

Onward

YOUR VOICE.

Winter 2025

Welcome to the Winter edition of the Your Voice newsletter.

I'm really happy to introduce myself as Onward's new Customer Involvement Manager. It's been wonderful joining the team and seeing first-hand how passionate both colleagues and customers are about making a difference. Everyone I've met so far has been so welcoming, and it's clear there's a real shared commitment to listening, learning, and improving together.

In this issue, you'll read about some of the brilliant work that's been happening – from customers helping shape our policy reviews on damp and mould and income management, to those took part National Customer Service Week and shared their experiences of seeing customer care in action. Thank you to everyone who's taken the time to get involved.

I'm really looking forward to getting to know more of you over the coming months and working together to build on what's already been achieved.

Amy Holden

Customer Involvement Manager



OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED.



HouseProud

We're thrilled to be working with HouseProud, an organisation which helps social housing providers improve their services for LGBT+ residents, and you're invited to join their forum.

The HouseProud Rainbow Roofs LGBT+ Customer Forum brings together customers from housing associations across the North West, housing professionals, agencies, and representatives from local authorities to focus on:

- hate crime and its impact on LGBT+ people
- housing for older LGBT+ people
- LGBT+ training for social housing employees
- celebrating local LGBT+ heroes
- supporting local LGBT+ businesses
- a calendar of events
- increasing the diversity of its members

If you'd like to get involved in the next online meeting, please get in touch with Leanne by emailing leanne.baldwin@onward.co.uk.

We're also supporting Stop Social Housing Stigma, a tenant-led national campaign that aims to present a positive image of social housing and its tenants. Our Customer Equity Forum will be looking at how we can help to support this campaign over the coming months, so please contact Leanne if you'd like to get involved. You can also visit (stopsocialhousingstigma.org) to find out more.

AN UPDATE FROM THE ONWARD SCRUTINY BOARD.

As members of the Onward Scrutiny Board, we dedicate our time on a voluntary basis to take a close look at the services you receive. We highlight what's going well and ask questions on your behalf where services are not meeting their targets.

We love what we do and work well as a team. We're a diverse bunch from across the North West and we all bring our experience and ideas together to help Onward make positive changes. You can find out more about our members on Onward's website.

Since our first annual review a year ago, we have continued to meet regularly to hold Onward to account for the quality of the services they provide. Some highlights from 2024/25 include our review of the communications Onward send to customers about rent and service charges, the quality of services you receive, as well as looking closely at areas such as grounds maintenance and cleaning now that these have been brought in-house.

OUR YEAR AT A GLANCE.

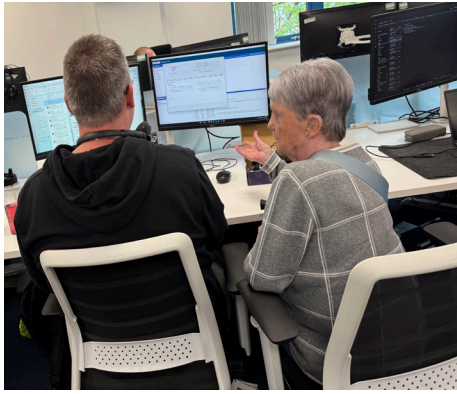
- ✓ Attended **2** national conferences
- ✓ Took part in **5** workshops with Onward's board members and directors
- ✓ Attended **5** Customer Committee meetings
- ✓ Made **16** detailed recommendations to improve rent and service charge information, transparency and value for money
- ✓ Held **18** working meetings and 4 quarterly meetings to review performance
- ✓ Asked over **40** questions about service performance
- ✓ Volunteered over **400** hours to help improve services for customers

We've also worked closely with Onward to offer positive, practical ideas for improving services. We have developed a collaborative relationship with Heads of Service and other senior employees across Onward and have had opportunities to influence at governance level through our attendance at Customer Committee (a sub-group of Onward's Board who oversee all services that customers receive) meetings.

In our 2024/25 annual review, we've provided a more detailed look at the work we've been doing to help make services better for our fellow customers. To take a look, please visit Onward's website (onward.co.uk/osb) or get in touch to request the review in another format.

We currently have vacancies for more customers to join us, so if you'd like to get involved, please do get in touch with the Customer Involvement Team by emailing customerengagement@onward.co.uk, calling 0300 555 0600 or filling in the form on Onward's website (onward.co.uk/get-involved).

The Onward Scrutiny Board



CELEBRATING NATIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE WEEK.

In celebration of National Customer Service Week, some of our involved customers headed into our Customer Service Centre for coffee, cake and conversation.

Getting a behind the scenes look at how our we deliver customer care in action, these customers shadowed live calls, took part in a question-and-answer session with our colleagues, and discovered how we support around 30,000 queries from customers each month across a variety of different channels.

Here's what the customers who attended told us about their experience.

"I came along to visit the Customer Service Centre because I wanted to see how the system really works. I was surprised by the size of the centre and the variety of calls coming through. The team were calm, helpful, and I had an eye-opening experience. It's enlightened me, and I now understand just how much goes on behind the scenes. I'd want other customers to know that the help is there, and everyone should use it."

Norman

"I couldn't resist the invite for coffee, cake and good company, but I also wanted to get a real insight into what happens in the Customer Service Centre. I was amazed by how many systems the team uses, how easily they move between them and that things are constantly evolving. You can feel the camaraderie as soon as you walk in, and it hits you how friendly it is. There are lots of employees in the team who are calm and helpful when speaking to customers. I had a great experience."

Tony

"Today has brought the Customer Service Centre to life for me. I was surprised by the sheer volume of calls and the wide area Onward covers. It's clear the team handles every enquiry with calmness and professionaliswvm."

Joan

"It hits you as soon as you open those doors, how friendly it is. The atmosphere is warm and welcoming, and the team are really making a difference."

Edwina

We'll be hosting more of these sessions over the coming months, so keep an eye out for your invite!

We're proud to be members of Tpas, an organisation who help bring tenants and landlords together to improve services. As a member, our customers also have access to a wide range of support from Tpas, such as training and networking that can help you become more involved in shaping the services we deliver.

To access this support, please visit Tpas' website (tpas.org.uk) or get in touch by emailing customerengagement@onward.co.uk.

Johnny, who is a member of the Onward Scrutiny Board, recently attend Tpas' annual conference alongside Val and Amy from the Customer Involvement Team to learn about how other social landlords approach customer engagement.

Johnny said: *"The day was packed with lots of good conversations and some impressive and informative workshops. I went along to the Tackling Stigma in Social Housing workshop which saw the launch of the Stigma Scrutiny Project. I'm excited to see which landlords have the courage to take part and ask themselves some tough questions to support the movement."*



SUPPORTING ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROJECTS.

Customers in Oldham whose homes will be made warmer, quieter and more comfortable through an upcoming energy efficiency project were invited to a drop in to find out about the work that we'll be delivering. Customers chose the colour and design of their new doors, looked at examples of the external wall insulation that will be installed at the rear of their homes, and the internal wall insulation that will be installed at the front.

Over the next two months, we'll be asking for feedback from customers in Oldham, Lancashire and Merseyside who were included in last year's energy efficiency projects. Their views will help us plan for future projects, and support Liverpool City Council's research into energy saving schemes that help to reduce carbon emissions.

IMPROVING SERVICES FOR LEASEHOLDERS AND SHARED OWNERS.

At our recent Home Ownership Forum, customers discussed their engagement and feedback opportunities and suggested the introduction of regular surveys covering key service areas such as maintenance and repairs, as well as communication.

We'll be working with the forum over the coming months to co-design these new surveys in line with the Tenant Satisfaction Survey, which a sample of customers across different tenures are asked to take part in each year based on Tenant Satisfaction Measures set by the Regulator of Social Housing.

POLICY REVIEWS.

We provide plenty of opportunities for customers to share their views and influence how we deliver our services. One of the ways we do this is through policy reviews and over the last few months, we've worked with customers to improve our damp and mould, income management, and buy back policies.



Damp and mould

On Monday 27th October, Awaab's Law introduced new timeframes for responding to damp, mould and emergency hazards in our homes. Awaab's Law has been created to protect social housing tenants from serious health hazards and follows the tragic death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale in 2020.

In consultation with customers, we recently updated the guidance we provide around damp and mould in our homes, so that customers know what to look out for, how to report issues, and what they should expect from us. Thanks to the customers who took part in the consultation and shared their views with Nikki Currie, Head of Repairs, on how we could make the policy and easy-read leaflet clearer. You can take a look at these documents by visiting our website (onward.co.uk/damp).



Income management

We also completed a review of our Income Management Policy, which aims to maximise rent and service charge collection, minimise arrears and enable our customers to maintain their tenancies and leases. Thanks to feedback from customers who took part in our survey.

We're now working with Rob Davies, Head of Customer Accounts and Money Advice, to shape this into a clearer, fairer and more supportive approach with your recommendations which included:

- Making the document easier to understand, particularly in technical and legal sections.
- Improving guidance on paying rent in advance with clearer information on refunds through real-life examples.
- Promoting the support available to customers through Onward's Money Advice Team and flexible repayment plans.
- Ensuring policies for homeowners and leaseholders are clearly marked to reduce confusion.



Buy back

Our Buy Back Policy, which outlines our approach to repurchasing properties previously sold through Shared Ownership, Right to Buy, or Right to Acquire, was also reviewed by customers in our Home Ownership Forum. The group focussed their review on whether this policy applies to all leaseholders, or specifically to shared ownership and right to buy customers and raised important questions around clarity. Over the coming months we will be updating the policy to ensure this is clearer and easier to understand.

IN IT TO WIN IT.

We're giving you the chance to win a £30, £20 or £10 voucher in our wordsearch competition. Simply complete the wordsearch below and let us know which word is missing by emailing leanne.baldwin@onward.co.uk by Friday 28th November.

Y S N M T P O N V E P Q D T L E V I L W
Q G C J F B H E V Y D J K Y M N S J U I
S P R K L Q X T C R F Z S M T V I Y C G
T E M Y C T V U V M B T U P Z I D A C B
L M A I N T E N A N C E P L D R C Y O S
I G W D G M U H M M H A P X S O E N Z H
S P N T K F G B I I V Y O B J N R C G O
T D H O M E G D H U S R R R R M U T U C
E K J K K H P O L Q Y E T X Y E B S F E
N A N J H S U S D Z S N L U Q N L S G V
I B N E X G S M F K J T O Z Q T B C O G
N A Y Q I J W A Z L M K N F X A S T E E
G Q J M H U G Q E I L J N E N L P T R I
I I T B U R R E P A I R S P N Q T J R D
Q B X P Q N U H M V C I Y L N B Y T U W

Home
Repairs
Rent

Maintenance
Environmental
Listening

Support
Landlord

PRIZE DRAW WINNERS.

As a member of our Customer Engagement Community, you are automatically entered into our monthly random prize draw for the chance to win a £50 high street voucher.

Congratulations to our latest winners June, John, Steven, Lin and Anthony.

Next time it could be you...

If you usually contact us using WhatsApp, please note our number will be changing in December. For the latest details, please give us a call or check our website (onward.co.uk/contact-us).

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**.

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.

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 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.

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 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。

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.

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 ہمیں واٹس ایپ پر 07793 795882 پر پیغام بھیجیں، یا

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