

ONWARD HOME STANDARD: Your questions answered.

In July we launched a consultation on our draft Home Standard which outlines what you can expect from us when we improve your home and replace key items such as kitchens and bathrooms.

We'd like to thank all those customers who took the time to respond. The consultation raised some really useful comments and questions, which we have responded to below.

Internal works

Fit showers but let us keep the bath too. We don't want a wet room.

Showers will now be included as standard on bathroom replacement schemes. Level access showers/wet rooms will only be fitted as standard in sheltered schemes as a way of future proofing them for current and future tenants.

Can you consider accessibility when you replace boilers?

We have mobility issues and we can't get to ours to repressurise it.

When replacing boilers, we will work with customers to position them in locations that are easy to access controls where possible. This can be discussed as part of the installation inspection.

Can fires/fireplaces be optional for tenants?

Unfortunately not. All fires are being removed to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide in properties. Where there is a specific medical need, these will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Can we have a choice of gas or electric heating?

Gas is the preferred source of energy as it is more energy efficient and most cost effective to install and run.

How do you make sure you achieve a good finish when you fit kitchens and bathrooms?

We are in the process of procuring new long-term kitchen and bathroom contracts. As part of the tender process, we assess the competence of contractors with an added emphasis on quality. We also employ internal Clerk of Works to inspect completed jobs and make sure the quality of workmanship is to the agreed standard.

When boxing in pipes, can you make sure there is easy access to pipes for repairs?

We will endeavour to make sure that easy access is maintained for future repairs when pipes have been boxed in.

When you renew kitchens can you supply like-for-like kitchen units? On the last programme we lost both drawer space and cupboard space.

We are in the process of procuring new kitchens for a long-term contract arrangement. As part of this, kitchen designers will be employed to inspect your home to determine the best design for your kitchen. All new kitchens will receive like-for-like units and, where repairs are needed, replacement door fronts will be like-for-like where possible.

Do you consider numbers of sockets in kitchens and other rooms on programmes, and add new ones to avoid overloading and fire risk?

The number of sockets are planned as part of the kitchen design stage, and will be designed in a way to prevent future overloading and fire risk. As outlined on page 5 of the Home Standard, we will provide separate electrical connection sockets for all appliances.

In light of the Grenfell Tragedy, could you provide a fire blanket and any other suitable equipment to prevent the spread of fires?

We do everything we can to ensure we meet our fire safety legal requirements. This includes the provision of fire blankets in manned properties (i.e. sheltered and supported schemes) on the basis that the effective use of such equipment requires training to be undertaken.

Do you replace internal doors on a programme?

Internal doors are not included on any planned programmes. However, when our properties become empty we look at whether doors need to be repaired or replaced as part of our repairs service.

Do you replace tap washers for elderly or vulnerable people?

This is a service we will be able to offer elderly and vulnerable customers as part of the new repairs service.

We find it hard to replace fluorescent tubes - can you do this for us?

We do not currently offer a service to replace light fittings including fluorescent tubes. However, as outlined in pages 5/6 of our Home Standard we will look to install more modern light fitting when kitchens and bathrooms are replaced.

Do you have a flat fee for rechargeable repairs like replacing locks?

If so, can you share it with us?

A standard fee will apply for the replacement of such items. However, as we are currently in the process of tendering our wider repairs service, we are unable to provide a fixed price until this contract is awarded (anticipated to be early in 2019).

How do you monitor that safety checks are carried out within the specified time period - e.g. electrical safety checks and fire alarms?

We have dedicated compliance teams in place across Onward who ensure we carry out the necessary checks in the specified time periods - this includes electrical safety checks and fire alarms, etc.

How can you make sure tenants are safe from carbon monoxide poisoning?

In addition to the Home Standard we have commenced a programme to replace all battery-operated smoke and carbon monoxide detectors with hard wired systems to ensure the safety of our customers. We also undertake an annual gas safety inspection which ensures all gas appliances are working correctly.

External works

Are your planned programmes of work going to be over more years than they were under our previous landlord?

The Onward planned investment programme is an ongoing programme that has no start or end date. Components are planned for replacement based on their age and condition. For context, we plan to spend around £100m over the next five years alone.

Can we have replacement front doors, and doors to match our windows if there is a windows programme?

As outlined in the Home Standard, windows and doors have different lifecycles and so will not always be replaced at the same time. Where possible, we will look to combine these programmes if the condition of both components is deemed to be in need of renewal. In terms of doors, customers will have a choice of colours (unless living in Listed Buildings or living in Conservation areas).

Do programmed works include resurfacing flat roofs?

As outlined on page 8 of the Home Standard, we will ensure your roof is watertight and repaired where necessary. This includes flat roofs which will be replaced on planned programmes when it is deemed that they have reached the end of their lifecycle.

Can we have outdoor security lights?

We will not include outdoor security lights as standard. However, we will be looking to develop the Estate Challenge Fund, where regions can bid for additional funding to deliver schemes outside the scope of the Homes Standard. This could include outdoor security lighting as a way of discouraging antisocial behaviour, for example.

If we have a garden can we also have an outdoor tap/water butt and outdoor socket?

Outdoor taps present a significant legionella risk if not in regular use. For this reason, outdoor taps will not be included as standard. Outdoor sockets can be added during electrical upgrade programmes where it is reasonably practicable to do so.

Can you include boundary walls on your programme?

Boundary walls are not included as standard due to the significant costs. However, the Estate Challenge Fund will allow regions to bid for schemes such as this. Repairs to external walls will also be undertaken through our repair service.

Can you consider a scheme to enable the replacement of boundary fences where the neighbour is not an Onward tenant but is an owner or private landlord?

We have dedicated programmes to deliver fencing programmes and where schemes are planned we will look to engage with private owners to encourage them to buy in to the scheme whilst contractors are on-site. In some cases adjoining owners may have an obligation to pay a portion of costs, and in such circumstances this will be progressed.

The Home Standard doesn't include standards and frequencies for grass and hedge cutting.

Can you share this too?

Not all properties have grass cutting requirements and so this has been excluded from the Home Standard.

Can you supply a shed?

We are unable to include for the provision of sheds to our properties due to costs.

Can you fit solar panels?

As part of the emerging Onward sustainability strategy, a key focus will be to improve the energy performance of all our homes to a minimum standard. Where properties do not meet this standard, and where solar panels are a viable option to improve the energy performance, they will be considered for inclusion on a case-by-case basis.

Do you repair paths and hard standings?

Repairs needed to paths and hard standings to remove hazards will be captured through the repairs service. Any requests from regional teams to carry out wholesale repairs/replacements will be assessed as part of the Estate Challenge Fund.

Is there a programme for renewing damp courses and rendering to front of old brick properties?

There is no dedicated programme to renew damp courses. Where there is a need to renew them, these will be captured through the repairs service. There is no plan to render old brick properties. Instead, we will capture these through the repointing of brickwork as part of planned programmes related to external wall finishes.

Can programmes include canopies over the front door?

Canopies over front doors are not included as standard in programmes due to costs.

Communication

Are you going to supply a paper copy of the Home Standard to tenants?

Not everyone has access to online information.

Paper copies are available to tenants on request. We will also ensure the standard is available through our website.

Can you send out the bare bones of this document with a rent statement? On it can you include both a web link where the document can be downloaded and also an address/telephone number to contact to have a printed copy sent out by post?

We will not be including a copy of the Home Standard with rent statements due to the cost of doing so. Instead, the document will be available to download from the Onward website.

A paper copy can be posted to customers who request it. This can be done on our website or by calling our Customer Contact Centre on *0300 555 0600*

Can you email about the document to all who have registered on the portal or you have email addresses for?

Email copies can be sent to those customers who request one.

Can you link our cyclical repairs into the neighbourhood plan for our area so we know what work is going to be done when?

The Onward cyclical programme is currently being developed and, as part of the neighbourhood plan, we will be looking to include a summary of the planned and cyclical investment in each neighbourhood from 2019 onwards.

Can you tell tenants in good time that they are going to be included on a programme so that they can avoid wasting money on decorating and other works and be ready?

We are developing longer-term plans for all our properties over the next year (and for the next five years' planned investment) and so customers will be able to see medium-term investment plans for their home.

