

Scrutiny Panel

Terms of reference



Aim of the Panel

The Scrutiny Panel's aim is to independently scrutinise Newlon's business and activities with the aim of making recommendations that will improve how Newlon is run and the services that residents receive. The Panel can choose to scrutinise any part of Newlon's business or activities.

1. Definition

In this context, 'scrutiny' means to study, look at or examine in detail.

2. Membership

The Panel is resident led and membership will be open to all Newlon residents.

- There will be a maximum of ten members. Membership will last for 5 years and members will be able to re-apply after stepping down.
- Members can step down at any time.
- Newlon will provide training, advice and support to members so that they can carry out this role to the best of their ability.

Residents cannot become Panel members:

- If they are in breach of their tenancy with Newlon. For example; if they are in rent arrears.
- If they are a Newlon Board Member or sit on the Residents' Services Committee.

As members may have access to personal or sensitive information, they must sign Newlon's Data Protection Agreement and abide by the Confidentiality Policy.

3. Conflicts of Interest

To maintain the Panel's independence it is important that any conflicts of interest are always declared. A conflict of interest occurs when a member's personal or business interests affects their ability to fairly act in the best interests of all residents.

4. Specific responsibilities

The Panel has the following responsibilities to:

- Meet regularly every three months to look at how Newlon's services have performed since they last met. Then to scrutinise in detail the area of Newlon's services and activities that they chose at their previous meeting. To choose what to scrutinise at their next meeting.
- Request relevant information from Newlon and contractors about performance and the service area or activity they are scrutinising. This could also include information from local monitoring, complaints, reality checking (e.g. mystery shopping) and other relevant sources.
- invite key Newlon staff and contractors to their meetings to help them interpret and understand all the information they have requested and which has been supplied.

- Make recommendations to improve the service area or activity they have scrutinised based on their interpretation of the information supplied.
- Meet at other times to decide what information is needed for the next formal Panel meeting, for training or other purposes.
- Work with other Newlon residents groups, such as the Residents' Forum or Complaints Panel. Accept suggestions from the Forum or Complaints Panel for service areas or activities to scrutinise.
- Report their findings and recommendations to the Residents Services Committee and Residents' Forum to be discussed and agreed.
- Agree an improvement plan with the staff member/s or contractor responsible for carrying out the recommendations.

5. Monitoring

Monitoring of the improvement plans to implement agreed recommendations will be carried out by the Residents' Forum.

6. Quorum

Meetings will be quorate if no less than 3 members are in attendance.

7. Chair

The Panel will elect a chair and vice-chair by secret ballot every calendar year.

8. Support

Support for Panel members will be provided by Newlon's Senior Resident Involvement Officer - for all issues related to the work of the Panel, paperwork, training and claiming expenses.

9. Rewarding Panel members

In recognition of the time involved, each Panel meeting attended by members will be rewarded with a voucher, which is currently worth £30.

10. Claiming expenses and other support

Panel members make an important contribution to improving Newlon. In recognition of this and to support their work, Newlon has a Resident Expenses and Support Policy which sets out how they can claim for reasonable out of pocket travel expenses; childcare and care costs related to being a Panel member. A copy of the current policy is attached.

11. Code of conduct

Panel members will be expected to abide by their Code of Conduct, especially in relation to confidentiality.

Residents' expenses and support policy

1. Introduction

1.1 Newlon Housing Trust (Newlon) recognises the important contribution that involved residents make to improving our services and how we are run. This policy sets out how reasonable expenses and other ways that we support involvement can be claimed by residents.

2. Purpose of this policy

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to make sure that: residents are not out of pocket for getting involved barriers to getting involved are reduced there is a consistent approach to claiming expenses and other support residents and staff have a clear and transparent procedure for claiming

3. Eligible expenses

3.1 The eligible expenses that involved residents can claim are:

- Reasonable out of pocket travel expenses for attending formal involvement activities such as meetings and training. This does not include local residents' meetings or activities.
- The cost of Child Care, where agreed before with Newlon.
- The cost of Care, where agreed before with Newlon.

4. Travel expenses

4.1 Wherever possible, residents should be paid back the same day for travel expenses they are claiming. This will be the responsibility of the Newlon staff member organising the involvement activity. This will only be possible if residents let us know the cost in advance. Otherwise payments will usually be made by direct payment into a resident's bank account (BACS). Any travel beyond the Boroughs where Newlon has homes must be agreed in advance with Newlon. All travel expenses can be claimed by filling out the expenses form.

4.2 To make a claim, a valid receipt, ticket or Oyster Card statement for the exact amount must be provided as proof of the cost of public travel - on bus, rail or tube. Residents with existing Oyster travel cards (not pay as you go) that cover them for the journey made will not need to make a claim. Some travel arrangements will be made and paid for by Newlon in advance, such as going to a conference outside of London.

4.3 For car/motorbike/bicycle users, the costs for attending formal involvement activities will be agreed using either the AA or RAC online route planners to work out the mileage from home or place of work to the involvement activity and return home. The amount paid back per mile for car/motorbike/bicycle use will match Newlon's staff policy for mileage.

Currently this is:

- 70p per mile for cars
- 54p per mile for motorbikes over 250cc
- 34p for motorcycles up to 250cc
- 20p per mile for bicycles.

These are above the HMRC amounts. Residents are responsible for their own declarations of income, for tax and benefit purposes.

5. Taxis

- 5.1 Newlon will arrange taxis for residents with disabilities or who are 65 years of age and over to attend formal involvement activities. In addition, taxis can be arranged for other residents to travel home after dusk in the winter. Residents should contact us in advance to arrange taxis. The cost will be paid directly by Newlon who will book the taxis with our current supplier – Addison Lee. Where residents are travelling from the same areas we will arrange taxi sharing.

6. Care

- 6.1 We will pay reasonable carers expenses to help residents with caring responsibilities attend formal involvement activities. Proof of carers allowance or caring responsibility will be needed. Claims will cover the time of the activity as well as reasonable travel times. Care costs must be agreed in advance with Newlon. We will check all claims with the care provider.

7. Childcare

- 7.1 Newlon will meet childcare costs to allow residents to attend formal involvement activities when their usual arrangements for childcare are not possible. Reasonable childcare costs for one child can be claimed at the current national minimum wage hourly rate for the child carer. For each additional child an additional £2.50 per hour will be paid. Residents should contact us in advance to arrange.

8. Reward vouchers scheme

- 8.1 Newlon encourage residents to get involved by rewarding them with gift vouchers for taking part in involvement activities. Different involvement activities are rewarded with different gift voucher amounts and these reflect the time and commitment from residents. There is an annual cap which limits the amount of reward vouchers that can be received in one year. The scheme applies to residents getting involved in involvement activities that Newlon organises including joint estate/ block inspections, but not local involvement such as Residents Associations.