

# The Onward Newsletter

Winter 2024

**IN THIS ISSUE:** Tips to keep you and your home safe this Winter and stories from across your neighbourhoods.

## WELCOME.

Welcome to your final Onward newsletter of 2024. In this newsletter, we set out some of the ways that we can help you at this time of year.

We understand that the cost of living can become more challenging during the Winter. If you are worried about how to manage your household bills over the festive period please let us know. Our Money Advice Team gives free, confidential advice to thousands of customers every year that are looking to get on top of their finances.

We also know that freezing temperatures increase the chance of things going wrong around the home. If you need to report a repair or spot signs of damp and mould please let us know as soon as you can. Over the next few pages, we've also included some advice on how you can keep yourself and your home safe.

In the next few months, we'll be holding Winter Wellbeing events across our neighbourhoods, which are a fantastic opportunity for us to come together, connect with our customers and offer you advice and support. We would love to see you there.

If you need some help, or just want to talk, we are a phone call away. With every good wish for the New Year.



Bronwen Rapley,  
Chief Executive

## WINTER SUPPORT.



If you need support with finances, housing, food, employment, mental health and wellbeing over the Winter, we're here to help.

To learn more about the support available and to find a Winter Wellbeing event near you, please:

- visit our website ([onward.co.uk/winter-support](https://onward.co.uk/winter-support))
- email [socialinvestment@onward.co.uk](mailto:socialinvestment@onward.co.uk)
- contact your Neighbourhood Specialist or Scheme Manager
- call 0300 555 0600

# PLAN AHEAD FOR THE 53-WEEK YEAR RENT PAYMENT.

Every few years there is an extra Monday in the rental year. 2024/25 is one of these years. Because weekly rents are charged on a Monday this means there will be 53 weeks rent to pay rather than the usual 52.

If you pay weekly or if you receive Housing Benefit there will be no change. If you pay monthly, or if you pay your rent from Universal Credit, you will need to make an additional payment, or increase your regular payments, before 30th March 2025 to avoid falling into debt.

For more information, please give us a call or take a look at the guidance available on our website ([onward.co.uk/53-week](https://onward.co.uk/53-week)).

If you think you will struggle to pay, or need help with your finances, we're here to help. To get in touch with our Money Advice Team, please email [moneyadviceteam@onward.co.uk](mailto:moneyadviceteam@onward.co.uk) or call **0300 555 0600**.



## REPORTING REPAIRS.

If you need to contact us to report a repair or damp and mould, you can do so by:



visiting the My Onward Portal ([my.onward.co.uk](https://my.onward.co.uk))



calling **0300 555 0600** or messaging **07793 795 882** on WhatsApp between 8am-6pm Monday to Friday and 10am-6pm on Wednesdays



emailing [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk)

If you need to report an emergency repair, such as a complete loss of power, faulty boiler, a flood or leak that can't be controlled, please call us as soon as you can on **0300 555 0600**. Our emergency phone line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

As a reminder, if you live in Greater Manchester or Cheshire East your gas repairs and servicing will now be carried out by Onward Repairs. This means we can deliver a more efficient and responsive service. To learn more, please visit [onward.co.uk/gas-services](https://onward.co.uk/gas-services).





# YOU SAID, WE DID.

Getting the basics right and listening to you, your priorities and aspirations remain the foundation for everything we do.

Our Customer Engagement Community is made up of over 3,400 customers who help to shape our policies and review how we deliver services. Here are just some of the ways customers have helped us to make our services better.

## **You told us that you'd like us to improve our communication about mutual exchanges.**

Following your feedback, we're now issuing regular social media posts about how customers can swap their home through a mutual exchange. We've also included an article in this newsletter and with the help of customer volunteers made improvements to our Mutual Exchange Policy which can be found on our website ([onward.co.uk/policies](https://onward.co.uk/policies)).

## **You told us that whilst our Repairs Policy is fair, clear and easy to understand, you would like us to make some improvements.**

Following this feedback, we will be working with customer volunteers to make changes to the policy, which will have more information on our repairs service, including the types of repairs we deliver, how they are prioritised and appointment timescales.

## **You told us that you would like the ability to rearrange repair appointments by text message, like other public services.**

For customers in Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Cheshire East, we have introduced a new way to track appointments with Onward Repairs.

On the day of an appointment, customers now receive a text message from us with the name of the operative and a link to track where they are. We know sometimes plans change and customers may not be home when we're going to arrive, so customers can also send a message straight to our operatives instead of missing the appointment. We hope to roll this out to customers in Merseyside in the future.



## **SCRUTINY BOARD UPDATE.**

The Onward Scrutiny Board is made up of customer volunteers from across the North West who provide valuable feedback and recommendations on how we can improve the services you receive. They do this by reviewing service performance, policies and working closely with our Customer Committee.

The Scrutiny Board has produced a new Annual Review which outlines its role, introduces its members, reflects on the successes of the last financial year and talks about priorities for the year ahead.

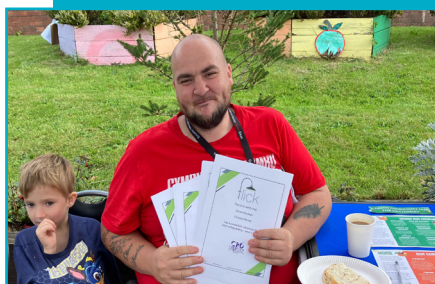
To read the report, please visit our website ([onward.co.uk/scrutiny](https://onward.co.uk/scrutiny)). You can also request a printed version by emailing [customerengagement@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerengagement@onward.co.uk) or calling **0300 555 0600**.

If you are interested in becoming a member of Customer Engagement Community, please get in touch.

# # The Onward Difference

Our Corporate Plan, The Onward Difference, is all about enabling you to be your best, in a home you love and place you are proud of. Here are some examples of the work we've been doing across the North West. To explore how we are making The Onward Difference in your local area, please visit our website [onward.co.uk/local-updates](https://onward.co.uk/local-updates).

## ENABLING PEOPLE TO BE THEIR BEST



Our customer Simon is an active member of the community in Hattersley and is involved in projects that support mental health and green spaces. Through the Onward Employment and Training Fund, our Social Investment Team has supported Simon with online training to improve his skills and further help community groups in the area.



We welcomed nine Year 11 students from Hyndburn Academy on a two-day work experience placement where they spent time with different Onward teams such as Neighbourhoods and Repairs to learn about job opportunities in the housing sector and apprenticeships at Onward.

LANCASHIRE



MERSEYSIDE



Through a grant from the Onward Community Fund, we supported Norris Green Community Alliance's Food for All initiative, which is set to support around 720 households with essential food and household items as well as employment opportunities, health and wellbeing support.

## PROVIDING HOMES OUR CUSTOMERS LOVE

On the former site of Wheatfields Day Centre in Bury, our development of 30 new homes is nearly complete. Through Onward Living's Shared Ownership scheme 14 of the new homes will be helping people onto the property ladder, with 16 homes available via Affordable Rent through Bury Home Options ([bury.gov.uk](https://bury.gov.uk)).

GREATER MANCHESTER



LANCASHIRE



Our Lockside Walk development of 127 new homes in Clayton-le-Moors is also taking shape thanks to our contractors, Watson Homes, and will offer a range of affordable housing on the banks of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. The first Shared Ownership and Rent to Buy homes are now available via Onward Living ([onward-living.co.uk](http://onward-living.co.uk)).



MERSEYSIDE



Over in St Helens, we're partnering with Vistry to deliver 123 new affordable homes on the former site of Ibstock Brickworks. When complete, the homes will be available via Social Rent, Rent to Buy and Shared Ownership.

## CREATING PLACES PEOPLE ARE PROUD OF

With the help of residents, our suppliers and partners, we refurbished The Park Community Hub, a thriving, multi-purpose space that is enabling the community in Hollinwood, Oldham to host a range of activities alongside services delivered by local partners.



GREATER MANCHESTER



LANCASHIRE



Our Neighbourhoods and Capital Projects Teams were joined by our contractors Wright Build at a community clean up day to help remove waste from customers' gardens and fly tipping across some of our neighbourhoods..



Thanks to funding from Liverpool City Council, we created age-friendly gardens at our Holmwood and Ashfarm schemes in Liverpool. As part of the project, we'll be delivering gardening activity days and displays throughout the year alongside additional wellbeing activities.

MERSEYSIDE



To find out more about what's happening in your area and support that might be available to you or local community groups, please visit our website [onward.co.uk/community-fund](http://onward.co.uk/community-fund) or email [socialinvestment@onward.co.uk](mailto:socialinvestment@onward.co.uk).

# STAYING SAFE AT HOME.

As the festive season begins, there are some important steps to take to make sure you keep yourself and your home safe.

## HOME SAFETY



- Test your smoke/heat alarms once a month
- Never leave fires or electric heaters unattended and be sure to put them out/turn them off before you go to sleep
- Don't heat your home with anything that uses a gas cannister or open flame
- Make space around oil-filled or electric radiators and never use them to dry washing
- Never tamper with gas or electricity meters
- Keep communal areas free from hazards
- Look out for signs of damp and mould

## ELECTRICAL SAFETY



- Check power sockets, wires and extension leads and if they are damaged don't use them
- Make sure that sockets and extension leads are not overloaded
- Never leave items unattended whilst charging them
- Don't overcharge battery powered devices, such as e-cigarettes or e-scooters
- Make sure e-bikes, e-scooters and their batteries are stored in cool places and never charge them near something flammable
- Festive decorations can catch fire very easily so please keep these away from heat sources, such as radiators

## KITCHEN SAFETY



- Never leave pans unattended whilst cooking
- Keep the area around your stove/oven clear of fabric and flammable items
- Turn off all appliances before you go to sleep

For more information on fire, gas, lift and water safety, please visit [onward.co.uk/safety](https://onward.co.uk/safety). You can also find tips on how to spot damp and mould in your home by visiting [onward.co.uk/damp](https://onward.co.uk/damp).

## KEEPING YOU SAFE FROM ABUSE.

If you are experiencing abuse, we are here to help and will listen, take what you say seriously, and get you the help and support you need to stay safe.

Our colleagues and contractors aren't around all the time, so if you're ever worried or concerned about the wellbeing of one of your neighbours, don't think what if I'm wrong, think what if I'm right.

You can contact us by visiting the My Onward Portal ([my.onward.co.uk](https://my.onward.co.uk)), emailing [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk), calling **0300 555 0600** or messaging **07793 795 882** on WhatsApp.

You can also contact Victim Support by calling **0845 303 0900**. If you need help in an emergency, please call **999**. For more information, please visit our website ([onward.co.uk/safeguarding](https://onward.co.uk/safeguarding)).



## HELPING YOU TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY.

If you need help making everyday tasks safer and easier, such as grab rails or a level access shower, adaptations can be made across all areas of your home, including your garden.

To learn more about our adaptations service, please get in touch or visit our website ([onward.co.uk/adaptations](https://onward.co.uk/adaptations)).

## SWAPPING YOUR HOME.

Need to move home for a new job, to gain more space or to downsize? Whatever the reason, you could swap your home through a Mutual Exchange.

If you are interested in swapping your home, please visit our website ([onward.co.uk/mutual-exchange](https://onward.co.uk/mutual-exchange)) or get in touch to find out more.



## STAY SAFE ONLINE.

If you receive an email, text message or phone call from someone you don't know and things don't feel right, it's important to be cautious about replying, clicking on links or sending money.

If you ever feel worried or unsure about an email or text message from Onward, you can check this with us by emailing [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk) or calling **0300 555 0600**.

## HOME VISITS.

From time to time, we may visit your home for things like repairs, surveys and tenancy checks. We will always inform you when a contractor we employ is scheduled to visit your home.

Before letting anyone into your home, it's important to check for ID. This includes Onward employees and any contractors.

If you are unsure who they are or they cannot provide their ID badge, do not let them into your home and call us straight away on **0300 555 0600**.





# OUR HOME STANDARD.

We want you to feel happy, safe and secure in the place you live and know the quality of your home can have a huge impact on your quality of life.

So you know what to expect when we look after and improve your home, we have worked with customers to create Our Home Standard which you can find on our website ([onward.co.uk/policies](https://onward.co.uk/policies)). If you need help understanding this document or want to request a printed copy, please get in touch.

If you need any help understanding this document, please give us a call on **0300 555 0600**, send us a message on WhatsApp to **07793 795882**, or send an email to [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk).

Jeśli potrzebujesz pomocy w zrozumieniu tego dokumentu, zadzwoń do nas na numer 0300 555 0600, wyślij nam wiadomość na WhatsApp na numer 07793 795882 lub wyślij e-mail na adres [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk).

إذا كنت بحاجة إلى أي مساعدة في فهم هذه الوثيقة، فيرجى الاتصال بنا على 0300 555 0600، أو أرسل رسالة إلينا على [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk) رقم الواتس 07793 795882 أو أرسل رسالة بريد إلكتروني إلى

এই নথিটি বুঝতে আপনার যদি কোনো সাহায্যের প্রয়োজন হয়, তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের 0300 555 0600 নম্বরে একটি কল করুন, আমাদের হোয়াটসঅ্যাপ -এ 07793 795882 নম্বরে একটি বার্তা পাঠান বা [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk).

اگر برای درک این سند به کمک نیاز دارید، لطفاً با ما با شماره 03005550600 تماس بگیرید، از طریق واتساپ به [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk) شماره 07793795882 برای ما پیام بفرستید یا یک ایمیل به

如果您在理解本文件时需要任何帮助，请致电 0300 555 0600，通过 WhatsApp 发送信息至 07793 795882，或发送电子邮件至 [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk)。

Haddii aad u baahan tahay in lagaa caawiyo fahamka dokumentigan, fadlan naga soo wac lambarkan 0300 555 0600, farriin noogu soo dir lambarkan WhatsApp-ta 07793 795882, ama email noogu soo dir [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk).

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کو سمجھنے میں کسی مدد کی ضرورت ہے، تو براہ کرم ہمیں 0300 555 0600 پر کال کریں۔ [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk) ہمیں واٹس ایپ پر 07793 795882 پر پیغام بھیجیں، یا

Si vous avez besoin d'aide pour comprendre ce document, appelez-nous au 0300 555 0600, envoyez-nous un message sur WhatsApp au 07793 795882, ou envoyez un e-mail à [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk).

ئەگەر پێویستت بە یارمەتی ھەیە بۆ تێگەیشتن لەم بەلگنامەیە، تکایە پەیوەندیمان پێوە بکە بە ژمارە تەلەفۆنی 03005550600، لە واتسەپ پەیامێکمان بۆ بنێرە بە ژمارە تەلەفۆنی 07793795882 یان ئیمەیلێکمان بۆ بنێرە بۆ [customerservices@onward.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@onward.co.uk).

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