

Movin' On Up

Issue 1, Autumn 2025



For
Advance
customers by
Advance
customers



Illustration by Chris Rose

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 and welcome,

My name is Sophie Lord and I have been a HOLD customer for ten years with Advance.

I have been on the Advance Customer Partnership for two years now. I really enjoy being on the panel as it gives me a chance to change Advance for the better for all its customers.

We came up with the idea of having a newsletter - written and produced **by** customers **for** customers – in our May meeting.

We wanted to show all Advance's customers what has been happening over the last few years to improve Advance and the changes we are helping to make to improve the customer experience.

Also, we hope this newsletter will encourage more customers to get involved with Advance. We'd love you to contribute to our future newsletters.

If you would like to speak about your experiences, share artworks, or any other information, get in touch!



The Customer Partnership: What it means to me

By Teresa Chambers



Teresa (left) with Jackie

Hi, my name is Teresa Chambers, I am a member of the Housing Customer Partnership group.

Here are my thoughts on what being involved with Advance means to me.

Me and the Team - including Advance's 'most Active person' (Grant Paton!) have been actively and continually involved for over a year now.

We put in hard work, ideas and time to the Partnership to help improve things for all customers.

I have gained so much in confidence from helping Advance. Last time I was involved I helped to lead on a Mental Health recovery system. This time it's more about helping to find where things are not working for customers and making sure Advance does something about it.

Being involved improves my own health & well-being, my physical ailments too. It is so important to challenge and help mend the Mental health system and services for people with Mental Health conditions. I am so proud to partner with Advance to enable Partnership and to collaborate to make improvements.

What is the Housing Customer Partnership?

The Housing Customer Partnership is a group of customers who live in Advance homes.

They meet every three months with Advance's Chief Executive and managers.

Advance talk about performance and customers share experiences and where they feel things need to improve.

After each meeting, they write a report for the Advance Board. This helps customers have a voice and make things better at Advance.



You said, we listened

In the Housing Customer Partnership meetings, we hear feedback gathered from customers, through completed surveys, Have Your Say events, complaints and from the Customer Engagement Manager led events.

Some of the main themes that customers asked us to focus on are our complaints process, communication, repairs and maintenance contractors and Anti-Social Behaviour.

Below Sophie shares some of the work the customers are doing on these themes. "Over the last year, we have been looking at complaints, services provided by contractors, the customer

survey and Anti-Social Behaviour.

"We have also been looking at communication which, as a person with a speech difficulty, is an issue close to my heart. We are keen to have lots of different ways for customers with different needs and abilities to be able to contact Advance if they have a problem.

"A direct result of this has been the introduction of the repairs form, for customers like me who cannot call up and report a repair through

customer service. This form has helped reduce so many calls coming through to the customer service teams."

"Also, through looking at the complaints process we helped identify the need for someone to take overall responsibility for the complaints process. From this, Advance introduced the role of Customer Experience Manager, and Mo joined the team...more on Mo later!"

"I really enjoy being on the Housing Customer Partnership and love it when I see things changing for the better for everyone. I want to make a difference to Advance. I want to share the work we are doing as a group with other customers of Advance and to make them feel like they can come on this journey of change with us."

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To use the online form to report a repair, visit www.advanceuk.org and click on the 'Report a repair' button on the homepage

Getting to know Mo

by Sophie Lord

On the 11th September 2025 I got a chance to carry out my first ever interview for 'Movin' On Up' with Mo Umerji. Mo has been the Customer Experience Manager for Advance since November 2024 after being interviewed by customers of Advance. On day three of his job, he was taken to a 50th birthday party for Advance in Oxfordshire. That's where I first met the Leicester born and raised, Mo. Mo's memories of that day are of lots of dancing (which he didn't participate in!) and an amazing balloon man who was making all sorts of balloon animals.

Most people would think being a complaints manager is a job which no one really wants to do, listening to negative stories all day long. Not Mo, who says he gets a buzz out of the job. He's been dealing with complaints for the last five years, first at the bank – NatWest – and then at another housing association before landing the job at Advance.

I started by asking him about what happens when a customer makes a complaint. He explained that, usually, the complaint will be logged by the customer service team where the customer will receive a confirmation of the complaint being logged and be given a reference number for the complaint. After that, Advance has five working days to acknowledge the complaint. This is when Advance will make sure their understanding of the complaint is right so they know what they need to investigate. They will tell the customer who is going to deal with the complaint.

After this, the investigation into the complaint will start. This may include going over records on the system, speaking to the people involved in the complaint to get their version of events, or listening to phone calls to get evidence of what really happened.

Advance will report back to the customer within 10 working days and will sometimes talk them through their findings using their preferred communication method. Once this has happened, Advance usually follows up with the customer to make sure they are happy with the outcome.

If the customer is not happy with Advance's response, they have an option to appeal.

When I ask what Mo would do if he had a magic wand to use for the good of Advance, he said he would use it to get all of Advance computer systems to talk to each other. He would like to make his job easier by using more technology to free up time. He said this would take away the risk of things going wrong and people missing something by accident.

Later on, Mo told me that his superpower would be teleporting as he hates being stuck in traffic. Plus, it would mean that he could go to Barcelona at the weekend and be back at Advance by Monday!

Throughout the interview, Mo's passion for getting customers' feedback and his love of making a bad experience into a good one came across. He loves the satisfaction of being able to change something for the better. Also, he really enjoys meeting lots of different customers and is enjoying Advance's new drive to get the customers more involved. He is definitely committed to Advance's customers and wants to hear their feedback.



Mo Umerji

How to make a complaint

There are lots of ways to make a complaint about Advance's services.

You can visit www.advanceuk.org and click on the 'Make a complaint' link and fill in the feedback form.

Or call Customer Services on 0333 012 4307

Or let your Housing Officer or Housing Outreach Worker know you would like to make a complaint.



Ian Bonshor



Grant Paton

Spotlight on...Ian Bonshor Housing Officer, Leicester 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.

In our recent Scrutiny Group we met with Ian Bonshor, a Housing Officer based in Leicester.

It was an interesting and informative meeting. Ian looks after 300 customers and has lots of different responsibilities. His main one is to keep us safe in our

home. He does this by making sure our gas and electric are safe and that we have well maintained homes.

No two days are the same for Ian, from helping new customers settle into their home, to arranging and attending house meetings.

He also attends community meetings with the local police, social workers and support colleagues to ensure Anti-Social Behaviour is monitored and action is taken, if needed.

As well as supporting customers with benefit queries to housing repairs and issues, it is fair to say he is a very busy man.

Meeting Ian really helped me understand his role and the challenges that he faces. This knowledge helps me make more informed decisions in our Partnership meeting.

This is important to me as I want to ask the right questions to ensure Advance's customers are heard.

Out and about with Jackie



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, including 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 attending Have Your Say Days.

For these I have been visiting customers in the Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire regions.

Have Your Say Days - What we did

Julie Layton, Chief Executive of Advance, Lucy Sivasundram, Executive Director of Housing and I have been visiting housing schemes in Oxford and Gloucestershire. These days are a chance for customers to talk about the service they get from Advance. Here is what our customers said:

FEEDBACK RECEIVED

Gardening – Lots of people want to know what the gardener is meant to do

Housing Officers – Customers said our housing officer are helpful and quick to reply

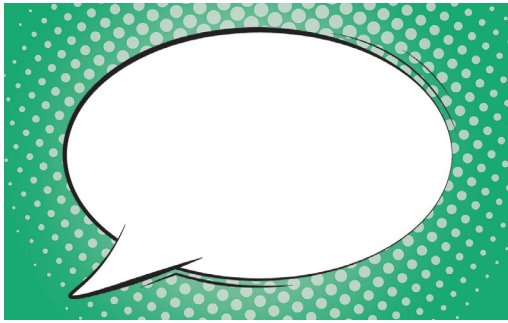
Customer Service Centre – Some people said it has got better and they get through when they call; other people are not so happy!

WHAT NEEDS TO IMPROVE

Repairs – Customers said repairs take too long to get resolved

Customer Service Centre – Some people said it still needs more work and takes too long to answer calls

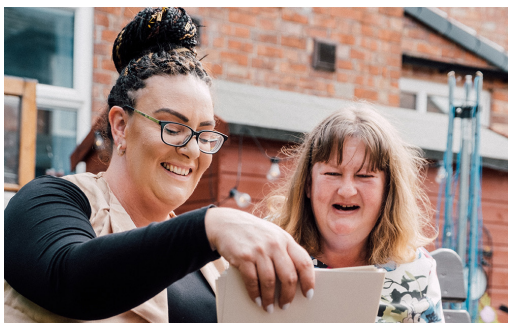
What happens to your feedback



I share this with the Housing Customer Partnership group and with the various departments within Advance.

We will use your feedback to make our service better.

Ways to share your feedback



The Housing Satisfaction survey is open now – don't miss out!

Every year, Advance carries out a survey of all tenants and shared owners to understand what you think about our services. This year, the survey is being conducted by an independent research company called Acuity.

Acuity will be sending customers a link via e-mail or text message, or they will be calling you to carry out the survey over the phone.

We'd love you to complete the survey. It's really important that we hear from as many customers as possible and your feedback helps us to understand what's working for customers and where we need to improve. Don't forget, you can ask someone to help you complete it if you would like

Other ways to get involved



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

- The Housing Customer Partnership – meet quarterly to hear about performance.
- Customer collective – an informal, fun meeting every two weeks where customers come together to chat and share their views about Advance and make new friends.
- Complaints panel – meet quarterly to hear about

complaints and what we are doing to improve services

- Welcome to Advance – opportunity to meet new employees of Advance and share with them how you like to be treated as a customer
- Have your say days – would you like us to come and see you? We would love to come along and have a cuppa and chat!

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

Need to know: 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.

It's that time of year again ... Christmas card competition

Our annual Christmas card competition has now closed for entries. We have shared a few of the designs sent in.

The winning design will be used as the official Advance Christmas card for 2025 and win a prize.



by Sarah



by Top



by Ben



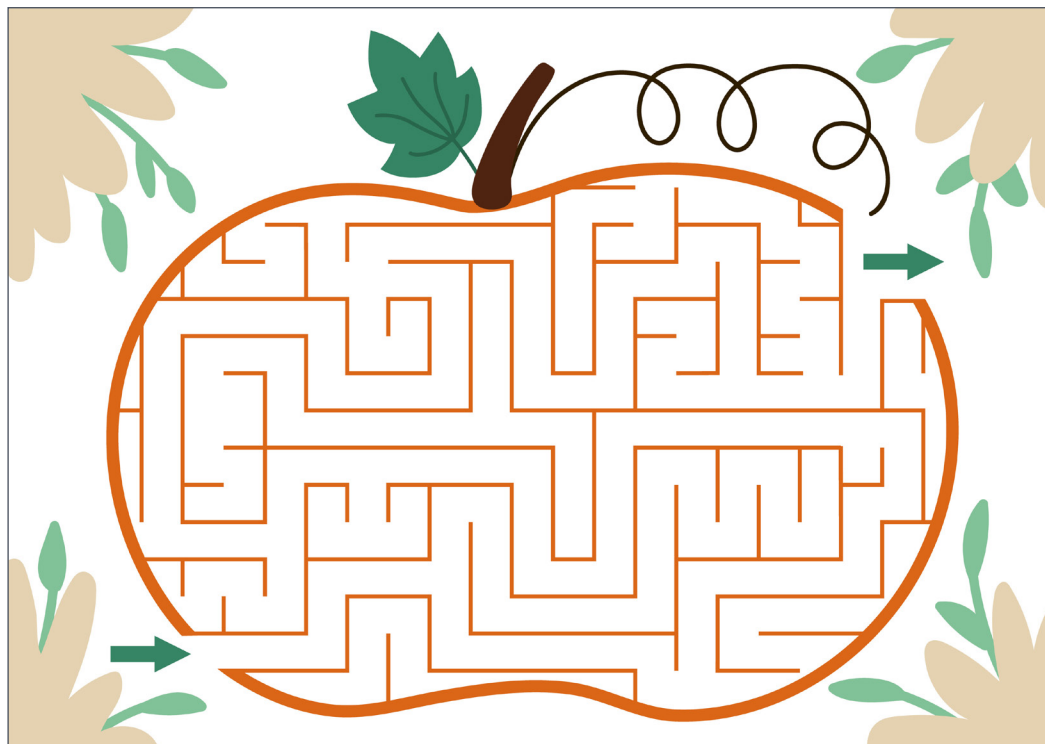
by Sophie



by Stefan

Just for fun: autumn vibes

Here is a little selection of autumn puzzles and pictures to colour in, together with an autumn poem by Housing Partnership member Teresa Chambers and a picture from our resident artist, Chris Rose. We would love for you to share your artwork/poem/stories too. Send them to Jacqueline.Russon@advanceuk.org



Why-ness Of Trees by Teresa Chambers

Why
do we have trees
Why do thieves hide amongst trees
The need of Trees Shade ,
The Sun
Shade with The Harmonious Oxygen Breathers
Are out weighed
by the Takers and Sellers
The Users and Of
The need for Speed
On
A drop of this
and
that An the other
An The Big Smoke too
There
Unable to do that As Thieves , Muggers and Harassers
Even Take This an'
That Away From them an' Each Other Too '
The Muggings Of Thieves and Harassers
Gaining In Confidence
Amongst Trees
Not Nice
For the Environment
People of Leic and Visitors
Of there
Gentle - Vulnerable Hearts
and
For The Need
In
Keeping Of Trees '
A Whyness Of Trees
Is
Awareness Of Trees
In
Simply
Chillaxxing
an
Breathing In ~~ Purity
Of
Oxygen From ~All The Living Breathing Trees!



Getting the party started!

Christmas party season has officially started!

Basingstoke customers held their first Christmas party of 2025. Everyone got dressed up for the occasion and had a great time.



EDITORIAL TEAM

CHIEF EDITOR & REPORTER

Sophie Lord

REPORTER & POET

Teresa Chambers

REPORTER

Grant Paton

ILLUSTRATOR

Chris Rose

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