

Movin' On Up

Issue 2 Spring 2026



For
Advance
customers by
Advance
customers

HAPPY
EASTER



Introduction from Sophie Lord, Chief Editor of Movin' On Up

If you would like to contribute to the next issue of Movin' On Up, contact Customer Engagement Manager, Jackie by email.

Jacqueline.Russon@advanceuk.org

Hello!

Welcome to the second edition of 'Movin' On Up', the newsletter written by Advance customers, for Advance customers. I hope you had a good start to the year and had time to read Issue 1.

This edition is about showing the improvements that Advance (with help from customers) is making to build on customer experience and providing you with useful information you may not already know.

However, I would love to invite our readers to suggest anything you want us to include in the next issue. Maybe you would like to send us a picture you have drawn or a short story you have written. Please send your suggestions or creations to Jackie at Jacqueline.Russon@advanceuk.org and she will pass them to me.



I really hope you enjoy this issue and want to get involved in all kinds of ways.



Question time

With Lucy Sivasundram, Executive Director of Housing



There are several changes in social housing, with new rules like Awaab's Law, the Tenant Satisfaction Measures and the Complaints Handling Code. These changes, quite rightly, emphasise customers being at the front and centre of decisions.

With Lucy Sivasundram, Executive Director of Housing, now settled into her role at Advance, the Partnership Group were keen to learn more about her and how she is dealing with these changes.

If you had a superpower, what would it be and how would it help you to make Advance better?

Foresight – I would choose the ability to instantly understand what people are really going through – residents, families and the staff supporting them.

This would help me support Advance by making sure I'm always focusing on what people genuinely need. It would help me spot issues early, remove barriers that make life harder for residents and support staff in a way that helps them feel valued and able to do their best work. If that couldn't happen, I would have the power to eat what I want without putting on weight! I would eat chocolate all day long!

Shared owners sometimes get confused with what Advance provides/is responsible for – what are your ideas to make it clearer and easier to understand what Advance provide/ is responsible for, when it comes to Shared Ownership?

Clear, simple communication is the key. Most confusion happens because people hear "Advance" and assume we handle everything to do with their home. The goal is to make it obvious what we do and what we don't do. We are in the process of creating a service standard which sets out what Advance is responsible for and what customers are responsible for.

This will be available on our website, in welcome packs and on the customer portal. Colleagues will be fully briefed so that you can easily check with them if you are unsure. This will help remove guesswork. It builds trust, reduces frustration and helps customers feel more confident about who to contact.

What is the most important aspect of your role in the housing department?

The most important part of my role is making sure residents have a safe home and get a fair service. My job is to listen, solve problems early and support the team so we can give people the best experience possible.

With the introduction of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, Awaab's Law and the updated complaints procedure, there's now a much stronger focus on putting customers at the centre

of everything we do. At Advance, this has always been part of our approach, so I'm confident we can meet these new requirements. For me, the most important thing is making sure customers have a strong voice when something isn't right and that we show them that we've listened, understood and acted on their concerns.

What do you do for fun?

When I am not working, I like to relax, spending time with my partner, daughter and our dog. We enjoy family days out, shopping, eating out and trips to the cinema. Not forgetting walks in the park with Maggie the dog!

If you had a magic wand and had one wish for your department, what would it be and why?

The gift of more time. As an organisation, we have to make the most of the resources we have, which means our teams often cover a wide range of responsibilities. This isn't a weakness – it's a reflection of how committed and flexible our staff are.



Lucy's dog, Maggie, enjoying a walk

What matters is that we use our time wisely, focus on what makes the biggest difference for residents and keep improving the way we work, so that we can deliver a consistent, high quality service. When we get this right, even a small team can achieve a lot. Can you imagine what we could achieve if we had the gift of more time?

New Housing laws

1. Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

Landlords must now ask tenants how happy they are with repairs, safety and services, and publish the results each year.

2. Awaab's Law

Landlords must fix damp, mould and dangerous problems quickly, with strict time limits for checking and repairing hazards.

3. Complaint Handling Code

There are now legal rules landlords must follow when dealing with complaints, including clear steps and timescales.



You said, we listened

Communication and repairs, an update from Sophie Lord

The most common reason why an Advance customer would want to contact the Customer Service Team is to report a repair. Over the last couple of years, the Customer Partnership has been working with Advance to improve the ease of doing so for everyone, no matter their disability. This was especially important to me as a person with a speech difficulty, which means I am unable to speak on the phone.

This meant that I had to rely on other people to report a repair. The Partnership wanted to come up with a way for a repair to be reported without having to ring Customer Services.

Advance has now introduced a repair form, which can be found on the website. This is available to fill in 24 hours a day. Customers can complete the form with the details of the repair job that Advance need to carry out in their property. Alongside this, the customer can attach up to 10 photos, enabling the Customer Service Team to see exactly what the problem is. The repair form goes straight into the Customer Services inbox and will be dealt with within 24 working hours (Monday-Friday).

It is worth noting that the repair form should not be used if you need an emergency repair.

Another service that Advance is introducing is the new Chatbot, which is currently being tested by the Customer Service Advisors. The team

also want to be sure that the Chatbot is easy for the customers to use. It is hoped that the Chatbot will use AI to answer simple questions so that customers can find out information, such as their latest rent statement. In addition to this, during working hours, Advance wants to use the Chatbot to enable customers to talk directly to the Customer Service Team, without having to use the phone. It is the intention of Advance that customers will be able to use the Chatbot to report emergency repairs eventually.

The repair form and the Chatbot (once it's finished) will be more convenient options for reporting repairs. These new tools will enable customers to skip the time they would have spent on the phone with the Customer Services Team. However, it's important to mention that

Advance is not looking to get rid of the phone service and customers will still be able to ring the Customer Service Team. It is hoped that by having different options to report repairs, the time that it takes customers to contact the team will be shorter. This will mean the team will be able to work more effectively and deal with more complex queries quickly.

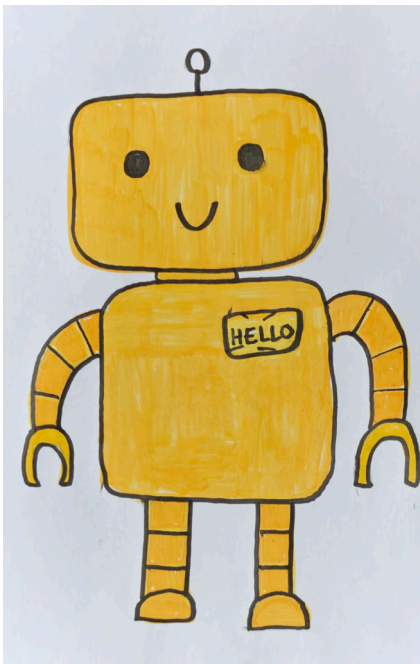
If you have an emergency repair that needs to be dealt with outside of Advance's working hours, you can still

call the Customer Services number. This will go through to the out-of-hours team run by Orbis. You can also send an email to emergencyrepairs@orbisprotect.com. Advance has a full list of what they deem to be an emergency repair on the website, but in short, it is anything which will cause you or your home harm if it is not dealt with immediately.

It's great to see Advance taking on what customers are saying and coming up with solutions alongside the

Customer Partnership Board. I have used the repair form several times over the last six months and I have had a response from Advance within three working days. I do encourage customers who are able to fill in the form to do so.

This will mean that customers who need to use the phone will face a shorter waiting time. Advance is certainly working with customers to improve customer services and I am looking forward to seeing more improvements in the future.



Competition time

Help us name our new chatbot.

When the chatbot launches, it'll be part of the Advance family, so it needs a great name.

Is it a Charlie, a Percy, a Chucky... or something completely different?

Send your ideas to marketing@advanceuk.org by 27th May 2026.

The winning name will be announced in our summer magazine.

Our Customer Services Team will be happy to help with any questions you may have.

0333 012 4307

Customer.Services@advanceuk.org





Hazel's world: Reported, sorted

a short story by
Sophie Lord

Hazel had black mould covering a small area of her lounge wall. It had been steadily growing over a number of weeks. Hazel knew she should report it to Advance because she knew the danger of black mould. However, the last time she tried to report something to Advance, she spent what seemed like hours on the phone before finally getting through to the Customer Service Team. She knows that things have improved since then but still feels hesitant. Plus, Hazel had real anxiety when she had to speak on the phone. These two reasons were putting her off reporting her patch of black mould.

Hazel's Support Worker, Jessie, walked through the door and saw that Hazel was in deep thought

"What are you thinking about?" asked Jessie

"How I really ought to report the black mould in my lounge to Advance, but I don't want to spend hours on the phone to Customer Services", replied Hazel.

"You don't have to," said Jessie. "Advance has a new repair form on their website where you can report any issues you have with your home. You can even attach photos of the mould so they can see the problem."

What a fantastic idea, would you be able to help me complete the form, please?"

"Of course I can", said Jessie.

Within ten minutes, they had taken photos of the mould and had completed the online form.

"I wonder how long it will take before someone from Advance actually reads my completed form. It has taken forever for them to respond to me in the past", Hazel thought out loud.

"Well, the new repair form actually goes to the front of the queue, so using it means you should get a response within days using your preferred form of communication", said Jessie

"Amazing", replied Hazel. "I had stated that I prefer them to email me".

The very next day, Hazel received an email from Advance saying they had seen her repair form and would take appropriate action to get the black mould treated. A contractor then called to arrange a time with Hazel to treat the mould. Hazel was so impressed that Advance seemed to be making improvements to help customers like her report a repair without causing stress, and was so thankful that the repair form had worked.

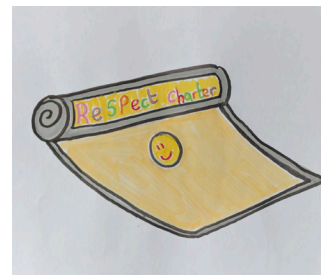


The Respect Charter - A New Relationship of Equals

by Jonathon Swallowe

Have you ever felt unheard when raising a concern? Have you ever waited at home for a contractor, unsure when or if they would arrive?

If asked to summarise in a single word the start of my experience as a shared owner with Advance Housing & Support, I'd suggest 'turbulent'. Despite the joy and agency that first home ownership brought me, the subsequent two years have been a prolonged struggle to extract the necessary information to live comfortably, secure in the knowledge of the terms and functionality of the relationship. So, when I was invited to help shape the future of the organisation by participating in the Partnership Group, I jumped at the chance.



Led by the Customer Engagement Manager, Jackie Russon, service users and staff met to identify common concerns from tenants, shared owners and supported living customers across the country. The data highlighted the clear times when customers have not felt valued, listened to or respected. With this in mind, the Respect Charter was forged specifically as an attempt to tackle these issues. What is the Respect Charter?

The Respect Charter is a new document that sets out how colleagues, contractors and customers will be expected to engage with one another.

It clearly outlines:

- How Advance will ensure clear and consistent communication
- Commitments to defined standards of professionalism, transparency and respect
- What you can expect when Advance representatives visit your home
- What will be expected in return from customers as part of a mutual partnership

What does it aim to achieve?

The Respect Charter is designed to deliver the following measurable improvements:

- Stronger relationships between customers, contractors and colleagues
- Reduced stress, anxiety and frustration during interactions
- Improved and more personalised customer experiences
- Greater efficiency when responding to customers

A living commitment

Due to be implemented in the coming months, the Respect Charter is not designed to be a static document. It will be a living, evolving commitment – growing and improving as more service users are welcomed to take the ongoing opportunity to engage. Born as it was from brainstorming sessions over generous, tasty spreads, it's proof that when given the chance, all of us have unique contributions to offer. The Respect Charter has the ability to improve not only our own lives, but also those of the entire Advance community.

So, this is your 'call to action' – whether you're only able to join for a single meeting or commit over the longer term, whether online or in person, I'd like to invite you to be a part of shaping the future together.

And if nothing else, there are great cakes.

The Respect Charter



We will:

- ✓ Make it clear what you can expect from us
- ✓ Let you know when things change
- ✓ Listen to your views, respecting your knowledge, experience and choices
- ✓ Flex our approach to meet your needs and circumstances
- ✓ Speak to YOU (not just your support worker/ family member)
- ✓ Provide the right level of information in a way that suits you



When we're in your home, we will:

- ✓ Respect your wishes (e.g. shoes off / no smoking)
- ✓ Explain what we are doing
- ✓ Keep noise to a minimum
- ✓ Clear up after ourselves
- ✓ Not cause problems for your neighbours



We ask customers to:

- ✓ Speak to Advance colleagues and contractors in a respectful way
- ✓ Work with us to resolve issues
- ✓ Be flexible where possible
- ✓ Take care of your home
- ✓ Be a good neighbour



No mind gets left behind by Grant Paton

Hello, my name is Grant Paton. I am the chairman of the Customer Collective, a member of the Housing Partnership Group and Scrutiny Group. I have lived experience with mental health issues

Did you know?

Mind is running a campaign called No Mind Gets Left Behind. Our roving reporter, Grant Paton, always has his finger on the pulse. Grant tells us more:

Mental health support needs to be better for everyone, young and old.

The mental health system is over 40 years old and needs updating. The No Mind Gets Left Behind campaign by Mind has been a key driver in pushing for this.

Hot off the success of the reform of the Mental Health Act in December 2025, Mind continues to push for change, ensuring people with lived experience have a bigger say in how mental health services are improved.

Mind's message, 'No Mind Gets Left Behind,' reminds us that everyone deserves the right help and support.

What's next in their campaign?

Mind continues to focus on pushing for better standards of mental health hospitals and early support hubs for young adults with mental health issues.

It's also keen to build a better benefits system for disabled people and support people with mental health issues to be able to thrive at work.

It is a busy time; we know services are not where they should be and we deserve better.

Have a look and see how you can get involved in Mind's No Mind Left Behind campaign. Visit: www.mind.org.uk

Out and about with Jackie Russon, Customer Engagement Manager

Hello, my name is Jackie Russon, I am the Customer Engagement Manager for Advance.

I regularly go out and visit customers to gather their feedback about the services we offer.

I do this in lots of different ways, from house meetings, social events, annual satisfaction surveys, Have Your Say Days and our regular Customer Collective and Housing Customer Partnership meetings.

Lately, I have been working on our new Customer Engagement Plan. We make a new plan every three years. To do this, I looked at what has worked well when we asked customers for feedback.



I also looked at the things that did not work well.

This takes time because it is important to get it right. The new plan will explain how we will keep working with customers. It will make sure there are lots of ways for you to give feedback. This means you can tell Advance when you are happy and when you are

not happy.

I have also been going to our Customer Collective meetings. These are online meetings where customers from across the UK join in. We always have a good time together. We do mental health check ins, fun quizzes and share ideas about how Advance can make services better.

Some ways to get involved

If, after reading our newsletter, you would like to get involved in helping to shape improvements at Advance, here are some ways you can contribute:

- The Housing Customer Partnership – meets quarterly to hear about performance.
- Customer Collective fortnightly meeting – an informal, fun meeting, where customers come together to chat and share their views about Advance and make new friends.
- Complaints panel – meets quarterly to hear about complaints and what we are doing to improve them.
- Welcome to Advance – an opportunity to meet new employees of Advance and share with them how you like to be treated.

Contact Jacqueline.Russon@advanceuk.org to hear more about any of the above.

Changes to benefits



The Government is ending some benefits, including Housing Benefit. Instead, you will be able to claim Universal Credit.

But this won't happen automatically.

Look out for a letter called a Universal Credit Migration

Notice from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) explaining what you'll need to do and when.

When you get this letter, contact your Housing Office or Housing Outreach Worker who can help you with your claim for Universal Credit.

Advance under inspection

The Regulator of Social Housing has carried out an inspection of Advance to check how it is performing for customers.

As part of this, they have been speaking to customers about how we are involved with

Advance, and how we can have a say about the the services we receive.

Over the next few months, the inspectors will write a report about Advance and give them a grading.

We will let you know how they did in the next newsletter!



Rent increases

Every year, Advance has to look at rents for supported housing.

This is something all housing organisations must do by law.

It helps make sure homes stay

safe, warm, and well looked after.

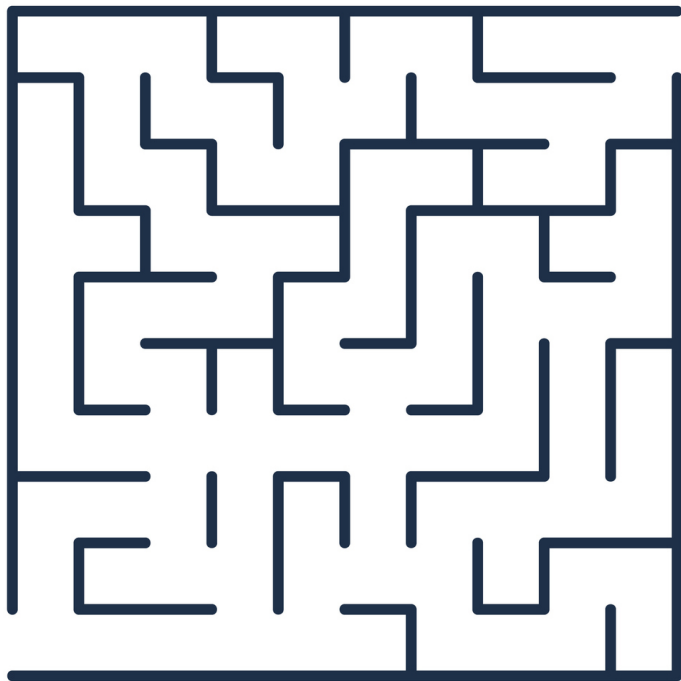
Rent reviews are happening now. We are sending letters to let you know about any changes to your rent.

If you have any questions or worry about your rent, please speak to your Housing Officer.

You can also call our Customer Services team, and who can help you.

Just for fun: Spring vibes

Here is a maze puzzle to try, an Easter bunny picture to colour in, a poem and some fab artwork.



Sometimes - a poem by Teresa Chambers

*Sometimes we may find ourselves
alone through illness or separation
Equally, in being alone
We may discover ourselves again...
Sometimes when being alone
Take a pause to reflect,
Brings something back with you
Whatever that may be.*



Amazing artwork

We've had some fantastic artwork submitted for this issue. Resident illustrator, Chris has sent this amazing Easter bunny drawing. The beautiful heart painting is by Andrew, who studied Art at Bristol University.

Don't forget to send artwork for the next issue to Jacqueline.Russon@advanceuk.org



Spring has sprung in Hackney



Spring has officially arrived in Hackney!

This week, some of our customers sprinkled wildflower



seeds across the rooftop garden outside their homes — bringing a little burst of colour and joy to the space.



Jackie, Bose and Frank are especially excited to watch their flowers grow over the coming weeks... and so are we!

Breast cancer awareness

Customers from Kidderminster held a breast cancer awareness morning, which was both informative and interesting.

Customers now have a better understanding of how to look for changes to their breasts, to make sure they stay healthy. Find out more at: www.macmillan.org.uk



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Our next edition will be out in the summer! Why not send us your summer themed pictures? We would love to see and share them. Send to Jacqueline.Russon@advanceuk.org