

Newlon Board's response to Housing Ombudsman Service Annual Complaint and Service Improvement Report and self-assessment against Complaint Handling Code

The Board have reviewed Newlon's self-assessment against the Code and the Annual Complaint and Service Improvement Report. The reports were presented by our Executive Lead for Complaints and our Member Responsible for Complaints.

Over the last year we have seen a marked change in our complaint handling culture and performance. We have much improved live reporting which means we are more able to quickly respond to changes in demand and ensure residents are not kept waiting. We have invested in additional complaint handling staff and responded to almost 95% of stage one complaints on time, despite an increase in complaint volume.

We want our residents to be confident they will be listened to and we make it as easy as possible to make a complaint. Complaint volume has increased this year and the Board has sought assurance on what is being done to understand and tackle the root causes of this increase. We would like to see a reduction in the number of complaints about repairs and expect our new repairs contractors will help us achieve that this year. We also know that sometimes we are too slow to deliver on our complaint promises and we have increased resources in this area. We think our escalation rate is an important measure of how effective our complaint handling is and we would like to see this reduce, as it would evidence that we are able to successfully resolve complaints at the earliest possible stage.

We have gained further assurance from our MRC who has regular meetings with senior leads for complaint handling, as well as the wider staff group and regularly reports back to Board. We gained assurance from the rigorous Complaint Handling Code self-assessment process and resulting action plan that has helped us reach full compliance this year, as well as our internal Quality Assurance reports which check for embedded learning from complaints and the quality of complaint handling.

Our MRC is a member of the Resident Forum and has provided updates and assurance to residents on our performance throughout the year. Our Resident Forum have also reviewed our Annual Complaint and Service Improvement Report and will be helping us decide how we can best to communicate the content to residents in a transparent and accessible way.

The Board believe that these documents represent a detailed and rigorous review of our performance, strengths and weaknesses and are assured that we have a positive approach to complaints and are compliant with the requirements of the Code. We believe we have the right plans and resources in place to further improve on our performance in the coming year and deliver even better outcomes to residents.

Aman Dalvi OBE – Chair of Newlon Board