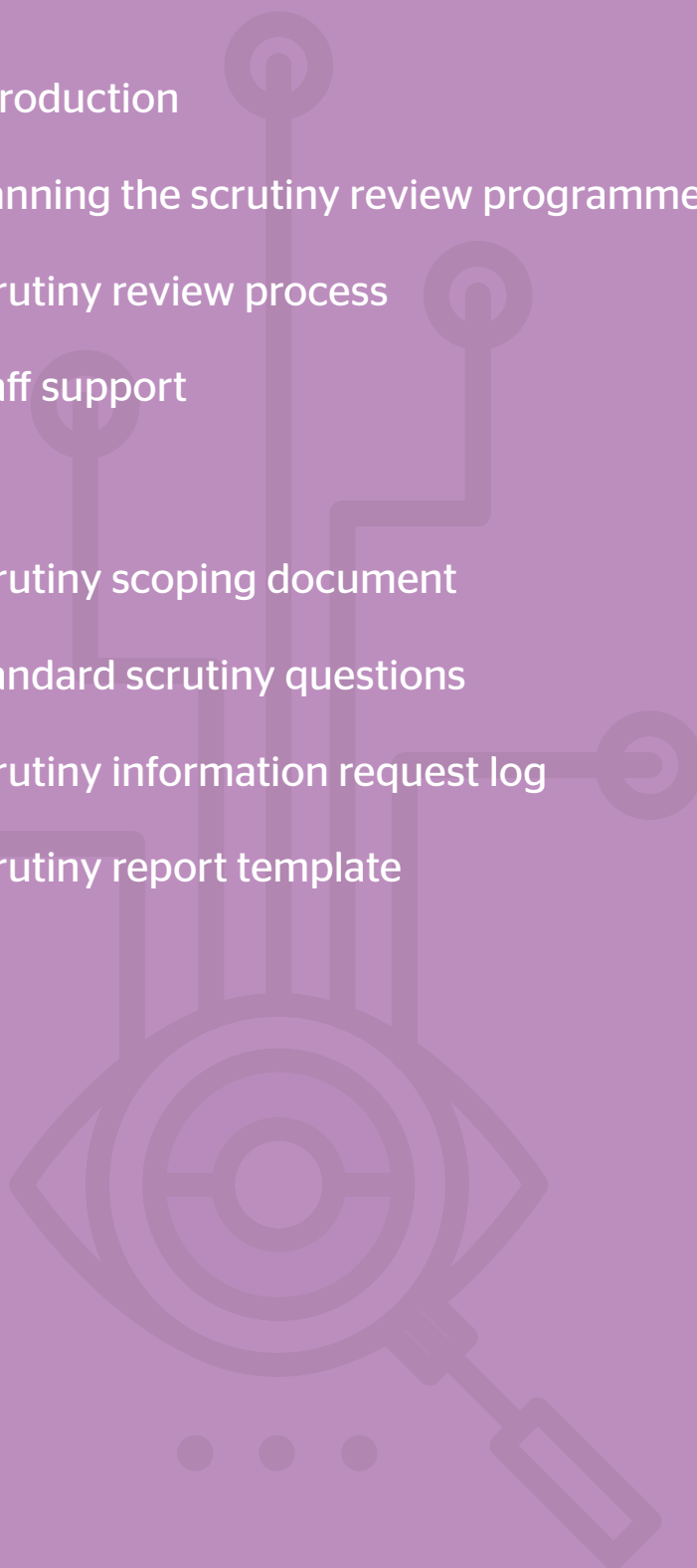


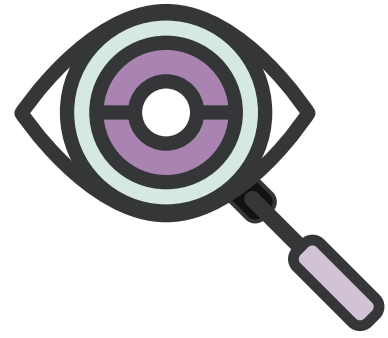
# Scrutiny Panel

manual

## Contents

<b>Section 1:</b>	Introduction	3
<b>Section 2:</b>	Planning the scrutiny review programme	4
<b>Section 3:</b>	Scrutiny review process	5
<b>Section 4:</b>	Staff support	10
<b>Appendix A:</b>	Scrutiny scoping document	
<b>Appendix B:</b>	Standard scrutiny questions	
<b>Appendix C:</b>	Scrutiny information request log	
<b>Appendix D:</b>	Scrutiny report template	





# 1

## Introduction

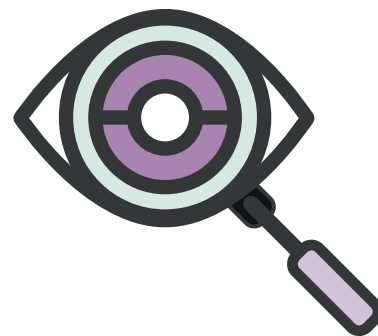
The role of the Newlon Scrutiny Panel members is:

‘To work constructively with Newlon Housing Trust in scrutinising its business activities with the aim of making recommendations that will improve how Newlon delivers the services that residents receive.’

The aims of the Newlon Scrutiny Panel are to:

- Independently review and scrutinise housing services to Newlon residents.
- To scrutinise and make recommendations for the benefit of all residents.
- To act as a realistic driver for continuous improvement in performance and excellence through the process of Resident Led Self Regulation (RLSR).
- Bring in a wider perspective from residents.
- Facilitate more openness and accountability encouraging residents to talk to us.

This manual sets out how the Panel will carry out scrutiny reviews.



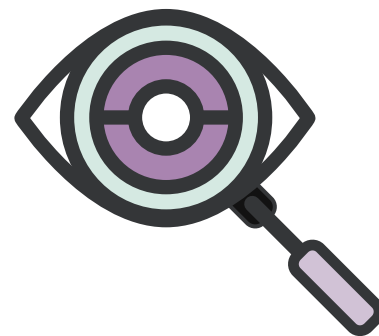
## 2 Planning the scrutiny review programme

The Newlon Scrutiny Panel acts as Newlon Housing Trust's 'critical friend'. The Panel's role is to scrutinise and challenge constructively the way the organisation plans and delivers housing services to Newlon residents. Newlon Housing Trust will also consider the impact of the housing service on other residents in the areas in which they have housing stock, when appropriate.

The Newlon Scrutiny Panel will draw up an annual programme of scrutiny reviews, taking into account:

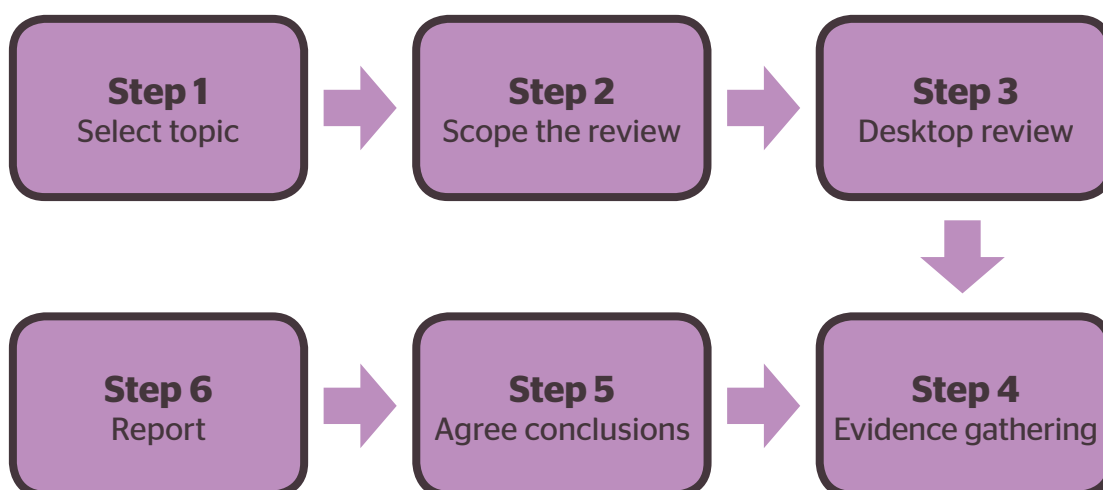
- Residents' needs, expectations and feedback (including information from surveys and complaints).
- Information provided by other Newlon Housing Trust tenant/leaseholder groups.
- Newlon's business plan, needs and objectives; any planned service reviews.
- The current regulatory framework, including any issues of particular concern to the regulator.
- How Newlon Housing Trust is performing (including data and performance information), including in comparison with other Providers (benchmarking data).
- External events that are having or are likely to have an impact on Newlon Housing Trust or its residents (e.g. changes to government policy).

The Panel aims to complete two scrutiny reviews a year. Each review will take a maximum of six months from start to finish.



# 3 Scrutiny review process

The diagram below shows the main steps in conducting a scrutiny review. Each step is described in more detail below.



## Step one: select the topic

There are always good reasons for selecting a topic for review. The Newlon Scrutiny Panel might make its choice because panel members are concerned about performance in a service area, or because there has been a change in government policy or because there have been complaints which may indicate a trend.

The Newlon Scrutiny Panel will work with Newlon Housing Trust and consult the Residents' Services Committee; Resident's Forum and officers before deciding on topics for scrutiny.

## Step two: scope the review

Defining the scope of the scrutiny review is extremely important. The Panel begins by asking a senior officer from the service to be reviewed, to give them a briefing so they understand how the service is structured and any particular challenges it faces. If the review is about a topic which straddles different teams or departments the Panel may complete an initial scoping document before this briefing. In helping them decide if this is needed, the Panel will consult a senior officer for the service. After the briefing the full scoping document will then be completed by the Panel.



The Panel then completes the standard scoping document which sets out:

- Exactly what they are going to scrutinise (defining clearly what is to be scrutinised, which may be a specific part of a service/ service delivery)
- Why that topic has been chosen
- What they want to find out
- What documents they will study
- Who they will interview
- Any other evidence-gathering activities, e.g. work shadowing, visiting other providers, testing the views of residents
- The start date and the date they plan to present their findings to the Residents' Service Committee.

The completed scoping document and list of standard scrutiny questions is sent to the service concerned so that managers and staff know what to expect and what information the Panel is going to need.

The Panel draws up a timetable. This will change frequently and needs to be kept up to date and circulated so that everyone knows what is happening and when.

The Panel will keep referring back to the scoping document as the review progresses and keep it updated. It is the main tool for keeping the review on track; the Panel can use it to check that all their activities and questions are taking them in the right direction and it will help them with writing the final report.

### **Step three: desktop review**

The Panel will already have requested copies of a range of documents and in this step they go through them and use the information to help plan their review. Typically they will look at information on the following:

- What the Trust is expected to do - regulatory Standards, any legislation or guidance relevant to the service being scrutinised.
- How the service is planned - corporate objectives, strategy, policies.
- How it is performing - performance information, complaints, customer surveys, service standard performance, mystery shopping results, resident satisfaction, quality audit results and Customer Relationship Management cases relating to the Scrutiny topic.
- Costs and value for money.



- Equality and diversity – how tenant profile information is being used, any Equalities Impact Assessment.
- Best practice – what the best Providers are doing.

Having reviewed the documents the Panel picks out any particular issues that they want to explore in the evidence-gathering phase (gaps; performance variances; out of date policies and strategies; lack of action plans; how all elements are linked and monitored).

### **Step four: evidence gathering**

Before beginning the process of gathering evidence, the Newlon Scrutiny Panel goes back to the scoping document. Taking into account the review scope and the findings of the desktop review, the team agrees its lines of enquiry and decides how to gather the evidence they need.

Evidence gathering activities usually include:

- Interviewing officers responsible for managing and delivering the service
- Interviewing contractors or other agencies involved in the service being reviewed
- Visiting other providers or partner agencies (as appropriate)

The interview list will depend on the scrutiny topic but it is always important to remember that interviewees are selected because of what they do, not because of who they are.

Depending on the review topic, the Panel might also want to talk to other residents, visit estates or have a demonstration of the IT systems used by Newlon Housing Trust, but they must remember to keep their focus on gathering information that will answer their scrutiny questions.

The Panel agrees a programme of work which will mean they complete the review by the end date in the scoping document and they agree how they will share the work out between them. They decide the key questions they will ask when they carry out each of their interviews or other activities. They will also plan to triangulate their evidence.

The Newlon Scrutiny Panel members keep their own files of information and take their own notes throughout each scrutiny review.

### **Step five: agree conclusions**

When the evidence gathering phase has been completed, the Panel comes together to review the information they have collected.

They begin by checking that they have done what they set out to do and have they gathered information required by the scoping document.



Next they discuss their emerging conclusions. They check that they have evidence to support each conclusion.

They might invite someone who is not on the review team to join them at this stage to act as their 'critical friend' and to challenge them to show how their emerging conclusions are evidence-based.

If there are obvious gaps or weaknesses, the Panel will decide whether or not they will try to gather more information.

When the Panel is confident that they have been thorough in the way they have conducted their review and that their findings are evidence-based they finalise their conclusions. The panel should agree the recommendations, which will be contained within the Scrutiny review report.

Finally, the Newlon Scrutiny Panel make recommendations based on the review findings. They are written so they are SMART. That means each recommendation should be:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Time bound

### **Step six: the review report**

Scrutiny reports must be evidence-based and relate directly to the review scope.

The drafting and approval process is:

- The Panel agrees who will do the first draft
- The Panel meets in person or electronically to discuss the draft and agree changes. (One member will collate the comments)
- The final draft report is sent to the Director of the service with an invitation to meet the Panel to discuss the findings. Newlon will formally consider the recommendations after this Panel meeting and will provide a formal written response (on a prescribed form), to the recommendations (including accepting/ rejecting the recommendation together with the reason why). The Panel decides if it wishes to make any changes following that discussion, formal feedback response and the Newlon Scrutiny Panel agrees its final report.

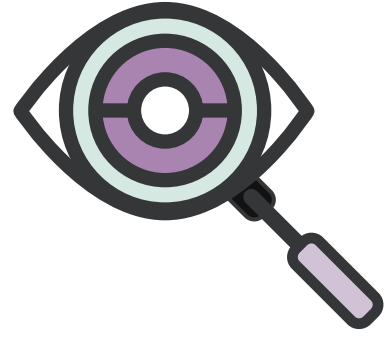




- The report goes with a response from the service to the Residents' Services Committee and Residents' Forum (a member of the Newlon Scrutiny Panel may be asked to attend to present their report)
- The final report is then made available to other Newlon tenants and leaseholders through the website and articles in newsletters, Facebook, etc, as part of our approach to accountability in relation to the scrutiny of services
- A review of the Scrutiny Panel activity and outcomes is provided to residents in the Newlon Residents' Review.

### **Implementation/ review/delivery**

- The Residents' Services Committee keeps track of scrutiny recommendations and the action promised by the relevant Housing Service
- Scrutiny Report recommendation action plans are reviewed as a standing agenda item at Residents' Services Committee meetings
- The Residents' Services Committee (RSC) checks on the implementation/progress of the recommendations of the final Scrutiny report
- Problems/issues are taken by the Chair of the Residents' Services Committee to the relevant service Director
- Updates on actions (feedback from RSC) from the Newlon Scrutiny Panel reviews to be a standing item on the Scrutiny Panel agendas.



## 4 Staff support

The Housing Service supports the Newlon Scrutiny Panel and has a budget for reasonable expenses, training and development.

The Housing Service will support the Newlon Scrutiny Panel by:

- Arranging provision of required review documents and supporting document chasing as required
- Arranging Newlon Scrutiny Panel review interview schedules/evidence gathering schedules
- Providing stationery used within the review process, as required
- Printing of the draft and final scrutiny review reports
- Supporting the provision of approved review reports to residents through the agreed feedback mechanisms in place (as per review report section.)

# Appendix A: Scrutiny scoping document



Review topic:	Lead:
<b>Team members</b>	
Reasons for selecting this service for review	
What the review will find out	
Review scope	
Main regulatory standard(s) that apply to this service	
<b>Review activities: evidence gathering</b>	
<b>Documents needed by the review team initially to include:</b>	
Performance information	
Complaints data	
Customer surveys	

<b>Review topic:</b>		<b>Lead:</b>	
Service standard performance			
Mystery Shopping results			
Resident Satisfaction information			
Quality Audit information			
CRM cases relating to Scrutiny topic			
Staff interviews			
Any partners to be included in the review (e.g. police, housing associations)			
Gathering evidence from other residents (e.g. focus group, survey, meeting)			
Services or systems to be observed			
Site visits (including to other providers)			
<b>Start date:</b>		<b>Draft report deadline:</b>	
<b>Date draft report will be sent to service:</b>		<b>Date of final report:</b>	



# Appendix B:

## Standard scrutiny questions



The following questions will be asked during nearly every scrutiny review. There will be many others to ask of course but answers to these will form the core of any scrutiny report.

1. How do Newlon's Housing Services ensure they meet:
  - Legal requirements
  - The regulator's requirements.
2. Is there an up to date:
  - Strategy
  - Service improvement plan/delivery plan
  - Policy
  - Set of procedures
3. Is there an Equalities Impact Assessment?

How does Housing Services make sure that the service is equally accessible to all its residents and potential residents?
4. What tenant profile information does Housing Services have?

How is it used by staff and contractors to tailor the service to the needs of individuals?
5. How is performance managed?
  - What performance information is there and what does it tell us?
6. How does Housing Services compare with other providers?
7. Are residents' expectations being met?
  - How have residents shaped the planning of these services?
  - What customer feedback is there (surveys, complaints, compliments, other)?
  - What has changed as a result of customer feedback?
8. How much does it cost to deliver this service and what steps have been taken to assess value for money?
9. What does best practice look like for this service?



# Appendix D:

## Scrutiny report template



**Title** (the review subject)

Version (draft no. or final)

**Date** (of the report)

**1. Introduction**

(Include date of review and objectives set out in the scoping document)

**2. Scope of the review**

(What was included and what was excluded.)

**3. Summary findings**

(Will usually be the headline answers to your main scrutiny questions as set out in scoping document)

**4. Detailed findings**

(It might be useful to group these into strengths of the service and areas for improvement. Include your evidence)

**5. Recommendations**

**6. Conclusion and acknowledgements**

(Thanks to officers and others who helped with the review.)

**7. Names of the people who carried out the scrutiny review**