

Resident Involvement

2016/17

This report is designed for anyone with an interest in resident involvement at Newlon - our residents, staff, the Board and Committees and other stakeholders. We aim to illustrate what has been a busy year for involvement and highlight the activities with the most impact. Specifically those that have helped deliver one of the objectives from our Corporate Plan about improving the quality of services to residents. These are interwoven throughout the report.

How residents get involved with us

One of our strategic aims is to increase the number and diversity of residents who become involved with us. We achieve this by offering a menu of involvement giving residents choice in what and how they can get involved. This is essentially a pick and mix approach, providing different ways of involvement so residents can choose what fits best with their other commitments, responsibilities and lifestyle.

Residents can get involved with us:

- As a member of a local group - such as a residents' association.
- As a member of strategic group - like the Scrutiny Panel.
- As an individual - for example, filling in surveys.
- As a consumer of our services - by being a Mystery Shopper.
- In regular activities - such as Joint Estate Inspections.
- In one off or ad hoc activities - writing for Newlon News.
- As much or as little as they like.

The new 'Get Involved' leaflet setting out these choices was distributed, digitally or via our newsletters, to all residents this year. We regularly reinforce these messages in the newsletter by profiling involved residents and showcasing the service improvements that have arisen through involvement. Residents assist us in this respect by writing articles for the Newlon News quarterly residents' newsletter. This year there were six articles written by residents.



Sustaining and supporting involvement

We support individual residents and resident groups throughout their involvement with us. We see this support as an investment and understand it is crucial for a sustainable involvement culture within Newlon. The support we offer covers:

- Relationship building between staff and involved residents.
- Out of pocket travel expenses.
- Reward vouchers for attending various groups and panels/involvement activities.
- Childcare or carers expenses.
- Training opportunities to add to the capacity of involved residents.



Readers' Panel

Type of Involvement

This Panel reviews and suggests improvements to our draft written material before they are published. Such as leaflets, newsletters and web pages. Although a group, it does not actually meet, instead its members provide us with digital feedback from wherever they are at the time. They supply us with a resident's perspective to help ensure that our words meet the needs of the intended audience - other residents.



Impact

This year the Panel gave us substantive and critical feedback about how we present and explain service charges. Queries from residents reduced after the Panel turned their expertise onto frequently asked questions and a glossary about service charges. Once the Panel's improvements were incorporated into new leaflets, they were included with the service charge statements sent out to residents.

Resident Liaison Representatives (RLRs)

Type of Involvement

Residents volunteer to attend inspections with our contracted estate inspectors once a month to make sure that the communal areas where they live are properly maintained and in a good state of repair. Attending our bespoke training is essential to being accepted before they can start accompanying the inspectors. Ten new RLR's were recruited this year. This role is very popular with residents and we have been over-subscribed with residents wanting to take on this role, leading to a waiting list now being kept.



Impact

Feedback from the estate inspectors tells us how much they value the RLR's. As their knowledge of where they live and their commitment to it ensures that nothing gets missed during inspections. The RLRs sometimes report repairs outside of inspection times, reducing the time between the inspectors' next visit and logging the repairs. Half of our RLR's filled in this year's resident involvement survey. Of those, we were pleased to hear that 88% were very satisfied or satisfied with their experience in that role.

Mystery Shopping

Type of Involvement

Mystery shopping is a tool we use to measure the quality of our services and whether they are performing to standard. Resident volunteers act as customers accessing our services during a mystery shopping assignment which could involve a telephone call or an email to us. After recent recruitment, we now have a pool of 15 mystery shoppers. This year we carried out two mystery shopping exercises consisting of 41 scenarios. Some of the scenarios tested whether emails were responded to within our 2-ten standard. The results from each round of mystery shopping were used by managers to address performance issues at team meetings.

Impact

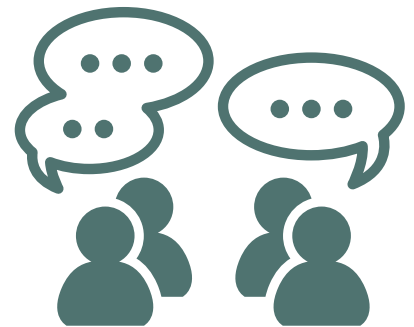
Our 2-ten performance was tracked over three quarters of the year. For the second and third quarter, 92% of emails were responded to within timescales compared with 58% in the first quarter.



Residents' Forum

Type of Involvement

The Forum is a consultative body. It is a group with a maximum of 21 resident members who meet five times a year. Current membership at the year-end stood at 17. Their role is to be the main consultation body for Newlon and influence their decision making. Another aspect of their role is to represent the views and aspirations of residents by being a channel through which residents voices are heard.



Impact

- Negotiating a new consultation agreement with us. This sets out in plain language, the principles by which they will be consulted, the scope of their influence and is an important governance document.
- All residents, including leaseholders, now receive a copy of the Scheme Rules after we implemented a Forum suggestion. Ensuring that everyone living on our blocks and estates get the same information.
- Forum feedback shaped the content and design of the new 'Get involved' leaflet sent to all residents.
- Influenced improvements to wording of the Scheme Rules about children playing, using wheeled equipment, clarifying the pet rule clearer and generally phrasing the rules more positively.
- Ensuring when our street properties are inspected that the inspectors always announce their visits.
- Agreeing with our recommendation that the Resident Board member will also be chair of the forum as part of their role. Enhancing the channels of communication between the forum and the Board.
- Agreeing in principle with the new transfer system proposed by us.
- Recommending that we stop withholding our phone number when we make external calls, this was agreed and implemented.

- Agreeing further improvements to the involvement rewards scheme which act as an incentive for residents to engage with us.
- Finalising the development and approving the design of resident involvement kitemarks which can be added to our publications. These visual symbols demonstrate at a glance how much residents have been involved.
- Influencing the new Service Standards so the 2-ten standard is clearer.

What's next?

The Forum will be looking at how performance reporting could be customised for their needs. They will also investigate developing structured induction for new members.

Scrutiny Panel

Type of Involvement

This Panel of ten members conducts detailed scrutiny of our services with the aim of making recommendation about improving them. We provide them with all the information they request to do this, whether that's performance information, costs or comparing what we do with other landlords. They act on behalf of all residents as a "critical friend", constructively challenging how our services are delivered.

They met four times and elected their first chair in addition to creating a role for members to take the lead for each scrutiny. Two consultancy sessions took place in early 2017 to develop and draft a Newlon specific Scrutiny Manual. The Manual formalises and improves how the Panel carries out its work. It does this by setting out how they will conduct scrutiny reviews from beginning to end and outlining a six step process. As such, it makes the process and expectations clearer and more transparent for both Panel members and staff. It will also ensure that scrutiny recommendations are evidence based. The manual will be completed and agreed in 2017/18.



Impact

The most significant scrutinies this year were about improving customer contact and our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion self-assessment.

Three of six recommendations on customer contact were fully or partially agreed. Five of eight recommendations about the self-assessment were fully or partially agreed. They included:

- Adding a message to our voicemail asking residents to leave a contact number.
- Using residents' communication preferences to send out important messages.
- Developing staff guidelines about using considerate language.
- Residents being involved in all future equality, diversity and inclusion self assessments.

Local residents' groups



Local resident groups

The use of customised digital surveys for emerging local resident groups has proved a success, with half of these residents using them to identify the issues that really matter to them. This has proved invaluable for new groups as it gives them a mandate from the residents they represent and provides a ready made action plan for their first year. The survey also identifies whether there is enough support to set up a local group. We found that the majority of survey replies were sent through residents' mobile phones.

Through our work with a residents association that decided to dissolve their group we have created a new model of local involvement -

Linking up resident involvement

The connections between different parts of the resident involvement structure can feel intangible but they enhance the ability of the residents' voice to be influential. We have focussed on developing effective channels of communication between the Forum, Scrutiny Panel, Residents Services Committee and Board to ensure the residents' voice is heard at all levels. The Forum has a standing item on their agenda for this feedback and their members who attend these other groups deliver it. When the Scrutiny Panel deliberate on future scrutiny topics they consult the Forum and RSC so that the topics they choose are evidence based.

informal resident groups. Instead of a committee there is a group of co-ordinators. Only one general meeting is required each year and much communication can be digital.

Residents can dip in and out of specific tasks, depending on their skills set. The focus is on conveying the collective resident voice to us and working together to resolve issues rather than on structures and processes. We have found this a popular model with more new groups opting to go down this route.

Impact

Our use of digital methods of engagement have made it easier for more residents to get involved with us at a time and place of their choosing. One off involvement like this can become a stepping stone to further engagement with us.

The funding we provide for local events such as Big Lunches and gardening projects has proved particularly effective in facilitating neighbours to engage with each other and foster support for local groups. Especially as these events are all resident led. We get a big return for a small but important investment.



What's next?

Next year we plan to facilitate the ability of other involved residents to network with each other. Such as between local resident groups and between those groups and our strategic resident groups. We will also be looking to encourage more efficient digital communications between residents and us and vice versa.

Residents' satisfaction with involvement



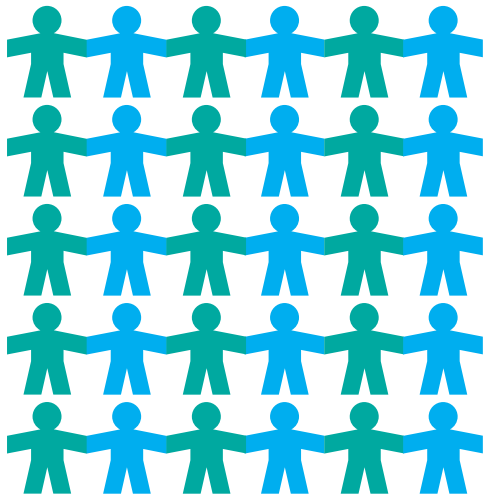
Type of involvement

Almost 10% of our households took part in resident involvement activities in 2016, demonstrating our commitment to involving as many of them as possible in shaping our services. They were invited to reply to a digital survey canvassing views on their experiences and satisfaction. We also asked for their ideas about improving involvement for all residents. Just over 20% replied and satisfaction amongst those who had been involved more than once with us ranged from 65 to 100%. When we delved deeper into some of the results we found that residents did not always make a distinction between expressing their views through formal involvement or through any other contact with us. However they expressed their views, they expected us to listen and act on them.

Impact

Their ideas for improving involvement included engaging more and diverse residents, also listening and responding better to them about the issues they raise with us. They have inspired our plan to create a virtual resident panel next year. Residents who register will be able to choose what, how and when they are involved. Existing activities such as mystery shopping will be included along with new ways for resident to become involved. This Panel will be an additional resource for other teams to engage and consult residents.

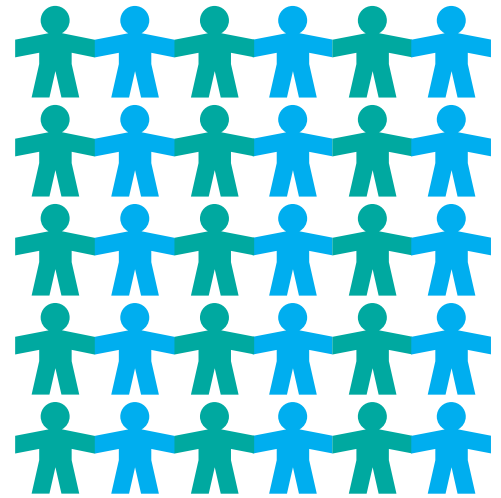
Resident involvement by the numbers



658

residents got involved
with us in 2016/17

Their involvement ranged from
one-off or ad hoc activities
to regular attendance at a
strategic group.



1,052

hours of time
(approximately) were gifted

during residents' involvement with us
(we have conservatively calculated this).



£10,257

Is the value of those
hours gifted to us

This figure is calculated
using the London Living
Wage. Offset against our
resident involvement
budget of £30k this year,
it demonstrates good
Value for Money.

