident who was fly tipping at one of our schemes. If prosecuted, the resident will face a significant fine and criminal record.

At one of our schemes in Liverpool, the Home Ownership Specialist has been working with Liverpool City Council to provide extra bins, replace broken bins and carry out repairs to bin stores to make them more accessible. The Specialist has also set up an awareness-raising campaign to leaflet local residents and put up signage that reminds people about the correct bins to use.



## HELP WITH THE COST OF LIVING

We appreciate that many of our customers may be feeling extra pressure as result of the increasing cost of living. We are doing what we can to keep costs affordable by sourcing new contracts for the following services:

- Repairs & Maintenance
- Energy
- Insurance
- Cleaning and window cleaning
- Grounds maintenance

We have improved our monitoring of service charge expenditure to ensure that any large variances are identified early and communicated where appropriate.

Organisations such as Citizens Advice and your local authority can provide advice and support to anyone experiencing financial difficulties.



## HOMEOWNERS' FORUM

Our Homeowners' Forum helps to shape our service delivery, including being involved in the development of new policies and procedures. The forum ensures that homeowners' views are considered and reflected in the way that services are provided.

If you would like to be involved and share your thoughts on improving the services you receive from us, please get in touch by emailing [customerengagement@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerengagement@onward.co.uk)