

Newlon News



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Welcome to our Spring newsletter

In this edition of Newlon News you can find out about all the ways you can get involved with us, including opportunities to join various forums and the Newlon Board. There is also information about remortgaging, lease extensions and staircasing, as well as a list of events going on in the areas where we have homes.

Easter closing times

Our offices close at 5pm on 18th April and reopen on 23rd April. During this time our contractors will only provide emergency repairs, such as for total electricity loss and major leaks.

Remember your ideas and thoughts on Newlon News are always welcome. Just email us at newsletters@newlon.org.uk to get in touch.

Residents' Forum



Martin Hughes, Chair, writes:

The Residents' Forum is a group of residents who meet every three months to look at Newlon's work and monitor performance.

At the last meeting:

- Nicola Bastin, one of Newlon's Board members, came along to find out more about the work of the Forum.
- Bill Henderson, Newlon's Housing Director, gave an informative presentation about service charges. We noted that residents have been instrumental in working with Newlon to improve information about service charges. It was agreed to ask the Scrutiny Panel to look at service charges when they choose their next topic. Bill's presentation will also be shared with our residents' groups – see page 8 for details of where and when this is happening.
- A Forum member presented us with a paper they had written about pets and we discussed if Newlon should review its pet policy and look at the rules on companion animals. A full review was not agreed, but Newlon will widen their definition of an assistance dog to cover companion animals that provide support to their owners.
- Staff and residents will be attending a series of interactive workshops to discuss ideas, including those from the Government's social housing green paper, to update Newlon's Resident Involvement Strategy. Some of the Forum members will be involved in these workshops and we look forward to hearing the results.

If you would like to read more about our last meeting you can find the minutes online at www.newlon.org.uk/residents/getting-involved/residents-forum.

You can also express your interest to join the Residents' Forum by getting in touch with us at getinvolved@newlon.org.uk. We welcome members from all ages and backgrounds, in order to reflect the diversity of our residents.

Message received how involved residents have helped us.

- Isobel Place residents told us they wanted changes made to their cleaning service. As a result of this feedback the cleaners now visit just three days per week and cleaning costs have been halved. Our Estate Inspectors have continued to give all blocks there a high rating since these changes were made. We will monitor this to make sure these standards are kept.
- Encouraged by the Residents' Forum suggestions on how to improve parking control on our estates, we found a possible new contractor with lower costs and better enforcement. We are piloting the service for three months on one of our estates. If residents give us good feedback, we will move to using this contractor for all our other estates that have parking restrictions.
- We were pleased to hear that guests at the recent Star Awards gave us an 88% satisfaction rating for the event. They have also given us good ideas and suggestions to improve future Star Awards.
- The Residents' Forum have asked us to explore ways that residents could be involved in giving feedback about communal repairs. Our Resident Involvement team are meeting with our repairs team to discuss how this could work.
- We have launched a new-look website. Review and input from residents played a big part in ensuring that it is easy to use and helpful. You can find out more on page 5.





Remortgaging

Getting it right

Remortgaging is when you choose to take out a new mortgage in place of the one you currently have. It can be done through a different lender or using a different mortgage product from your current one.

People often remortgage to secure a more competitive interest rate and therefore save money, to borrow more or to add or remove someone from a mortgage. Your choice of a mortgage depends on your personal preference and you should not only look out for the interest rate but also the fees and terms and conditions that comes with it.

A mortgage is a long-term commitment so it is important that you make sure you are getting the best possible deal on it. We recommend that you shop around to find the deal suitable to your needs and take time to carefully look at the details before signing any paperwork.

For further information and advice please email resident.sales@newlon.org.uk.

Lease extensions

If you are a Leaseholder and you have 80 years or less remaining on your lease, we would encourage you to think about extending it. In order to obtain a lease extension, you must satisfy the following conditions:

- Your existing lease must be for a term exceeding 21 years.
- You must have owned your property for two years.

It is worth seeking independent financial and legal advice before you consider a lease extension.

If you would like to find out more then please contact our Resident Sales Manager, Olu Adedokun-Abiiba, on **020 7613 7480**, who will be able to guide you through the process. You can also email resident.sales@newlon.org.uk.

Getting a lodger?

If you are a Shared Owner or Leaseholder you do not need our permission to take in a lodger. However, you must first check that your lodger can legally rent in England as you risk a heavy penalty if they can't.

You can find out more about how to do this at www.gov.uk/check-tenant-right-to-rent-documents.



Need a space to hold an event?

Newlon provides access to community facilities for our residents. This includes the recently refurbished halls in the Barnsbury Centre. If you want to hire the hall for an event, such as a party, please contact us concerning space and availability.

We have special prices for Newlon residents of up to 50% off the usual cost.

You do not have to live on the Barnsbury Estate to hire it.

Find out more by emailing community.services@newlon.org.uk or calling **020 7033 4605**.

Readers' Panel help simplify service charges

It's approaching the time of year when residents will be receiving their service charge statements.

In the past, residents have told us that information about service charges can be difficult to understand. So we decided to ask our Readers' Panel to review the glossary of terms which we send out to help explain them.

Their feedback was really helpful. They suggested ways we could better explain terms and reduce unnecessary information - and so we did.

Cleaning consultation review



We've been undertaking our biggest ever consultation on a cleaning service contract - including a written consultation, targeted survey and meetings with involved residents. We have also spoken to our existing contractors and staff about how we can do things better. As a result of this we are:

- Entering one big contract which should provide better value for money.
- Changing the frequency of cleaning in some buildings to reflect resident feedback.
- Improving how we deal with bulk rubbish - a service that can cost residents a lot of money through service charges. We hope to reduce these costs by having a dedicated service, rather than paying for one off removals.

The cleaning contract is due to begin in summer. When it goes live we will be involving residents further, to support how we manage the contract and undertaking inspections.

Residents' Network Conference - getting ahead of the game

Three Newlon residents and two staff members attended the recent Residents' Network Conference, which focussed on the government's green paper called 'a new deal for social housing' - a document which sets out their vision for the future of social housing. The event included talks about where housing policy is headed in the near future.

The residents found many speakers to be informative and interesting. One said she found it useful to see how other housing associations operated and it gave her some food for thought for further discussion.

You can read the green paper online at www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-new-deal-for-social-housing.

Staircase you way to owning your home

If you are a Shared Owner you can buy extra shares in your home - known as staircasing.

Purchasing extra shares reduces the proportion of rent you pay. Most Shared Owners have the right to staircase, but you should check your lease first. You should also ask your mortgage lender if you can borrow the amount you need to buy an additional share.

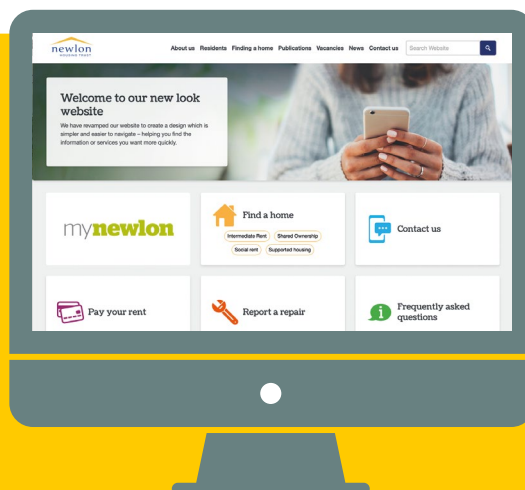
You can find out more at www.newlon.org.uk/residents/home-owners/staircasing.



Our new website is live

We have redesigned our website to make it simpler and easier to navigate – helping you find the information or services you want more quickly. It has also been optimised so it works better on mobile devices.

We would like to extend our thanks to our involved residents who helped test and give feedback on our new website. Their contributions were valuable and gave us a good insight into how users felt about the improvements.



Our employment programme gets national recognition

We are pleased to announce that we are a finalist for the 2019 UK Housing Awards in the 'resident employment and training' category.

It recognises the hard work our Resident Services team have done in helping residents to build their skills and find jobs. We would also like to congratulate our residents who have taken part in our Step Forward programme.

We are also proud that almost 15% of Newlon staff are made up of our residents – which played a big part in getting our successful nomination.

Intermediate Rent – rules for retired residents

We have been approached by some of our Intermediate Rent residents who are concerned about what will happen to their tenancy when they retire. In response we have amended our policy on how we review Fixed Term Tenancies for these tenants.

If a resident has been an Intermediate Rent tenant for a minimum of 5 years and has retired (including medical retirement from age 55), then when we review their tenancy we check the following criteria to see if they still qualify:

- Whether they still meet the Right to Rent criteria (legally entitling them to rent a property in England).
- Whether they can meet the cost of their rent, either directly or through benefits.
- Whether they still have a need for the type of property they are occupying.
- Whether they are under-occupying (lodgers are not considered part of the household).

If these criteria are met, then we are happy for them to keep their Intermediate Rent home.



Reviewing our policies

We regularly review our policies and procedures to ensure our services are as effective as possible. Here are just a couple of recent examples of where we have made changes:

Mutual Exchange

Parking permits held by departing tenants are not transferable to new residents. Incoming tenants who want a parking permit will need to contact us, as there are waiting lists.

Flat sitting

If a resident asks for permission for a flat sitter, permission will only be granted if the tenant has a direct debit in place for the full rent.

Customer care

We made it clear that calls to the Service Centre will be recorded for training and quality purposes and retained for up to 6 months.

Getting involved

how you can play your part

By getting involved you can play a part in helping us improve the services we provide and the area where you live.



The ABCs of Resident Involvement

There are three levels for engaging with us and providing your input.

A. Bigger picture:

Joining strategic forums and panels.

B. Local picture:

Getting involved with community groups or projects, or inspecting your block or estate.

C. Lighter touch:

Dipping in and out of groups or taking part as and when you have time. This could be filling in a survey, coming along to a focus group, going to training or conferences, taking part in our Readers' Panel or becoming a Mystery Shopper.

A. Bigger picture

- **Residents Forum** – a friendly group of residents who get together with senior Newlon staff every few months to help shape and improve services.
- **Scrutiny Panel** – review our services in greater detail to find out what's working well and what should be improved.
- **Complaints Panel** – independently resolve complaints by applying the principles of fairness, put things right and help us learn lessons.
- **Residents' Services Committee** – explore the day-to-day decisions about how we look after our homes. It has five resident members.
- **The Board** – responsible for setting direction for Newlon and overseeing our governance. The Board currently has one resident member (expanding to two members in the coming year). They think about the bigger picture, like what does Newlon want to achieve in the next ten years and how do we make it happen?

B. Local picture

There are many different ways for you to get involved where you live and the choice is up to you. We can help support you in getting started.

- **Residents' Association** – a formal residents' group with a strong collective voice to talk to us about important issues.
- **Informal residents' group** – less formal, but still with a strong collective voice.
- **Project group** – a way to get something off the ground, such as organising a community event.
- **An annual or one-off meeting with Newlon** – to bring up and discuss important issues but without the need to set up a group.
- **Digital involvement** – setting up a Facebook group, or something similar, so that all residents can communicate with each other.
- **Resident Inspectors** – help our estate inspectors, by jointly checking the standard of cleaning, maintenance and gardening where you live.

C. Lighter touch

- **Think Tank** – not sure how to get involved or don't have much free time? Then try the Think Tank. Tell us your skills and which part of Newlon you are interested in (e.g. repairs), and we'll match you up to an involvement opportunity that's happening.
- **Mystery shopper** – we are calling for our customers to measure us, on how well we deliver our customer service through telephone calls and emails. The feedback you provide us will help to improve our services. Being a mystery shopper, you will test our customer service from the comfort of your home.
- **Readers' Panel** – have you read our publications and thought they could be improved or made clearer and easier to understand? If so, get involved and review our publications on a quarterly basis by becoming part of our Readers Panel.

Why not set up a residents' group where you live?

If there are no residents' groups where you live, we can help you start one up. We can provide advice, help survey fellow residents, put you in touch with experienced residents' groups, provide funding and more. Get in touch to find out how we can help.

"We strive to give our group a voice concerning local issues. Since we created it, we have seen a real benefit in community relations. Our regular meetings and joint projects have really helped build relationships with others in the local community."

Jeannie Lowen, Norton Folgate Community Group.



What are the benefits of getting involved with us?

Becoming an involved resident gives you the opportunity to help us improve how we look after our homes and deliver our services, as well giving you a greater say in your community. You can also benefit from:

- Meeting other like-minded residents and making new friends.
- Developing new skills and gaining experience that could help you at work or if you are looking for a job.
- Getting rewarded for some activities and paid out of pocket expenses.



"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 Folaranmi,
Scrutiny Panel member.

Want to get involved or find out more?

- Fill in our online form at www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/newlon19 to tell us what you are interested in.
- Call **020 7613 8084**.
- Email getinvolved@newlon.org.uk.

Take a Spring break at Nutley Edge



Are you looking for an affordable Spring getaway? If so, then Nutley Edge Cottages could be the perfect destination.

Nutley Edge belongs to Outward, a charity that supports vulnerable people in north and east London, and is part of the Newlon Group. All profits from Nutley Edge go to providing better care and support. So your stay will be benefiting some of London's most vulnerable people.

You can pick from twelve cottages that sleep up to four people, and also have the option of staying in our 17th century Old Farmhouse, which sleeps seven.

Nutley Edge sits in eleven acres of rolling countryside on the edge of the Ashdown Forest in East Sussex, located just an hour from London by train and easy to get to by car.

They also cater to larger groups. So if you are celebrating a birthday or wedding anniversary and are looking for a venue with large capacity then it could be ideal.

To learn more about Nutley Edge and book your stay please visit their website at www.nutleyedge.org.uk or call **01825 712 377**.

There are good rates for Newlon residents.

You can also find out more about the community work done by Outward at www.outward.org.uk.

Everything you wanted to know about service charges – invitation to our residents' groups

We would like local residents' groups to come along to a presentation about service charges from Bill Henderson, our Housing Services Director, on **Wednesday 20th March from 6pm at our Head Office in London, N17**.

He will cover:

- What service charges are and the principles behind them.
- What factors determine their costs.
- Challenges with service charges.
- The role of the Service Charge team.

Before the presentation starts our Service Charge team will be holding a surgery where you can discuss service charge issues on behalf of the residents you represent.

To find out more and book your place, contact the Resident Involvement on **020 7613 8084** or at getinvolved@newlon.org.uk.

Thinking of becoming a Newlon Board Member?



Sarah Ebanja, Chair of the Newlon Board

We are looking for an enthusiastic and committed resident to join our Board. You will help us make sure we are running things properly, that we are financially strong and are meeting all our legal obligations. Being a Board Member involves a commitment of around 26 days a year, including attending two Board weekends. We currently pay up to £7,308 per annum, plus reasonable expenses incurred for attending meetings, training or undertaking business on our behalf, including travel and child-minding costs.

Serving as a Resident Board Member is exciting and challenging and you will gain new skills and abilities which may help you in other areas of your life. We are committed to

supporting our Board Members in their roles so appropriate training and ongoing development will be provided.

If you have got general business and customer service experience, like to challenge opinions and be challenged, can see the 'bigger picture' and make a positive contribution to strategic discussion and debate, this role might be right for you.

In order to be eligible to apply for the role you need to:

- Be a Newlon tenant or joint tenant (as per your Tenancy Agreement) or a named leaseholder (as per your Lease Agreement).
- Be at least 18 years of age.
- Not be in serious breach of your agreement with us (e.g. where we are taking legal action against you).
- Not be a Newlon employee.
- Not have any unspent criminal convictions.
- Not be prohibited by law from being a director of a company.

Duties include contributing to Board meetings and committees, working with senior staff, attending functions and supporting and promoting the work of Newlon Housing Trust and the Newlon Group.

For an application pack, please visit www.newlon.org.uk/vacancies, email recruit@newlon.org.uk or write to Recruitment, Newlon Housing Trust, Newlon House, 4 Daneland Walk, London N17 9FE.

Problems with ASB? We can help

Our Enforcement team deals with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), in close partnership with the police and local authorities. ASB includes noise nuisance, harassment and vandalism.

How to report ASB

If you feel threatened call the police. Call 999 in an emergency, or 101 if you are not in immediate danger. The police will not normally attend noise nuisance matters. Instead you should call your council's ASB or noise line, who will assess the complaint and arrange to visit depending on the urgency.

If you feel comfortable doing so you should consider talking to the person responsible before contacting your council as they may not realise they are causing a problem. In other cases of ASB, or if you have already reported noise nuisance to your council, call us on **020 7613 8080** or email asb@newlon.org.uk.



Events in your area



Mother's Day Concert

When? 31st March

Where? Forty Hall, EN2

Cost? £15

Come and celebrate Mother's Day with The Big Choir, whose harmonies will fill the Long Gallery as they sing uplifting songs which you can listen or sing along to. Songs to be performed include Unchained Melody, A Million Dreams, Proud Mary and Super Trouper.

www.fortyhallestate.co.uk/whats-on

Easter Egg Trail at Fenton House

When? 19th March – 22nd April

Where? Fenton House, NW3

Cost? £9 adults / £5 children

Explore Fenton's walled garden on an Easter egg hunt with a difference to win a chocolate prize. This quest takes you through a sunken garden, ancient orchard and kitchen garden, along terraces and across emerald lawns. Or bring a picnic and relax among spring flowers while others seek out hidden treasures.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/fenton-house-and-garden

Easter Holiday Activities: Sharing is Caring

When? 9th – 12th April

Where? The Geffrye Museum of the Home, E2

Cost? Free

How does sharing make the world better? Introduce young children to sharing with toys and games in Nursery Rhyme Time and Geffrye Explorers, or explore the different ways to share with older kids in craft making, digital workshops and hands on tours.

www.geffrye-museum.org.uk/whatson/events/families

Dragon Egg Hunt

When? 17th – 22nd April

Where? Museum of the Order of St John, EC1M

Cost? Free

Come to the Museum of the Order of St John and search for hidden eggs with Gozon the dragon-slayer, Knight of St John. Free drop-in activity. (Please note the museum is closed on Easter Sunday.)

www.museumstjohn.org.uk/events

Easter egg decorating & the Great Egg Roll

When? 21st April

Where? Lauderdale House, N6

Cost? £8.50

Meet on the Tea Lawn at Lauderdale House on Easter Sunday for a creative family event. Includes a chance to decorate your own Easter egg and take part in the Great Egg Roll. Then head to the Lower Terrace for a mini Easter egg hunt. Everyone leaves with a chocolate treat.

www.lauderdalehouse.co.uk

IWA Canalway Cavalcade

When? 4th – 6th May

Where? Little Venice, W2

Cost? Free

IWA Canalway Cavalcade is a unique waterway boat gathering organised by volunteers, that has taken place at Little Venice since 1983. There will be activities for all the family with a pageant of boats, trade shows and stalls, live music, kids' activities, competitions, morris dancers, a real ale bar and more.

www.waterways.org.uk/events_festivals/canalway_cavalcade

YMCA North London Fun Run & Festival

When? 19th May

Where? Priory Park, N8

Cost? From £11.50

One of the largest community events in North London. Over 3,500 adults and children entered the 10 fun runs last year - an adult 10k event and 8 children's races. Over 1,000 people in Priory Park will also enjoy a day-long festival of music and entertainment.

www.ymcanorthlondon.org.uk

The secret history of our streets

We provide nearly 8,000 homes, ranging from new build developments to 18th century street properties. Many have fascinating histories. Here we continue our regular feature exploring some of these stories.



Royal Free Hospital

Newlon Housing Trust has some types of stock which are unique for a housing association. This includes long-term ownership of a Grade II listed Edwardian Town Hall and staff accommodation for the Royal Free Hospital.

In the mid-2000s Newlon entered into partnership to redevelop some residential buildings for Royal Free Hospital based on or near to the main hospital campus in Hampstead.

Many of the Royal Free staff have the option of taking up hospital accommodation as part of their employment and there was a shortage of available spaces for people, as well as a number of buildings which required refurbishment. These included William Gunn and Anne Bryans House and homes at nearby former Queen Mary Hospital site dating from the 1920s.

Each of these sites posed a different challenge. William Gunn was a collection of 1960s low rise blocks which required extensive repair and refurbishment works. The decision was taken to demolish them and build a larger purpose-built single block called Coppetts Wood House using the same footprint. This block was opened by HRH Prince Andrew in 2008 and provides 141 homes, ranging from studio flats to larger family accommodation. It has double the accommodation previously available at William Gunn House.

Our accommodation at the Royal Free Hospital is available to people in a wide range of roles, including nursing and clinical staff. People can live there long term or in some cases stay for short periods, either to come for training or even to perform a specific one-off operation or surgical procedure. Newlon has a small team based at Coppetts Wood House to manage the housing we provide for the Royal Free Hospital.

Anne Bryans House was a 13 storey 1960s concrete clad, brutalist style tower block, which required extensive refurbishment and internal remodelling. We used modern methods of construction to provide each flat with its own bathroom, changing the layout from space inefficient shared accommodation to provide 180 individual flats.

The block is named after Dame Anne Bryans who helped to establish the hospital. She was the first woman to be made a Red Cross commissioner during World War 2 and later became the first chairman of the Royal Free. She was responsible for the successful set-up and completion of the hospital, ahead of schedule.

Our work at Royal Free Hospital started with the refurbishment of Queen Mary's House, which was completed in 2006. This involved upgrading 50 apartments and communal areas.

Now we provide nearly 400 affordable homes at the hospital and have been working successfully in partnership with them for more than 10 years.

Kids' Quiz!

Below are 6 words which are all to do with Spring. See if you can unscramble them.

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1) TUBRELFYT | 4) FODIFDAL |
| 2) BABRIT | 5) KICHC |
| 3) SSLOMBO | 6) STAREE GEG |

Please email your answers to kieran.hurley@newlon.org.uk, with the words **Kids' Quiz** in the title, along with your name, age and full address. Or post them to **Newlon Kids' Quiz, Newlon House, 4 Daneland Walk, Hale Village, N17 9FE.**

You can only enter the quiz if you are aged 11 or under. Answers must be received by **21st April 2019.**

All correct entries will go into a draw, and one lucky winner will get a £20 voucher which can be used at a range of high street stores.



Be environmentally friendly by getting your newsletters digitally

We can send our newsletters digitally to your email address. This is both faster and more environmentally friendly. If you want to receive them digitally rather than in hard copy then please get in touch at newsletters@newlon.org.uk.

Write for your newsletter

Do you have an idea for an article for this newsletter? We welcome articles from residents of all ages. If we publish it we will send you £20 in vouchers of your choice! Send your article idea to kieran.hurley@newlon.org.uk, or post it to **Kieran Hurley, Newlon Housing Trust, 4 Daneland Walk, Hale Village, London, N17 9FE.**

Newlon House, 4 Daneland Walk, Hale Village, London, N17 9FE
Telephone: **020 7613 8080**

Email (general enquiries): customerservice@newlon.org.uk
Email (repairs): repairs@newlon.org.uk
www.newlon.org.uk

Newlon Housing Trust is a charitable Housing Association

If you have difficulty reading this newsletter, require a different format or need help with translation, please contact us on 020 7613 8091 or email newsletters@newlon.org.uk.