

Resident Involvement

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This Policy will be applied in a way that will not discriminate on the grounds of the race, gender, marital status, disability, sexuality, religious belief or age of the employee concerned. It applies to all staff.

Version number	Amendment	Amended by	Date

1. Purpose

To provide guidance to staff and residents, about Newlon Housing Trust's (Newlon) roles and responsibilities for involving residents in its business and activities.

2. Policy Statement

Newlon Housing Trust will provide a range of flexible choices, suited to their needs, for residents to be involved in its activities - including at decision making, strategic and local levels. This range of choices will include formal and informal ways to be involved. Our aim is for residents to drive continuous improvement in how we design and deliver our services and in how we run ourselves.

3. Scope

One of our strategic aims is to embed resident involvement throughout Newlon Housing Trust. This means resident involvement is the responsibility of all staff in all teams and departments with everyone having a role to play.

The Resident Involvement Team will take the lead on strategy, strategic residents groups and setting up local involvement. It will provide advice and support to other staff in their resident involvement work.

Due to the different needs of supported housing residents, Outward have their own Customer Involvement Team and can be contacted at involvement@outward.org.uk.

4. What do we mean by resident involvement?

Resident involvement is about “residents taking part in:

- Decision making processes
- Influencing decisions about housing policies
- Influencing decisions about housing conditions and housing (and related) services.

It is a two way process which involves the sharing of information, ideas and power” (1).

By “residents” we mean all those that we house and who live in our homes – those renting from us; shared owners; 100% leaseholders; and the people who live with them. Where homes are rented out by 100% leaseholders, residents who live in the same estate or block will decide how the people renting those homes can be involved.

1 Scottish Office (1999) *Partners in Participation: A National Strategy for Tenant Participation*; Edinburgh: Scottish Office

5. Legislation and regulation

The key legislation and regulation for resident involvement is listed below. They are all available online at www.gov.uk.

- Housing Act 1985
- Housing Act 1988
- Housing Act 2004
- Equality & Diversity Act 2010
- The Localism Act 2011
- Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England 2012

The Regulatory Framework sets out the regulatory standards and expectations for Newlon. The principle of “co-regulation” underpins the framework. This means that we must self regulate all parts of our business in a transparent manner while also enabling “bottom up” resident scrutiny and challenge of these. Resident Involvement is the vehicle to help us deliver these elements of co-regulation and this underlines its importance for Newlon.

6. What standards are there for Resident Involvement?

Newlon's 2 – ten standard applies to resident involvement. If a resident or residents' group contacts us, makes a service request or asks a question by email, on the phone, at a meeting, community event or any other involvement activity, we will:

- Always deal with them quickly
- Always respond within two working days
- Always give them a full reply within ten working days

7. How will performance be monitored?

Performance will reported annually to the Residents' Forum and will be measured by:

- Resident satisfaction with Newlon listening to and acting on their views.
- The number of residents involved annually from a baseline established in 2014 to 2015.
- The volunteer hours given to us by involved residents

The RI team will co-ordinate the collection of this performance data.

8. Procedure for Resident Involvement in Decision Making

Resident shareholders participating at Annual General Meetings

Newlon is a Community Benefit Society with shareholders who have paid a £1 share. Shareholders attend the Annual General Meeting and their main duties are to receive the annual accounts and to appoint the Auditors. Profits are not distributed to shareholders.

9. Resident Board Members

Newlon has one resident Board member who also sits on the Residents Services Committee. The resident Board member is subject to the same rules as other Board members i.e. how long they can remain on the Board. When recruiting, this post is openly advertised to all Newlon residents. The recruitment process has both formal and informal elements including an interview and other residents are involved in this process.

Detailed corporate induction is provided by our Human Resources Team. Resident board members can receive payment for undertaking this role due to the high level of commitment needed and this is reported on our website. The RI team also have a role in providing other training to build capacity in the resident Board member.

10. Residents Services Committee

In addition to the resident Board member, there are four co-opted resident members on the Residents Services Committee (RSC), including one from the Barnsbury Estate. When recruiting, application is open to all Newlon residents and there is a recruitment process that has both formal and informal elements. The Barnsbury Estate place is chosen by Barnsbury Estate Local Management Organisation or BELMO. The committee champions and enables resident involvement at Newlon in addition to liaising with and receiving reports from The Residents' Forum and Residents Scrutiny Panel.

The Board have delegated responsibility to the RSC for all matters and decisions about residents' services. Resident members therefore have an important role as part of this committee.

11. Procedure for Strategic Resident Involvement

11.1 The Residents' Forum

The Forum is a formally constituted residents group of 21 members which meets every two months and has been in existence since at least 1999. It has a Terms of Reference, a Role Description and a Code of Conduct for members. When recruiting, application is open to all our residents, including supported housing residents. It has an important role as it is our main consultative resident group and part of our structure – see Appendix A. The Resident involvement (RI) team is responsible for co-ordinating the Forum in collaboration with the Quality Manager and Housing Services Director. It also services every meeting including taking and distributing minutes to staff who have action/s and liaising with them on written feedback for the next meeting. The Housing Services Director (HSD), Quality Manager (QM) and Senior Resident Involvement Officer (SRIO) regularly attend.

The Forum sets their own agenda and invites staff relevant to that agenda to attend. Staff must provide their written feedback to actions from the meeting within ten working days of receiving them. Similarly, reports or presentations for agenda items must be provided by staff to the SRIO team at least ten days before the next meeting. It is expected that staff will attend when invited.

When Departments are developing new policies or designing new services they should consult the Forum and consider their views before finalising these. They should also inform the Forum about any other resident involvement they may have carried out. Ideally, consulting the Forum should happen at the end of a process where residents have already been involved. The RI team can advise and support other teams in planning and organising the involvement of residents in their work.

Forum members can be asked to sit on Newlon working groups and job interview panels when appropriate.

Forum papers are posted on our website with comments invited from any resident to be fed into the discussion at the Forum meeting.

11.2 The Scrutiny Panel

The Scrutiny Panel is a formally constituted residents group of ten members which meets every three months. It started up in 2011 and initially scrutinised the repairs service. It has expanded its activities so that it now can scrutinise or look in detail any part of Newlon's performance. The aim of this scrutiny is to check standards and make recommendations for improvements.

The Panel choose which areas they wish to scrutinise after looking at the latest performance and other information from Newlon. The SRIO is responsible for servicing the Panel. The Chair is responsible for co-ordinating its work with the assistance of the SRIO. The Panel will request that relevant staff provide information about the area they wish to scrutinise and attend the meeting. Scoping meetings with staff and Panel members will sometimes take place before to agree what information is needed.

Discussions are held by the SRIO with staff responsible for implementing the Panel's recommendations. Then a summary of the Panel's discussions & recommendations plus staff comments are sent to the Residents Service Committee for their views and agreement. A similar summary is sent to the Residents' Forum. The Forum or the Complaints Panel can request that the Scrutiny Panel scrutinise any performance areas which they are concerned about.

Once agreed, implementation of the recommendations is carried out by staff with responsibility for that area of work. Where responsibility crosses different teams a lead officer will be chosen.

11.3 The Complaints Panel

The current Complaints Panel was set up in 2014 following the introduction of a new two stage complaints process. The Panel is the second stage, is resident led and independent of Newlon in its decision making.

The Panel's aim is to independently review and resolve complaints where the complainant is unhappy with the response they received from Newlon at stage one. When recruiting, membership is open to all Newlon residents. There are some training elements that must be passed before residents can become Panel members. There are currently seven Panel members of which only two or three attend each time. Each Panel meeting identifies any potential learning opportunities from the complaints they have handled and makes specific recommendations to Newlon about these.

The Quality Manager will collate and report these recommendations to the Residents Services Committee every quarter and the Residents' Forum every year. Where changes have resulted from the recommendations, these will be reported to residents in general.

The Panel is co-ordinated and serviced by the Quality Officer who produces all the paperwork for each meeting. Other staff may get requests to provide information relevant to each Panel meeting and should do so in a timely fashion. The SRIO is responsible for organising training, re-imburement of expenses and reward vouchers for Panel members.

11.4 Readers Panel

This panel looks at and suggests improvements for draft and published written material from Newlon. These include, but are not limited to, leaflets, newsletters, web pages and handbooks. Its role is to make sure that anything written for residents by Newlon is clear, easy to understand and accessible. Like the Residents' Forum and Scrutiny Panel it has a formal Terms of Reference and Role Description. It operates as an email and postal group and receives written material to comment on four times a year. Other staff teams at Newlon can commission the panel to check its draft or published written material. It is important that the Panel receives drafts with enough time for their suggested improvements to be considered and where appropriate taken on board in the final document. The Panel is co-ordinated and serviced by the Resident Involvement Officer.

11.5 Mystery Shopping

We recruit and train residents to be mystery shoppers to help us judge the quality of our services. Mystery shoppers do this by pretending to be a real customer while accessing our services. They use a pre-arranged scenario to test the quality of those services. The findings from mystery shopping are then used by Newlon to improve services. Other staff teams at Newlon can commission our mystery shoppers. Mystery shopping is co-ordinated by the Resident Involvement Officer and Quality Manager.

11.6 Procurement

This includes, but is not limited to, contracts for responsive repairs, the Concierge and Estate Inspection Service, Lifts and the Grounds Maintenance service. The process of involving residents is led by the appropriate Director for the service in collaboration with the Procurement Manager and SRIO. Opportunities to get involved will be advertised to all residents receiving the service using multiple communication channels, such as newsletters and on our website. Involvement will include developing questions; the specifications for the contract being tendered; assessment of potential contractors and guidance on the awarding of the contract. Residents will be involved with Newlon in monitoring any new contracts. Full guidance for involving residents is found in the Procurement Procedures 2015-20.

12. Local involvement procedure

When residents wish to set up involvement where they live, Newlon will offer a "menu" of different ways to get involved – both formal and informal. It will be up to residents to choose which is the most appropriate for their needs. The aim of local involvement will be to make sure that residents' views are heard, listened to and where appropriate, acted on. The RI team will take the lead in setting up local involvement, in collaboration with the Head of Estates. The SRIO and RIO will both hold a portfolio of new local involvement groups and projects.

12.1 Formal Local Involvement – Residents Associations

A formal way for residents to get involved locally is by setting up a Residents Association with a Constitution. The Constitution sets out the name of the Association, what area it covers, what its aims are and how it will meet those aims. Its members elect a committee and officers (Chair, Treasurer, Secretary etc) to carry out the agreed work of the Association. Newlon has developed a handbook for Residents Associations which includes a Model Constitution which can be customised. Also included is guidance on running an Association. Key to the success of an Association is their ability to involve all Newlon residents in the area it

covers; that there is proper representation of the community and fair elections for their committee and officer posts.

Newlon supports Residents Associations in their first year with a start up grant. Future grant payments are dependent on the Association providing a financial report on how it has spent the grant and demonstrating that it has kept to its Constitution.

The Estates team will take the lead for all established Residents Associations. The RI team will take the lead in setting up new Residents Associations and will continue to provide some support while they are establishing themselves. Newlon will be responsible for providing residents with a list of actions agreed at meetings. All actions for Newlon from Residents Association meetings are subject to our 2-ten standard. This means residents will receive written feedback from Newlon on the agreed actions within 10 working days.

12.2 Other local involvement

Other ways for residents to become involved locally include, but are not limited to:

- Starting up a project group to get something off the ground e.g. a grow your own vegetables club
- Getting together with Newlon at least once a year at a meeting or an informal event
- Starting up a digital group or forum for residents
- Starting up a group for residents living in street properties
- Having block representatives
- Fun days and events

The RI team will provide advice and support to help residents thinking about starting up some form of local involvement. We may also be able to provide some financial support.

13. Tenant Management Organisation

13.1 Barnsbury Estate Local Management Organisation (BELMO)

Barnsbury Estate is a Tenant Management Organisation or TMO – this means that it manages some services to residents on Newlon's behalf. For Barnsbury residents, BELMO provides day to day repairs and service contracts, estate services, cyclical maintenance and help Newlon deliver its planned replacement programmes. Newlon retains responsibility for housing management, lettings, rents and service charge setting. Newlon is also responsible for Stock Improvement and Planned works. The Newlon Service Improvement and Agency Manager is the key liaison with BELMO. Any resident over 18 years of age living on the Barnsbury Estate can apply to become a member. This can be done by completing the membership application form from the office at the Barnsbury Community Centre.

13.2 Joint Estate & Street Inspections

Newlon recruits and trains residents to become Resident Liaison Representatives. Their role includes carrying out regular joint estate or street inspections with a staff member of the Concierge Service. The Estates Team lead on this work and are supported by the RIO in co-ordinating resident involvement in inspections.

14. How does Newlon support resident involvement?

14.1 Expenses

Newlon Housing Trust (Newlon) recognises the important contribution that involved residents make to improving our services and how we are run. We have a policy which sets out how reasonable expenses and other ways we support involvement can be claimed by residents. This includes a Rewards Vouchers Scheme. The policy is attached as Appendix B.

14.2 Training

Training for our involved residents is an investment from which they and Newlon will both benefit. The aim of providing training is to build the capacity of residents to take part in involvement activities. The RI team has responsibility for identifying the training needs of involved residents and organising training to meet these. The SRIO co-ordinates training for our strategic resident groups. The RIO co-ordinates training for involved residents generally and promotes this in a quarterly training bulletin.

Appendix A - Newlon Resident Expenses and Support Policy

1. Introduction

Newlon Housing Trust (Newlon) recognises the important contribution that involved residents make to improve 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

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

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 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

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

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. Residents should contact us in advance to arrange.

7. Childcare

Newlon will meet reasonable childcare costs to allow residents to attend formal involvement activities when their usual arrangements for childcare are not possible. 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

Newlon encourages 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.