

Residents' Review

2016-2017



Digital and self-service

Take advantage of the options available

As part of Newlon's digital strategy we aim to provide many of our services online. Our Residents' Forum has been a central part of this by giving us their views on what they want us to focus on and deliver.

Over the last year we have made good progress in furthering the development of more digital and self-service customer service options, so you can make service requests at times that suit you and without the need to call us.

We are currently tendering for a new customer self service portal, which will bring together many online services in one place.

In the meantime here are just a few ways you can interact with us digitally:

- Report repairs at **www.newlon.org.uk/contact-us/repairs**.
- Get answers to common queries from our website via the Knowledge Base at **www.newlon.org.uk/knowledge-base**.
- Pay your rent or service charges using the allpay app, which you can find out more about at **www.newlon.org.uk/residents/paying-your-rent**.
- Give your opinions through our online Residents' Forum at **www.newlon.org.uk/newlon**.



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Reviewing our year

Welcome to your copy of Newlon's annual Residents' Review. This report will tell you how we performed over the past year and the achievements we have made.

Newlon has two key objectives:

1 To increase the supply of affordable homes in London.

2 To increase residents' satisfaction by providing high quality services.

We are making excellent progress with our aim of creating a further 2,000 new affordable homes between 2013 and 2022. More than 1,700 have either already been delivered or are in development. We also remain committed to investing in maintaining our current properties to make them safe, desirable places to live.

Underpinning our development of new homes we remain committed to providing residents with great services. Each day we carry out hundreds of safety checks, security inspections and communal repairs as well as dealing with instances of anti-social behaviour. This work is often unseen, but plays a key part in our residents being able to live safely and securely in their homes.

The introduction of our new service model in 2015 continues to bear fruit. Independent surveys show satisfaction for residents that rent from us is at the highest level it has ever been.

The impact of our repairs and maintenance contractors, estate inspectors and new handyperson teams has also helped improve our repairs targets.

In addition our digital strategy is driving efficiencies within the organisation, helping residents interact with us in new ways and get things done more quickly.

Last year was also a good year for external recognition of what we have achieved, as Newlon was nominated for or won over a dozen awards, including for our developments and community work.

As we approach our 50th anniversary in 2018 we look forward to continuing our heritage of providing new affordable housing for local people in north and east London and improving the high quality services our residents require.

Improving our services

One of our key objectives is to provide high quality services to our residents, so we keep looking for ways to improve and to meet people's changing needs. Residents help us to achieve this through involvement in our Residents' Forum, Scrutiny Panel and in the procurement of our services. On this page are just some of the ways we have changed and improved in the past year.

Getting value for money

We want to get the best value, so focus on ways to reduce costs while maintaining quality.



We appointed a new lift maintenance contractor, saving over

£250,000

across a **five year contract** while improving the service, as they now automatically carry out works relating to vandalism.

Since introducing our handyperson service there has been a **reduction in the number and cost of communal repairs.**



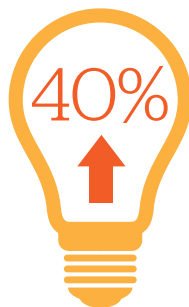
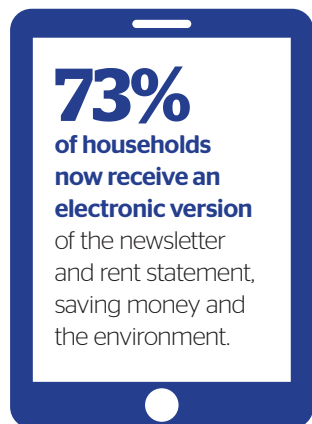
Analysis has shown the average handyperson repair is

40%

cheaper than the equivalent repair completed under a main schedule of rates contract.

Going digital

By delivering more services digitally we can make savings and adapt to the changing ways residents interact with us.



The number of residents accessing advice online through the Knowledge Base on our website **increased by 40%.**

We implemented **online Live Chat** on our website and the number of residents opting for this channel **increased each month.**



To help with our lettings process we **improved our IT systems** to make better use of data, eliminate manual form filling and be more efficient.

Increasing satisfaction

We use independent market research specialists to survey thousands of residents about their satisfaction with our services. It shows we have made real improvements over the past few years.

Satisfaction with:

- ✓ **Overall service** - 72% (↑ **+10%** over past three years)
- ✓ **Helpfulness of staff** - 75% (↑ **+9%**)
- ✓ **Query dealt with first time** - 54% (↑ **+8%**)
- ✓ **Repairs and maintenance** - 60% (↑ **+10%**)
- ✓ **Condition of home** - 68% (↑ **+8%**)

The improvements have been driven by the specialist teams we created as part of our new service model in 2015, as well as innovative IT systems to deal with queries more efficiently.

Want to help us go further?

You can help us improve our services even more by getting involved with us. We provide rewards for those who do. Find out more on page 5.

We can send your rent statements and newsletters digitally. This is **faster** and more **environmentally friendly**. If you want to receive them by email rather than in hard copy please let us know by emailing newsletter@newlon.org.uk



Get involved

Influencing the way we work

We aim to provide excellent services and like our residents to help us achieve this, by offering a range of formal and informal ways to get involved. These range from one off involvement, such as filling in surveys or taking part in a community event, to reviewing our performance and making decisions through joining groups such as our Residents' Forum and Scrutiny Panel.

Our achievements last year



Almost **10%** of our households **took part in resident involvement activities**, demonstrating our commitment to involving as many people as possible in shaping our services.

Over one in five of our involved residents gave us feedback about their experiences and **satisfaction with involvement**.

Satisfaction levels ranged from **65% to 100%**.

65% - 100%
Satisfaction

Their ideas for improving involvement have inspired our plan to create a **virtual resident panel** which will offer choice on how, when and what residents get involved in.

We have explored innovative models of resident involvement, **establishing informal residents groups**.

These provide a voice for people who may not otherwise have the time for more formal involvement.



The use of **digital surveys for emerging local resident groups** has proved a success, with half of these residents using them to identify the issues that matter to them.



We recruited an **extra 10 Resident Liaison Representatives**

This role is popular with residents as they do joint visits with our estate inspectors to make sure where they live is safe and clean.

Our Readers' Panel helped reduce residents' queries

by assisting in creating frequently asked questions about service charges. The Panel's recommendations were incorporated into a new leaflet.



✓ **We introduced "kitemarks" on our publications, such as policies and procedures.**

These are visual symbols which show how and when residents have been involved.



Our Scrutiny Panel act as a "critical friend", constructively challenging how our services are delivered.

Their recently agreed scrutiny manual will improve how they carry out their important work.



Signing of Forum constitution



"I want Newlon's services to be the best they can and bring real change. It's really satisfying to be part of a group that helps this happen."

Liz, Newlon resident and Scrutiny Panel member

Want to find out how you can influence and improve our services? Email getinvolved@newlon.org.uk.

Lettings & income

Housing people more quickly

In order to ensure people waiting for homes are housed as quickly as possible and to maximise the income we get to invest in new homes and better services, we make sure when a property becomes vacant it is re-let as quickly as possible.

We were particularly pleased with the year's results. Re-let times showed a huge improvement on the year before. In part this is down to the implementation of new IT systems and improved repairs procedures which turn around empty properties more quickly. However, a big reason has been staff themselves – communicating better with each other and taking ownership.

Social rented and Affordable Rent housing

Number of lets



Number of re-lets



Average time to re-let



2016/17



2015/16

Intermediate Rent housing

Number of Intermediate Rent lets



Number of Intermediate Rent re-lets



Average time to re-let



2016/17



2015/16

Reducing our arrears

We rely on residents to pay their rent so we can use the income to invest in the services we provide. Good performance in rent collection is particularly important at a time when the government's rent cuts are starting to take effect on our overall income, potentially limiting our ability to provide good services and develop new homes.



At the end year

overall arrears reduced to 3.07%,
the best result we have had for many years.

Overall arrears as % of rent due

2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
3.62%	3.55%	3.07%



Lord Graham Mews

We achieved this despite the challenges welfare changes brought. All our boroughs implemented Universal Credit for new benefit claims and in Tower Hamlets the full system was introduced. There was also an increase in the number of tenants affected by the Benefit Cap due to a reduction in the amount of benefits people can receive.

The Income team engaged with many residents impacted by these changes, to proactively ensure people were able to handle them and help them maintain their tenancies.

In addition affordability tests have been introduced at sign-ups. Potential tenants, together with an Income Officer, calculate the benefits they are entitled to and how much rent they will have to pay. These checks ensure residents are able to decide whether they can afford the property.

Where necessary residents were referred to our Community Services team for independent benefits and debt advice and assistance with more complex issues. You can read more about the work of that team on page 7.

There were 16 evictions last year, despite these interventions. Eviction is always a last resort when all other options are exhausted.

Another success of the Income Team in the last year has been **an increase in the number of quarterly rent statements sent by email to 73%.**



This reduces costs and is more environmentally friendly.

You can get in touch with us if you want your rent statements sent to you electronically.

Supporting our residents

Our Community Services team help residents on the path to employment and provide support and advice to those going through difficult financial times. They also ensure Newlon's community facilities are vibrant spaces which benefit residents and the local community.

Here is a summary of some of the team's achievements last year.

Help with finances

Our in-house welfare advice service provides financial stability for Newlon residents and helps reduce rent arrears. They assist residents to make applications for benefits and access external services such as debt advice.

126 new case registrations were made last year

with over

£52,000

in backdated housing benefit secured

as well as

£165,000

in other health and welfare benefits

Getting people into work

The team help residents seeking jobs or training.

115 residents

were engaged with last year



with well **over half** securing **employment, apprenticeships, work placements** or employment-related **training**.



Petra, from Islington, currently works as a nanny but wants a career change, preferably in an office environment. She is on a work placement with our Community Services team, at Barnsbury Community Centre.

"My role includes taking bookings, showing people around the centre, making risk assessments and maintaining registers. I am also the first point of call for clients wishing to hire our centre. Every day is different and I enjoy meeting new people and learning new things. It has helped improve my computer skills and boost my confidence. I highly recommend getting in touch with the team if you are looking for work."



Barnsbury Garden

Providing community facilities

The team also provides access to community facilities for residents who wish to take part in health and wellbeing programmes. Our two main spaces are based in Barnsbury in Islington and Lascar Wharf in Tower Hamlets. We also hire out the halls, generating income that is reinvested in our services.

Last year:

- A new online booking system was launched to make the booking process easier.
- A new community garden was opened on the Barnsbury Estate, created with the help of local volunteers, providing a green space for residents to enjoy.
- Our activities at Barnsbury Community Centre were recognised with an award from Sport Islington for Sports Organisation of the Year.
- Over 50% of hall hire has been by Newlon residents. The vast majority of participants in the wide range of services provided by other hirers have also been our residents as well as other members of the local community.

If you want help from the team or to find out how to book our halls email communityservices@newlon.org.uk, call **020 7033 4605** or go to the Community Services section on our website, www.newlon.org.uk.

Helping vulnerable people



National Learning Disabilities & Autism Awards

Outward is the Newlon Group's specialist care and support partner. They work with more than 1,000 people, including many Newlon residents, who need extra help to live their lives and realise their potential, providing a range of specialist services for older people, people with mental health issues and those with learning difficulties. Over the last year they have received plenty of recognition for their varied work.

At the **National Learning Disabilities & Autism Awards** Helal Ahmed, who manages their Selwyn Road supported housing scheme, was shortlisted for 'The Manager Award', which follows Outward's success winning in the 'Supporting Older People with Learning Disabilities' category last year.

At a time when budgets are tight and expectations are higher than ever, Helal has galvanised his team to deliver high quality person-centred support that is all about enabling people to live their lives to the fullest.

Meanwhile Desmond Court, an Enfield-based supported living scheme for older adults with learning disabilities run by Outward, was nominated for a **Housing Innovation Award** - highlighting the important role such developments play.

Outward also celebrated one of their community volunteers, Felicia Ogunleye, picking up a much-deserved award at the 2017 **I Love Hackney Mayor's Civic Awards** at the Town Hall.

A key part of Outward's strategy is to improve customers' wellbeing. One of the ways they do this is to support them to 'make a house a home'.

This year the focus has been on gardening, so they launched their third annual Outward Gardening Competition and had a record nineteen entries, involving dozens of its customers. There were lush raised beds, colourful hanging baskets and sensory elements for people on the autistic spectrum.

Find out more about the work Outward do on their website at **www.outward.org.uk**.

Outward Gardening Competition



Felicia is a volunteer befriender with the Hackney Volunteer & Befriending Service, which tackles loneliness and social isolation in the borough. We are thrilled that her efforts as a model befriender were recognised by Mayor Philip Glanville. She checks in with as many as 20 people every week and nothing is too much effort for her. All this is even more impressive given that Felicia has health issues of her own.

Asked if her mobility issues were a burden, Felicia said: "As long as I can get up in the morning and help, I'm very happy!"

Would you like to follow in Felicia's footsteps?

The Hackney Volunteer & Befriending Service is always on the lookout for new volunteers. Social isolation is a big problem in Hackney, as it is across the capital, so they are looking for people willing to give a couple of hours each week to make a big difference to someone's life. You don't need to live in Hackney to take part and you will get a full induction and training.

Call **020 7275 9829** or email **hackneyvolunteers@outward.org.uk** to learn more.



Outward activity break

Complaints making it right

In 2016/17 we received

440

Stage One complaints

and answered

95%

on time.

This is a

2%

improvement on
the previous year

and above our

90%

target.

**The top subjects we received complaints about
last year related to:**



repairs



estate conditions



service contracts
(such as lifts)

Learning lessons

We regularly review complaints and discuss lessons we can learn from them and what we can do to avoid such complaints in the future. Over the last year we have taken actions around issues including the following:

- There were complaints about the handling of repairs by our gas servicing contractor, BSW, including repeat visits to identify the cause of problems. The Head of Building Services worked with them to develop a better procedure, so if there are more than three visits a supervisor will attend.
- Staff handling complaints were occasionally advising residents to make claims for compensation when they should have been directing them to make insurance claims. This caused complications when reviewed by the Complaints Panel. Following staff training no instances of this have arisen since.
- The defects period is the set period of time after new homes are built during which the contractor will return to remedy any faults. Correspondence about this has been reviewed so it is clearer to residents what the implications are if no access is given for the end of defects period inspection.

We believe it is important to have residents involved in complaint resolution to ensure the process is clear and we are seeing issues from residents' perspectives. As a result we will continue to keep residents involved in reviewing our complaints process. You can find out more about our complaints procedure on our website – www.newlon.org.uk.

Our complaints procedure

- **Stage One** – when you first make a complaint it will be logged as a 'Stage One'. Our Service Resolution Team will deal with your enquiry and respond within 10 working days.
- **Stage Two** – If you are unhappy with the response you can appeal within 28 days. Your complaint will then be reviewed by a Complaints Panel, which will include other Newlon residents.
- If you are still unhappy after Stage Two then you can contact the independent Housing Ombudsman Service. The Ombudsman has the power to investigate complaints against us, but will only help after our complaints procedure has been followed.

Service
Centre



Reliable repairs and good places to live

As well as front line services such as responsive repairs and maintenance we carry out a vast range of health and safety and security inspections and work to manage anti-social behaviour (ASB).

Efficient repairs service

Our concierge and estate inspection teams ensure all our properties are regularly inspected. In last year's Residents' Review we reported on the **new handyperson service** we introduced in partnership with Wates Living Space, our main responsive repairs provider. This team visits our properties on a rota basis, meaning communal repairs are reported and actioned quickly.

This has helped deliver a genuine improvement in repairs

with over
94%
completed on target



and average repair times across all types of job down to **8.2 days**, from 15.7 the previous year.



In an independent survey completed in May 2017 almost **half the respondents said they thought the repairs service had improved over the past six months**, with more than a quarter saying they thought it had got 'a lot better'.

We are delighted to see these improvements and must give credit to our maintenance partner, Wates, who have worked so effectively with us.

Wates have also now got a **permanent team dealing with cyclical works** for external repairs and painting and internal checks of electrical systems. This was previously carried out on a job by job basis. The changes allow us to use resources more efficiently as they work more strategically, carrying out external works in the summer and focusing on internal works in the winter.



Handyperson team at work



24 hour CCTV monitoring

Keeping residents safe

The terrible events at Grenfell Tower have made the importance of residents' safety clearer than ever.

Newlon takes your safety extremely seriously and over the last few years we have invested significantly in this area of work and we comply fully with all relevant regulations.

All of our buildings have up to date Fire Risk Assessments, as well as Water and Gas Safety Certificates.

In addition all safety equipment is regularly inspected and monitored by our Estate Inspection and Concierge teams.

If you have any questions or concerns about safety measures where you live then please contact us at customerservice@newlon.org.uk or call **020 7613 8080**.



Maintaining estates

One of the key performance indicators we measure is the condition of our estates. This helps us assess whether our cleaning services are delivering value for money, identify if estates require improvement works and ensure we provide good places to live. Our Estate Inspectors regularly check the condition of our estates and involved residents often assist by accompanying them on their visits.

We were pleased that **94% of all our estates were classed as being in a good or fair condition** over the course of the year. This is a significant improvement on last year, in part thanks to the new grounds maintenance contractor and the handyperson service. We aim to sustain this going forward.



Improving homes

Another aspect of the service we provide to our social rent residents is our stock improvement programme, which includes ongoing works to ensure that people's homes are maintained to a decent standard.

Last year we set a target of improving a minimum of **400 homes**

We exceeded this by completing works to

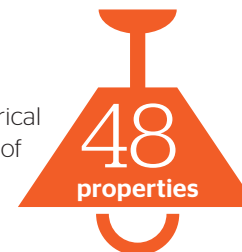
416
properties.



This included:



full electrical rewiring of



Tackling ASB

We aim to tackle instances of ASB, such as noise nuisance, vandalism and harassment, as quickly as possible. It is a complex and sensitive area so we are pleased that the improvements we have seen over the last couple of the years have continued.



Last year we had

303
reported cases of ASB.

98% 
of reported cases were responded to within our target times.

Over **80%** 
of residents were satisfied with the way we handled their case.

You can contact us about ASB issues either via live chat on our website, by emailing asb@newlon.org.uk or calling **020 7613 8080**.



Newlon House – 4 Daneland Walk – Hale Village – London – N17 9FE

T: 020 7613 8080

E: customerservice@newlon.org.uk

www.newlon.org.uk

Newlon Housing Trust is a charitable housing association

Group Chief Executive: Mike Hinch Chair: Sarah Ebanja

Newlon Housing Trust is registered with the Homes and Communities Agency L0006, Inland Revenue charity no. X21906/1, Community Benefit Society 18449R.

Access Homes HA Ltd is registered with the Homes and Communities Agency SL3605, Community Benefit Society 24992R.

Outward Housing, trading as Outward, is a company limited by guarantee – company no. 2151434, registered charity no. 800529.

Newlon Fusion is a company limited by guarantee – company no. 4000022, registered charity no. 1119673.

NewlonBuild Ltd is a registered company – company no. 7884092.

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