

Onward



Our Corporate Plan sets out how we will enable people to be their best, in homes they love, and places they are proud of. This year's Customer Annual Report gives examples of how we are delivering our plan and improving your homes and neighbourhoods. In the next few pages, we'll also share how we are listening to your feedback to make changes to our services so that we can deliver better customer experiences in the future.

This year we have invested a total of £77.2 million in improvements and repairs to our existing homes and £31.6 million on new windows, doors, kitchens and bathrooms and more. Work has started on energy efficiency improvements to 128 of our homes, making these warmer, more comfortable and easier for customers to run. We're also helping more people to find a place to call home. This year we have built 329 new homes across our neighbourhoods and started on site with a further 470, delivering a mix of homes to cater to the different housing needs of our communities.

Listening to our customers means that we can improve how we deliver our services in the future. In response to your feedback we have expanded our inhouse repairs service into Greater Manchester and brought grounds maintenance inhouse, which means we can improve performance and communication with our customers. We've also invested in new technology to make us easier to contact and have

continued to work with local partners to support our communities.

In this report, we also share information around our performance so you can see how we are doing compared to twelve months ago. This year we have faced continued pressures and the changes we have already made to key services will give us more resources and capacity. However, we know that there are areas where we can do better and have plans in place to deliver significant improvements.

We understand that the cost of living continues to be a challenge for many of our customers. Over the last twelve months, our Customer Accounts & Money Advice Team has supported 3,095 customers. We are here to help. If you need to speak to us about your home, our services, or are worried about your finances, please get in touch.



Bronwen Rapley,
Chief Executive

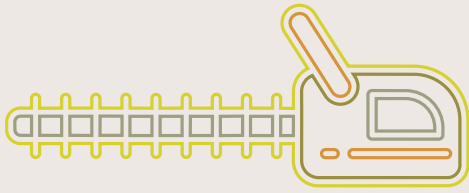


Making the Onward Difference.

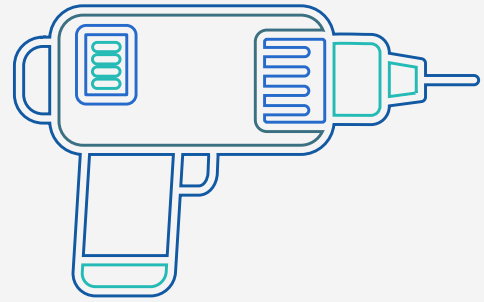
Our Corporate Plan is called The Onward Difference and sets out what we will do in the future to deliver better services, improve your homes and build new ones. We will do this by providing homes that you love, in places you are proud of and by working with partners to go beyond housing and invent new ways to do more.

Read on to find out more about the work that we have done this year to make our Corporate Plan a reality for our customers.

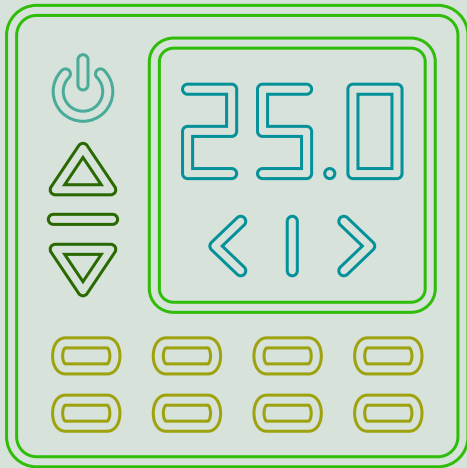
Our highlights from the last 12 months:



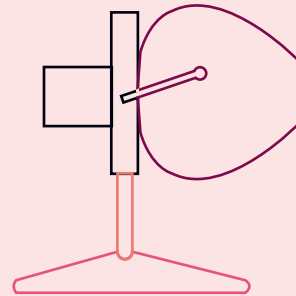
Continuing to bring key services inhouse, enabling us to be more efficient and flexible for our customers.



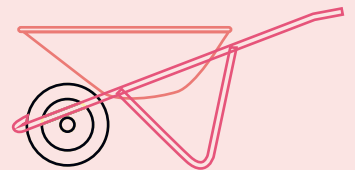
Investing a total of **£77.2 million** in improvements and repairs to customers' homes.



Investing **£5.2 million** in energy efficiency upgrades to customers' homes to make them warmer and easier to run.



Building **329** new homes across the North West, helping more people to find a place to call home.



A¹ G1/V2

Keeping our top A1 credit rating and G1/V2 governance ratings, giving us a strong foundation to deliver for customers.

Awarding **£99,990** to **61** community organisations that are making a difference in our neighbourhoods.



Making The Onward Difference

Our Corporate Plan – ‘The Onward Difference’ – sets out the different ways we will improve your homes and neighbourhoods. Here are some of the ways we have done this over the last twelve months.

ENABLING

Helping people to fulfil their aspirations.

Building more homes.

Over the last twelve months, we have built 329 new homes across the North West, enabling even more local people to put down roots in their communities.

In Greater Manchester, we have handed over the keys to 15 new homes for shared ownership at The Alders, Hattersley. Elsewhere in Hattersley, we are moving forward with 91 extra care apartments and 46 new affordable homes. Over in Merseyside, we are now applying the finishing touches at Ferry Court, which will offer 28 new apartments for social rent. In Lancashire, we are also progressing with 127 new affordable homes at Clayton-le-Moors in Hyndburn.

In the last twelve months, we have also started to build a further 470 new homes.



Working with partners to do more.

Our dedicated 1st Call Team enables thousands of customers every year to fulfil their aspirations through financial, housing and digital support and access to volunteering, employment, and training opportunities. In the last twelve months, we have worked with 4,288 local people across Hyndburn, Hattersley and Preston and delivered projects such as one-to-one coaching and work and skills initiatives.

Through the Onward Community Fund, we have awarded £99,990 to 61 local organisations that are making a positive impact in their communities, ranging from training programmes to open up employment opportunities for local people through to health and wellbeing support.



ENVIRONMENT

Making your homes warmer, drier and more affordable to run.



This year, we have progressed with improvements to customers' homes that will make them warmer, more comfortable, and easier to run. In July, we completed retrofit works to 132 bungalows in our Murdishaw neighbourhood. Since then, we have started to deliver energy efficiency improvements to 128 homes across Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Lancashire.

Later this year, we will be retrofitting more customers' homes as we continue our journey to reduce carbon and build a more sustainable future.



TECHNOLOGY

Using new technology to give better experiences and make us easier to contact.



Our Corporate Plan sets out how we will use technology in different ways to make us easier to contact and improve customers' experiences of our services.

Earlier this year, we tested a new way to deliver welfare calls to customers in our sheltered schemes. Customers can now choose when they would like to get their morning calls from us and send alerts directly to their scheme manager. This is a quicker and more convenient way to communicate with us and we'll be making this available to more customers later in the year.

In March, in response to feedback, we launched a new, easier way for customers in Lancashire to track repairs and contact us about appointments. Customers now get a text on the day of their appointment, which allows them to track Onward Repairs in real time and send us a message if their plans change. Following a successful launch, this has now been rolled out to customers in Greater Manchester.

LISTENING

Having a local presence and listening to your feedback to improve what we do.

We have been listening to what you have been telling us about key services, such as repairs and grounds maintenance. In response to your feedback, we have made some big changes to how we deliver these services this year, which will deliver better outcomes for customers in the future.

In March, repairs in Greater Manchester moved from external contractors to Onward Repairs, our inhouse repairs team which carries out all repairs in Lancashire. Bringing repairs inhouse gives us greater control over the service, more flexibility to deliver improvements in the future and improves communication with customers.

We have also brought all our grounds maintenance, cleaning, and waste management services inhouse with these moving over to our Onward Environmental team. In the long-term, this means that we can protect customers from rising contractor costs and offer a more efficient service. It also means we're more visible in your neighbourhoods, can better monitor performance and respond more quickly to your feedback.



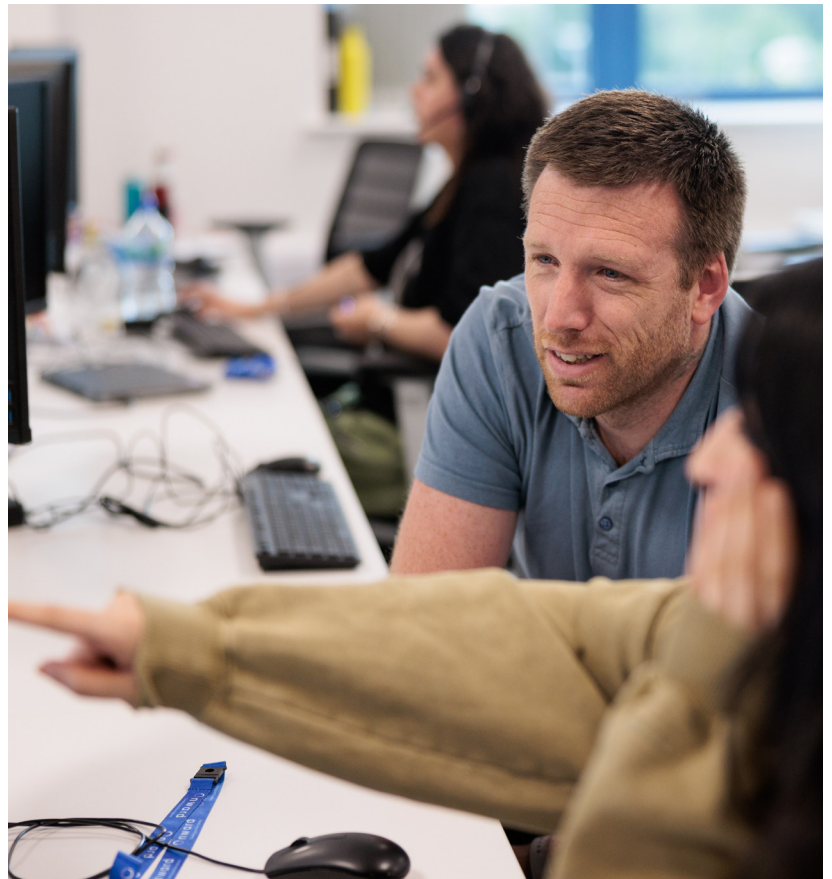
COLLEAGUES

Always learning how to do a better job for our customers.

Our Corporate Plan sets out how we will give opportunities for colleague learning so that we can deliver better outcomes for our customers.

This year, we launched new customer service training for all colleagues. This training gave colleagues an opportunity to share knowledge and experiences with a focus on getting the basics right and delivering better outcomes for customers. We will roll this out to all new starters and our contractors as we strive to continuously improve our customer service.

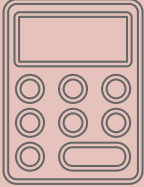
Colleagues also have lots of opportunities to share feedback and shape our culture through our Colleague Forum and Equity Forum, helping us to build an inclusive and welcoming workplace where everyone can give their best.



How we are doing.


This year we have experienced continued pressure on our services. We expect that this will continue, so have already made changes to improve our services, such as bringing repairs, grounds maintenance and cleaning inhouse, which means we now have more control over performance and can deliver services more efficiently. These changes also give us more capacity and resources to respond to pressure on our services.

The following tables set out how we have performed this year compared to last. These show that there are areas where we need to improve and we have significant plans in place to do this. On page 12, we set out how we are working with you to improve our services.




| | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
|---|---------|---------|
| Proportion of rent collected from customers | 99.2% | 98.9% |
| Proportion of overdue rent owed by customers | 5.1% | 4.8% |

Rental income



| | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Average days to relet an empty home | 30.3 days | 45.7 days |
| Average days to relet an empty home (excluding sheltered and supported homes) | 30.2 days | 44.5 days |

Lettings & turnover



| | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|
| All repairs | 81.5% | 77.3% |
| Emergency repairs | 93.5% | 82.9% |
| Routine repairs | 80.9% | 75.3% |

Repairs Completed within target timescales.



| | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
|---|---------|---------|
| Homes with a valid gas safety certificate | 99.3% | 99.6% |
| Homes with a valid electrical safety certificate | 97.5% | 97.7% |
| Homes with a complete fire risk assessment | 100% | 99.8% |

Keeping you safe

Measuring tenant satisfaction

This year, we have completed our first survey based on new Tenant Satisfaction Measures. The survey will take place every year and the results will be shared with and published by the Regulator of Social Housing. You can find out how we have performed [here](#).

Improving your home.

This year, we have invested £31.6 million in customers' homes, which involves work to keep you safe and well and improve your home. This has included:



1,364
Doors



930
Windows



1,030
Kitchens



773
Bathrooms



328
Roofs



633
Boilers

Our plans to improve.

We don't always get things right and your complaints help us to understand what we need to do better. Over the last twelve months, there has been a small increase in the number of complaints received but we are encouraged to see that less of these are escalating to the next stage.

Working with our involved customers, we've made some changes to deliver a better service focused on improving customer communication, resolving issues more quickly and ensuring we take opportunities to learn from complaints. The table below shows how we are doing around complaints compared to the previous year.

| Performance indicator | 2022/23 performance | 2023/24 performance | Difference |
|--|------------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| Number of complaints received | 1,380 | 1,388 | +0.6% |
| Number of Housing Ombudsman complaints | 33 | 27 | -18% |
| Complaints closed within 10 days | 90.2% | 81% | -9% |
| Average time taken to resolve complaints | Average 9 working days | Average 9 working days | No difference |
| Number of complaints upheld | 76% | 77% | +1% |
| Number of compliments received | 459 | 378 | -18% |
| Complaints per 1,000 properties | 45.5 | 48.9 | +7% |
| Complaints not accepted | 75 | 67 | -11% |
| Number of complaints escalating to Stage 2 | 202 | 158 | -22% |



What are we are doing differently?

We have clear action plans in place focused on how we can continue to improve our services and reduce the number of complaints we receive. This includes:

- Introducing training and support around early intervention. This will focus on contacting customers proactively to understand how we can support them and means we can resolve issues more quickly and tackle the causes of dissatisfaction at an earlier stage, before this escalates to a complaint.
- Introducing an alternative approach to dispute resolution for customers who have started the legal disrepair process. The formal legal route can be lengthy, so this alternative approach is designed to speed up the resolution for customers and give us an opportunity to engage with them directly so that we can understand their concerns.
- Creating a new complaint case management process that will improve our record keeping and reporting capabilities, provide quality information and help us learn from customer complaints.

To find out more about we're responding to complaints, please take a look at our Annual Complaints & Service Improvement Report [here](#).



Working with customers to improve services.

Our performance and complaints data shows that there are areas where we can improve. We have already made changes to deliver better outcomes for customers and have further plans in place for significant improvements to our services this year.

Our customers are at the heart of everything we do and listening to your feedback helps us to improve our services. Through our customer engagement community, our involved customers have lots of opportunities to share their views, work with us to shape new services, challenge us and hold us to account.

We have different forums where customers can do this and here are just some of the ways our involved customers have helped us to make our services better this year:

- In response to feedback from customers about the performance of our repairs service, we have now brought these inhouse in Greater Manchester, which gives us more control over performance and means we can deliver a more efficient service. We have also transitioned grounds maintenance and cleaning services to our own Onward Environmental team following feedback from customers.
- The Onward Scrutiny Board and Repairs Groups have helped to shape other important improvements in our repairs service, for example they have given feedback on technology to manage appointments, and shared ideas on how we can improve our communication about repairs and the way we record and liaise with customers about communal repairs.
- Through our Customer Resolution Forum, involved customers have shaped changes to how we approach and respond to complaints and helped us to prepare new guidance to give customers more clarity around the service and support available.
- We also involve customers in projects taking place across our neighbourhoods. For example, as part of the retrofit work in Murdishaw, all customers had the opportunity to give their views on the design which resulted in changes. Several involved customers also volunteered as neighbourhood champions and had opportunities to regularly feedback on how the work was progressing and monitor the performance of contractors and sub-contractors.



Your feedback helps us to improve our services and make our homes and neighbourhoods better places to live. To find out more about how you can get involved email customerengagement@onward.co.uk or visit www.onward.co.uk/get-involved.