Newlon News



What's inside...

TPAS conference

Events in your area

Setting up a Residents' Association

Kids' Quiz

Welcome to the autumn edition of Newlon News.

In this edition we have contributions from residents who have got involved to make a difference at Newlon and in their communities.

We also report back on some of the events held this summer as well as suggestions for things to do over the next couple of months.

Lastly, there is plenty of advice - from staircasing to setting up a residents' association where you live.

Cover photo: View from Newlon homes at Goodman's Fields.





All aboard - welcome to Lloyd and Blossom, and a fond farewell to Martin ...



Martin Hughes, Chair

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:

- We discussed the draft Resident Involvement Strategy. It was very encouraging to see
 Newlon's plans for involving residents and giving them opportunities to have a say about
 the services they receive. We had quite a lot to say ourselves and made some practical
 suggestions about the language used in the document and the timing of the plans. We
 liked the strategy's focus on the importance of residents' homes in their lives and the
 recognition of the part Newlon have to play in this.
- We reviewed the Forum's Constitution. This is part of making sure that our group updates
 how it is organised and supports the Resident Involvement Strategy. There was a lively
 discussion about this with different views expressed by members and we did not reach
 any firm conclusion at the meeting. However, we decided to reach agreement through
 a consultation exercise before the next meeting.
- Members heard about the latest mystery shopping results where a pool of involved residents test Newlon services by phone and email to see if they are meeting the agreed standards. These results showed an improvement from the last time and that staff and teams were quicker at responding to queries. One area identified for improvement was about the tone of communications to residents and action is being taken to improve this.
- The successful resident recruits to Newlon's Board were announced, Blossom
 Shakespeare and Lloyd Gale-Ward. They are both Forum members and also involved
 in a variety of ways with Newlon, so have lots of experience to bring to the table.
 We wish them the very best in their new role.

On a personal note I will be stepping down after nine years as a resident Board member and from the role of Forum chair. I have enjoyed my time immensely and hope that you feel I have made a difference. Lloyd will be taking on the role of Forum Chair and will continue the work of championing resident engagement with Newlon.

Praxis:



Providing support to apply for the European Union Settlement Scheme

The Home Office EU Settlement Scheme has been designed to provide EU citizens and their families with a route to living and working in the UK beyond 31 December 2020. Whether the UK makes a deal with the EU or not, EU citizens living in the UK before any agreed date of departure will be able to apply to stay in the UK via the EU Settlement Scheme. Anyone who does not apply on time may not be able to work or claim benefits and may be vulnerable to deportation from the LIK

Praxis Community Projects provides support to EU citizens and their family members to make applications under the EU Settlement Scheme. In particular, the project is open to people who are at risk of homelessness, precariously housed, have a disability, are elderly or vulnerable. The project is free and is

To find out about getting a referral go to www.praxis. org.uk/online-forms-and-advice-page-42.html

Checking your identity to keep your data secure

Keeping your data secure is important to us. So if you contact our Service Centre, we will ask you some basic security questions including your name, address and contact details. This will ensure that we do not accidentally disclose personal data to a third party.

In addition, certain queries require us to carry out further checks. This includes tenancy management issues, rent queries, and requests for keys and fobs. In cases

such as these you will be asked questions such as your date of birth and when you last made a rent or service charge payment.



Newlon's Resident Services team worked with the charity 'Help On your Doorstep' to run a range of health and well-being activities for visitors at the free Cally Festival in Islington in June.

Our smoothie bike was running throughout the day making 250 healthy smoothies.

The team met over 500 local people and residents to talk about what Newlon does and promote the work of the Barnsbury Community Centre.

We were also pleased that local MP Emily Thornberry came along to show her support.

We hope it demonstrated Newlon's commitment to the community. Thanks to all those who come along to make it a success.



Residents enjoy **Hale Village Festival**

Another successful summer festival took place in Hale Village on 13th July.

Hundreds of residents came along to enjoy the day. There was food, music, a bouncy castle and our smoothie bike, as well as information booths, table top sales and more.

Since 2012 the festival has helped create a really positive community at Hale Village. A big thank you for everyone who volunteered or came along to make it such an enjoyable event.



Keeping tabs on our performance

annual report to residents

You should have received the Residents' Review with this newsletter, our annual report to residents.

It charts our performance in key areas over the last year so that you can get a clear picture of how successfully we are providing services.

We also publish quarterly performance updates on our website which set out how we are doing in a range of key areas including call handling, repairs ASB, estate standards, arrears management and stock improvement.

Visit **newlon.org.uk/us/performance** for more information on our ongoing performance.

Resident Involvement Strategy 2019-22

'There's no place like home'

There have been considerable changes in the social housing sector, some of which have inspired debate and discussion about resident involvement and the relationship between residents and their landlords.

This is particularly important following the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017 and the government Social Housing Green Paper in 2018.

We have refreshed our Resident Involvement Strategy to give residents a clear voice throughout Newlon while being agile and dynamic in responding to evolving expectations.

Some practical ways that have been identified include involving residents more in monitoring contractors and staff recruitment, increasing the number of staff who are Newlon residents, and improving resident feedback on our standards.

The ambition is for residents to have every opportunity to meaningfully influence and shape the decisions we make about how we manage and look after their homes.

In developing this strategy, the Resident Involvement team held a series of interactive workshops with staff and Board members as well as residents who are participating at all levels of the involvements.

Thank you to everyone who has been involved in this process.

To find out how you can get involved in helping to improve Newlon's services, and the rewards we provide, go to

www.newlon.org.uk/residents/getting-involved.



Safety in our taller buildings

Following the tragedy at Grenfell, Newlon is actively reviewing the construction and materials used for all of our buildings over 18 metres in height. This includes carrying out a programme of specialist forensic fire engineering investigations to ensure buildings are safely constructed and that we comply with any guidance from the Government.

All of our buildings have current and up to date Fire Risk Assessments and we always follow the recommendations made by specialists following investigations. We are committed to residents' safety and if any form of remedial works are required at a building we will communicate with residents as soon as we are made aware

National awards recognition for Newlon's Resident Services

We are pleased Newlon was nominated for the 2019 Women in Housing Awards, in the Improving the Lives of Women or Communities category.

The nomination recognises the success of our female-led Barnsbury Community Centre in Islington, which provides initiatives designed to counter social exclusion and improve the wellbeing of women from all groups in the local community. This includes the Barnsbury Improved Lifestyle Initiative, which aims to boost the health of women who attend.



The award also celebrates the success of the Islington Bangladesh Association's community garden project, which provides allotments, food-growing and cookery classes, with opportunities to gain horticultural qualifications - a unique approach to engaging a group of women who would otherwise be at risk of marginalisation.



Graham Watts, Newlon's Head of Resident Services, said: "I'm thrilled we've been nominated for this prestigious award. While we provide support for these incredible programmes, it really is down to the efforts and leadership of the women involved who have made such a difference in their community."

We were also shortlisted at the 24 housing awards for our Step Forward employment programme. We are proud that 16% of Newlon staff are made up of Newlon residents – a key part of the reason we have been shortlisted for this award.

Inspirational ideas from the TPAS Conference



by Jeannie Lowen

"An inspirational array of people involved with social housing gathered at this year's TPAS conference. TPAS is the 'Tenants Participation Advisory Service'. They work with both tenants and landlords to enhance tenant engagement within social housing. Their aim is to help improve services, save money and bring real beneficial, long-lasting change to communities.

I was invited to the TPAS Conference along with members of the Residents' Forum and staff from the Resident Services team department, the theme of which was 'Shaping Positive Change Together'.

2019 marks the 100th anniversary of the Addison Act which enabled councils to build social housing on a large scale. A timely anniversary given the current lack of availability of affordable homes.

The housing crisis is a major concern for Polly Neate, Chief Executive of Shelter and a keynote speaker at the conference, whose ideas I found inspiring.

During her speech she pointed out the lack of affordable housing is affecting people in all stages of their lives, both young and old.

She spoke with passion about recommendations from Shelter's social housing commission.

The commission has highlighted that if the government committed to a 20-year cycle of building 3.1 million more social homes then these could be paid for by housing benefit savings alone within 30 years, as a huge amount of housing benefit is currently paid to private landlords and for temporary accommodation.

The Shelter commission for social housing also proposes a stronger voice for tenants, with a new regulator to work across

the social and private renting sector in order to protect residents and enforce standards.

We participated in an assortment of workshops and talks which covered various issues within housing.

Some of our group attended the 'Women's Housing Forum', where the links between women's housing needs and gender inequality were discussed. They covered topics such as homeless women, housing for women in abusive relationships, lone parents and other vulnerable women in our society.

The 'Behavioural Insight' session looked at the idea of the 'nudge' to get people to engage and act via small incremental steps. The words we use can also have a great effect on our thinking.

Another insightful session was about 'Community Led Housing'. These are housing co-operatives which aims to give residents more control of their community. Co-operatives can be focused on specific groups such as older residents (we are a rapidly ageing society) and other groups who would benefit from living in co-operative communities. It is suggested they could go a long way in reducing the stigma attached to social housing.

Having been impressed by this initiative Community Led Housing will be on Newlon's Residents' Forum agenda this September and a connection was made with the person who ran the session.

The conference was galvanising as we gained deeper insight into many issues and brought back some inspirational ideas to explore further."

Jeannie Lowen is a Newlon resident and member of the Norton Folgate Community Group, which won Resident Group of the Year at the 2018 Newlon Star Awards.





Wendy and Sylvia making a difference on the Forum

by Jeannie Lowen

"I had the pleasure of chatting to fellow Newlon residents Wendy and Sylvia who are close friends and together the longest serving members of Newlon Residents' Forum.

This year the Forum is celebrating 20 years since its foundation in 1999. Before it was created Wendy and Sylvia were running a local group, along with their Housing Officer. Other residents would come with problems - usually repair issues - which they would help resolve.

The Residents' Forum brought together smaller local groups such as these into a larger network of Newlon residents.

In the beginning the focus was on repairs. Wendy noted that in the intervening years the Forum has evolved to encompass many more areas. The Forum's Chair also now serves on Newlon's Board and Forum members are consulted on many subjects such as procurement of services and performance figures.

It took time for the Forum to win the trust of the organisation and in the beginning there was a slight feeling of them and us. Nevertheless, the value of having the Forum has been proven over time.

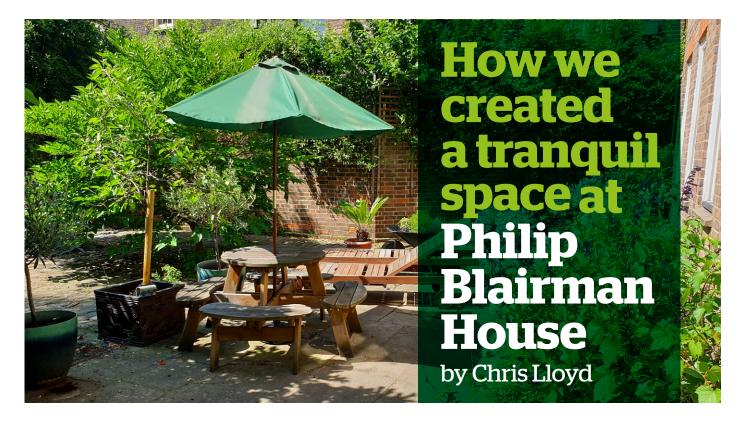
Having resident involvement can bring vital insight into the organisation. For instance, Sylvia pointed out that one of their members raised the importance of keeping pets which led Newlon to reconsider and then revise their pet policy.

The Forum gathers together a variety of people and Sylvia found that she became better at listening to and considering other people's points of view after joining it. This is an important skill, enabling different perspectives to have a fair hearing and consideration.

Newlon's Housing Director, Bill Henderson, has been pivotal in getting the Residents' Forum more involved within Newlon. Presently Wendy is in the early stages of reaching out to some new areas within the organisation. This will help other departments become more aware of the resources the Forum can offer and enable resident representatives to gain greater insight into how these departments work.

There is an obvious closeness between Wendy and Sylvia and it is no surprise that they have been long term friends, having met in 1985. They are lovely, entertaining company, regaling me with many outrageous tales from their lives, which unfortunately, they forbade me from telling! Wendy says she is writing a book, and based on hearing her tales, I expect it will be very humorous. I look forward to reading it one day."

Want to find out more about the work of the Forum? Go to www.newlon.org.uk/residents/getting-involved.



"Living in the heart of Spitalfields can be a very busy and noisy place and this was my motivation for turning an overgrown piece of land into a little sanctuary of peace and quiet.

In the summer of 2013 I approached our then Housing Officer, Hafizur, about the possibility of clearing the small overgrown courtyard area at the rear of Philip Blairman House. Newlon agreed to clear the area as part of adjacent work that needed to be carried out and the residents would then plant and maintain a future residents garden.

Over the past six years our small courtyard garden has grown into a quiet, tranquil little oasis. It's a great place for residents to relax, have some lunch or just sit in the perfect little suntrap. As I live in a relatively small block of 20 flats it also provides a great way to meet and talk to neighbours which can only be a good thing.

In addition to the Agapanthus, Hebes and Salvias, we also grow a surprising amount of fruit and vegetables including tomatoes, courgettes, rhubarb and even an apple tree.

Our communal garden is maintained solely by residents with some occasional funding from our residents' association. Of all the projects that the residents' association and I have been involved with the residents' garden is a constant source of joy."

Chris Lloyd is a Newlon resident. He is a member of the Norton Folgate Community Group, winner of Resident Group of the Year at the 2018 Newlon Star Awards.



Reviewing our policies

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

Starter tenancies

Our policy on starter tenancies was clarified to make it clearer about the requirement for a rent account to be a week in credit.

Succession

A new form will need to be completed when making an application for succession, to make the process more efficient.

Complaints

The policy was updated to ensure that there is consistency around how complaints made about Newlon staff are logged onto our systems and processed.



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.

Please note that a lodger is not the same as subletting, for which the rules are different. If you wish to sublet you should visit **www.newlon.org.uk/residents/home-owners/subletting** first to find out if you can.



We encourage and support residents to set up a Residents'
Association to act as a voice for their estate or area. These bring
people together to ensure that we are providing the standard
of service that we should be, and to make the most of their
community through projects and social groups.

We have advice for getting started in the Residents' Association handbook on our website, which includes all information you need to know as well as a draft code of conduct and constitution

Newlon may offer support to residents setting up a Residents' Association such as start-up funding, help towards running costs and training. You can download the handbook on our website or email getinvolved@newlon.org.uk.





for selling your Shared Ownership home

First impressions count

The first impression a potential buyer gets is when they look at photos of your home, not when they walk in the door. So make sure your home is at its very best when the valuer visits, as they will take photographs inside and out.

Declutter

Get rid of all the clutter filling your property. If you have turned a spare room into a storage space now is the time to turn it back into a room someone can sleep in. Make your home look as spacious as possible.

Repair and clean

Do any repairs needed, however minor - such as a dripping tap or loose handle - and organise a deep clean. If you have an outdoor area, remove any weeds. Make it look as new as possible.

Act like a salesperson

While your property is being advertised for sale you are essentially part of the sales team. Make sure potential buyers see the benefits of your home and be enthusiastic and helpful to them.

If you would like further information on selling your home, please email **resident.sales@newlon.org.uk**.

Events in your area



Pumpkin Plod Family Walk

When? 27th October
Where? Haven House Children's Hospice, IG8
Cost? Adults £11 / Children £7

Pumpkin Plod is the perfect afternoon activity for the whole family. A family adventure trail through a beautiful forest, with pumpkin fun, challenges and treats. This year has new themed activities and children will receive their very own Pumpkin Passport to complete as they undertake their journey around Pumpkin Planet. Families are encouraged to arrive from 12.30pm for an afternoon of pumpkin pastimes.

Tottenham Ploughman

When? 29th September **Where?** Lordship Rec, N17 **Cost?** Free

Tottenham Ploughman was first started in 2013 and celebrates local food and drink from in and around Tottenham, including cheese, beer and bread. Showcasing their wares will be Wildes Cheese. Redemption Brewery, Prestige Patisserie, Opera Ice Cream, Celtic Bakery, Living Under One Sun and more. This free event runs from 11am to 6pm.

tottenhamploughman.com

Apple Weekend

When? 5th & 6th October **Where?** Fenton House, NW3 **Cost?** Adults £10 / Children £5

An annual celebration of all things apple in Fenton's walled gardens and 300 year-old orchard. Taste old English varieties of apples and juice from their trees. Relax with a beverage or two, from delicious fresh juices and teas, to wine and cocktails. There will also be local produce, hot food and kids' activities like badge making, apple juicing and giant lawn games.

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

Apple Day

When? 13th October Where? Forty Hall Farm, EN1 Cost? Free

Celebrate apples, orchards and the arrival of autumn with lots of activities for all to enjoy at the annual family friendly Apple Fair. There will be apple tasting, apple bobbing, craft activities and more. The Forty Hall Farm Community Orchard volunteers will also be running their apple stall, and there will be plenty of other delicious local street food and produce available at the Farmers Market.

fortyhallfarm.org.uk

Big Fun Run

When? 20th October Where? Victoria Park, E9 Cost? Adults £16 / Children £14

A 5k untimed run in Victoria Park. Run for fitness, run for charity or just run for fun. There is no pressure, just some easy moves and lots of laughs. It is all about getting involved, having fun and enjoying the whole experience of the day. All ages welcome. Make sure you book your place in advance.

bigfunrun.com/victoria-park

Tales from the Shed

When? Fridays & Saturdays **Where?** Chickenshed Theatre, N14 **Cost?** £6

This autumn you can enjoy weekly vibrant, interactive theatre shows which are perfect for young children. They are informal, lively and engaging as the performers and audience share the same space. Children are always encouraged to make a lot of noise to make the story happen. Every week they present different stories featuring much loved characters.

chickenshed.org.uk

Urban Food Fest

When? Every Saturday, 12pm - 12am Where? Euro Car Parks, E1 Cost? Free

Conveniently located near Shoreditch High Street station, the Urban Food Fest features over a dozen street food trucks and stalls which regularly change. Global gourmet street food is served alongside a bar with craft beers, cider, cocktails, plus live musicians and outdoor seating.

urbanfoodfest.com



Take a break at Nutley Edge

Are you looking for an affordable 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. 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.

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 up to eight.

Plus, new this year are two four-metre glamping tents kitted out with a double bed and two single camping mats with sleeping bags, as well as compostable toilet, shared kitchen area and individual fire pits.

There are good rates for Newlon residents.

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

Managing your contact preferences

We occasionally receive enquiries from residents who would prefer to be contacted by Newlon in a particular way but not in others. We only have a limited capability to manage contact preferences and these are set out below.

If you would prefer to be called to arrange appointments rather than emailed we can note this in our housing management database and try to call you in the first instance. If we can't reach you by phone we will usually also email you if we hold your email address.

We do not have the capability to opt you out of receiving emails or texts that go to groups of residents, such as everyone in a block. For example, if we need to update residents at a scheme about communal works, we will usually text everyone. This means that if we do not have your mobile number you will not receive this update.

We will shortly be adding functionality to our system so that if we do not have your mobile number you would automatically be emailed if we have your email address when we are sending a bulk text to residents. It is both easier and more cost effective for us to contact residents by text or email if we need to reach you personally or contact groups of residents. However, you can opt out of receiving messages from our Resident Services team about support with benefits or employment.

I here are some messages, such as changes to rent or notices for works, which we are required to send in hard copy and therefore will always post to you.

If you do not want to be contacted by us at all using either email or text you can ask us to delete your mobile number and email address from our records. However, in this instance there will be information that you may not receive as a result, such as updates on works.

Before deleting your details we will ask you to confirm that you are prepared to not receive some information and you understand that it may be harder for us to contact you to make appointments.

Please call our Service Centre or email **customerservice@newlon.org.uk** if you have any queries about your contact preferences.

Take a step to owning your home outright



Do you know that each time you staircase, the rent payable on the remaining equity of your property is reduced?

Buying extra shares in your Shared Ownership home is known as staircasing. It's your choice to do it, but by purchasing extra shares you benefit as the rental portion decreases. You can staircase up to 100%, at which point you will own your home outright and no longer pay rent.

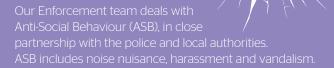
The best time to start thinking of staircasing is when you are due for a remortgage as it gives you the chance to shop for good interest rates and borrow more to purchase more shares

Always remember to check your lease to confirm the rules around staircasing where you live. You will also need to check with your mortgage lender whether you can borrow the amount you need to buy an additional share.

Staircasing is normally straightforward and you can complete it within eight weeks provided you have your mortgage offer and you stay in regular contact with your solicitor. When you staircase you will have to pay the valuation fee, your solicitors fees' and the cost of the extra share of your property. If you pay service charges please note your service charge payments is not affected by staircasing.

To find out more go to www.newlon.org.uk/residents/homeowners/staircasing, call 020 7613 7480 or email resident.sales@newlon.org.uk.

Problems with ASB?



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.

Do it online



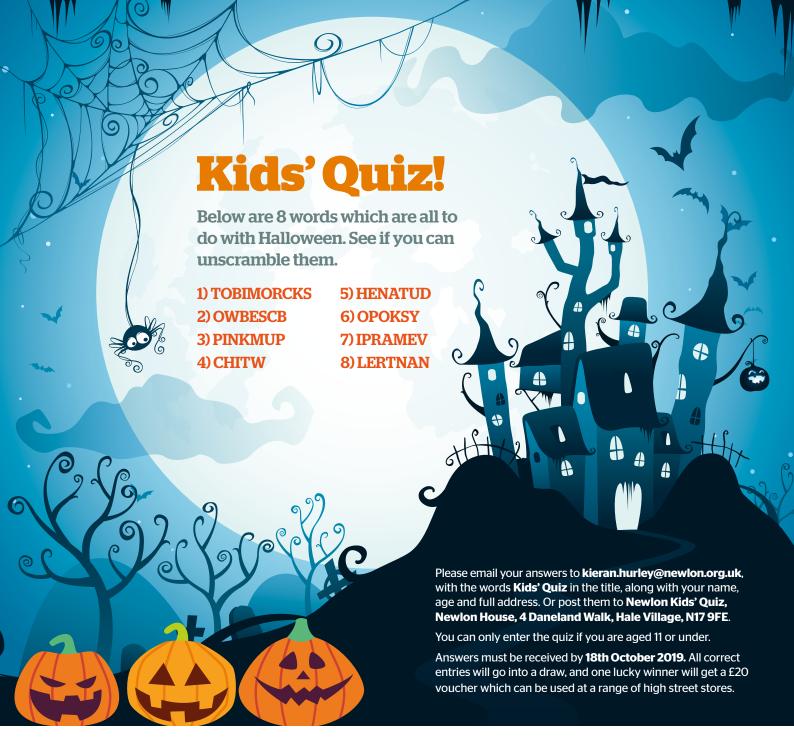
We are investing in developing more digital and self-service customer service options so residents can make service requests at times that suit them, or without needing to contact us. Here are some handy things you can already do online, 24/7:

Report repairs at www.newlon.org.uk/contact-us/repairs.

Browse a selection of common questions and answers from our website at www.newlon.org.uk/knowledge-base.

Pay rent or service charges using the allpay app or by text at www.newlon.org.uk/residents/paying-your-rent.

We are also making good progress in developing our new customer self-service portal to give you even more freedom to make changes, requests and view accounts online.



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 or require an alternative format please contact us on 020 7613 8091 or email newsletters@newlon.org.uk.