

Newlon News



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Welcome to Blossom and Lloyd

In this edition we say a big hello to Blossom Shakespeare and Lloyd Gale-Ward who have recently joined Newlon's Board as Resident Board members. You can find out a bit more about their first steps as Board members inside.

Christmas and New Year closure times

Our offices, including the Barnsbury Estate Office, will close at 2pm on Tuesday, 24th December and reopen on Thursday, 2nd January.

During this time our contractors will only provide emergency repairs. Emergencies include total electricity loss and major leaks. In these instances our contractors will 'make safe' and may be able to do a full repair provided extensive works are not needed. If additional works need to be approved we cannot do this until we reopen.

If you have an emergency repair please phone **020 7613 8080**, where a recorded message will direct you to the contractor providing emergency cover. Please note that we will not be able to reply to any text messages or emails over the closure period.



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at **@NewlonHT**

Residents' Forum



Lloyd Gale-Ward, 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:

- Geraldine Grant suggested that we discuss community led housing and we listened to a thought provoking presentation by Nic Bliss from the Confederation of Co-operative Housing.
- We heard the results from the consultation of members about updating our Constitution. There was a majority in favour of all proposals, such as limiting membership to four years and pairing new members with an existing one to support them while they find their feet on our group. These changes will strengthen the Forum so that it can continue to shape and influence Newlon on behalf of all residents. Next steps are to recruit some new members and we'll be inviting residents to join us at a recruitment event.
- Graham Watts, the Head of Resident Services, guided a discussion about how Newlon can improve their communications with residents. We all felt this could be improved and generated many ideas about how we thought this could be achieved. For example, we stressed the importance of guidance and training for all staff so they are consistent in their communications with us. Graham will be taking these back to Newlon and we look forward to hearing their response.
- We're looking forward to a combined Christmas party and a celebration of the Forum's 20th Anniversary later this year. Two of our current members were at the original meeting back in December 1999. We'll be inviting other residents and staff who have been involved with us in some way to help us to party.
- John Rymell, our performance representative, asked that staff should be more aware that the Forum reviews the performance statistics for key services.

Dangerous trees please report them

If you have a tree in sole use – in other words a tree in your garden or by your property which only you have access to – then it is your responsibility to ensure that it is maintained.

However, if you think a tree is in danger of falling or causing subsidence then please contact us via our Service Centre on **0207 6138080** to let us know, so we can offer advice and assistance.



Fire safety first please don't use barbeques on balconies

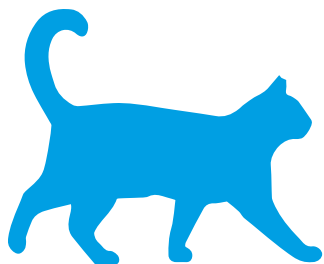
Following the tragedy at Grenfell Tower and updated safety advice from the Government and London Fire Brigade we want to reinforce that the use of barbeques is not permitted on balconies, shared or private, as this can increase the risk of fire.

In addition common areas, including walkways, should be kept free of all items such as bikes and pushchairs. Under the terms of your lease or tenancy agreement we reserve the right to remove such items.

You can also get information about fire and gas safety on our website at www.newlon.org.uk/residents/health-and-safety.

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.



Pet companions

Following a suggestion from our Residents' Forum, on an exceptional basis we will now consider applications for permission to keep companion cats or dogs. Supporting evidence to demonstrate why they are required will be needed. If you want to find out more about this please contact our Service Centre.



Succession

We have amended information relating to making an offer of alternative accommodation for those in adapted properties. We will now make an offer of alternative accommodation to match the household's housing needs.



Repairs

We have made it clearer that replacing lost or broken letter box keys or letter box locks are the responsibility of a tenant.



Our heating contractor has changed

On 1st July PH Jones officially took over from BSW to provide repairs for gas, hot water and heating services at all of our housing, except for the Barnsbury Estate where a separate contractor, Oakray, provides these services.

PH Jones are part of the British Gas Group and therefore we are confident that residents will benefit from the technology and distribution capabilities of the UK's leading heating provider.

If you have any questions about this change please get in touch with our Service Centre.

You can also get information and tips about gas safety on our website at www.newlon.org.uk/residents/health-and-safety.

Want to move home? Consider a mutual exchange and do a swap

As a Newlon resident if you want to move to another social housing home the best option is to consider a Mutual Exchange - where you swap homes with someone else who wants to move. An exchange is not limited to Newlon properties, as you can swap with social housing residents nationally, including those living in local authority homes.

We have our own mutual exchange board, which comes with your newsletter.

You could also consider **HomeSwapper**, the largest organisation for social housing residents wishing to move home through a mutual exchange, which has over 500,000 tenants registered.

Last year there were 27 successful swaps for Newlon residents who had registered for a mutual exchange.

Find out more at www.newlon.org.uk/residents/moving.

Hale Village wins at London in Bloom Awards

One of Newlon's largest developments, Hale Village in Tottenham, was recently awarded gold in the 2019 London in Bloom Awards. In addition it was overall winner in the Urban Community category as well as the 'Greener Streets, Better Lives' award – scoring maximum marks.

London in Bloom is about celebrating and recognising the passion Londoners have for greening our Capital city.

The key aims of the campaign include:

- Making Greater London a greener and more pleasant place to live and visit.
- Recognising the work of volunteers who support and care for many of our parks, squares, and green spaces, both large and small.
- Working to increase the biodiversity of Greater London
- Building stronger and more vibrant neighbourhoods through community gardening projects
- Developing and sharing best practice

Entries came from local authorities, community groups, friends of parks groups and schools across the region.

MAKE A STAND

Dealing with domestic abuse

Newlon signs up to 'Make a Stand' campaign

Social housing organisations house and employ millions of people across the UK, some of whom will suffer from domestic abuse. The true scale of the problem is difficult to determine because a large proportion goes unreported, but studies suggest millions of people across the country are affected every year.

Newlon has signed up to the Make a Stand pledge (www.cih.org/makeastand). The pledge is developed by the Chartered Institute of Housing in partnership with Women's Aid and the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance. It was created to encourage housing organisations to make a commitment to support people experiencing domestic abuse.

To comply with this we will ensure that all reports of domestic abuse are responded to within 48 hours, in a sensitive manner and in line with our Confidentiality Policy. We will only take action or share information with other agencies with the consent of the resident affected. We will also discreetly keep them informed about progress, including any updates on referrals.

For more information or to report any domestic abuse or seek help, please call **020 7613 8080**. Any calls you make will be kept confidential.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse and need more urgent assistance please contact the National Domestic Violence helpline on **0808 2000 247**.

If you are in immediate danger, please call the police on **999**.

Other contact information or resources can be found on the following websites:

www.womensaid.org.uk

www.hestia.org

[www.met.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/daa/
domestic-abuse/support-helplines](http://www.met.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/daa/domestic-abuse/support-helplines)





International Housing Group Study Trip 2019: Freiburg, Germany

by Jeannie Lowen

Imagine a town designed around children. This is what new Newlon Resident Board members Blossom Shakespeare and Lloyd Gale-Ward discovered when they were invited to attend The International Housing Group Study Trip. This year's research trip was to Freiburg in Germany. Freiburg is one of the greenest cities in the world, implementing ecologically sustainable housing in the redevelopment of the city.

The city is designed to provide a safe space for children to play and is not designed primarily for personal cars. Many of the streets are green and are more akin to an urban park than the usual city environment. The aim has been to provide a strong cross generational community, which is a pleasant environment for both young and old.

An integrated transportation system is at the heart of the design; with one-way streets, traffic calming, car sharing and good public transport. The shops are small local stores with no out of town shopping centres. Lloyd pointed out that there is a different mindset, with every area of the community having been considered. It is a cohesive design including schools, doctors and other community facilities.

Both Blossom and Lloyd were astounded to see small children walking home from school without adult supervision; confirming the safety of the community here. They remarked that community is very much the central element that allows this approach to function.

The homes are built to be passively heated. They are insulated to be warm in winter and cool in summer. Surprisingly this means the only heating comes from the environment such as body heat, lighting and cooking rather than a central heating system. Homes have been planned to meet the challenges of climate change, affordability, health and wellbeing.

Blossom and Lloyd are newly appointed to the Newlon Board. Blossom is a Newlon tenant and Lloyd a leaseholder with Newlon. Each bring their personal experiences to the Board. They both participate in various resident involvement forums and activities. Blossom sits on the Residents' Services Committee and is a member of the Complaints Panel and Residents' Forum. Lloyd is Chair of the Newlon Fusion Board, Chair of the Residents' Forum and a member of the Residents' Services Committee. These roles have given them greater insight into the operation of the housing services.

I asked them how they were finding their new positions on the Board. They both remarked that they had had a good induction with a lot of support. Because they are still settling in, they had found it was a bit of a full-time job, with a lot of detailed reports to read.

Certainly, the Freiburg study trip will furnish interesting ideas for further exploration back home. Having met Blossom and Lloyd I can say that they display a depth of thought and consideration which I believe will contribute much to their new roles on the Board.

Newlon's work placement programme shortlisted for the 2019 Guardian Public Service awards

We are proud to have been selected as finalists for the **Guardian Public Service Awards** in the Recruitment & HR category.

The award recognises the innovative work we do in helping residents into employment with Newlon.

Graham Watts, Newlon's Head of Resident Services, said: "I'm honoured that we've been recognised for this prestigious award. Over 17% of Newlon's staff are also our residents - and this award showcases their great achievements."

You can find out more about the work we do to support residents into employment- and see if we can help you - in the **Community Services** section of our website, or feel free to call us on **020 7033 4605**.

Let's talk about debt



by Graham Watts, Head of Resident Services.

Debt is a subject often avoided because of the shame some people feel. A case in point is the recent BBC programme 'Killed By My Debt'. In the programme, Jerome had parking tickets to pay - but as many people do, he ignored them. This heart-breaking programme showed how a relatively small debt can spiral out of control. It also showed the way in which people often avoid dealing with the issue of debt, until it becomes too late. So if you are in debt, here are some tools and tips that can help you.

Start by working out what you owe. If you don't know your starting point, you can't get it sorted. It is also crucial to look at your expenses. We recommend keeping a record of everything you pay for over the course of one month. If you buy a pint of milk with spare change, write it down. If you have a one-off purchase, add it in. A good online tool to help can be found at www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/tools/budget-planner.

At the end of the month, look at the results. Have you spent more than you earn? If so, don't panic - it is good to know the figures so you can tackle it.

First, try to reduce outgoings by shopping around to see if you can change to a cheaper phone contract or insurance provider, cancelling memberships for things you aren't using and taking advantage of the savings on bulk purchases in the supermarket. The next step is to look at ways of dealing with the debt.

Payday loans have very high rates of interest, so it is important to avoid these. If you do have one, get a debt consolidation plan together to reduce or tackle overall payments.

Credit cards and bank loans are also tough to manage. But you may sometimes be able negotiate to get some of the debt written off, depending on your circumstances. A debt advisor can help you do this. While Newlon is not registered to do this, we can provide support in accessing these services.

If you have outstanding utility bills then your energy company may agree to reduce or reschedule your bill if you agree to a payment plan and can stick to it.

Do you have County Court Judgements against you? If so, you should also speak with a debt advisor about how to work on a plan to clear these.

There are some excellent free services, some of which can renegotiate debt on your behalf which you can find on page 7.

The key point is you should not suffer in silence. Please reach out to any of the agencies below or speak with the Resident Services team in order to get the help you need.

You can contact the Resident Services team by emailing community.services@newlon.org.uk or calling 020 7033 4605.



Services to help with debt

Step Change Debt Charity

StepChange provide free impartial advice and provides a range of debt solutions and advice that can help tenants deal with their debts: www.stepchange.org.

Debt Free London - London's Debt Advice Partnership

Debt Free London works with tenants to prioritise bills and debts and help tenants to write letters and advocating on their behalf: www.debtfree.london.

Help with saving energy and utility costs

Cheaper utility deals



We recommend a social housing focussed utility company, Angelic Energy, which offers excellent rates for residents. For more information call free on **0800 169 0220** or visit www.angelicenergy.co.uk.

Make sure to quote 'NEWLON' in the originator code section, or when speaking to the agent.

To explore alternative options to Angelic Energy go to www.ofgem.gov.uk/consumers/household-gas-and-electricity-guide/how-switch-energy-supplier-and-shop-better-deal.

We've also launched a partnership with a programme called SHINE to provide energy saving advice and home visits, along with energy and water bill discounts, grants, and other services. Call them on **0300 555 0195** and quote 'NEWLON'.



Residents' Forum tour

by Liz Folaranmi

"On Saturday 26th October, Residents' Forum members had the opportunity to be part of a coach tour to visit a selection of Newlon homes.

It was very useful having a mixture of residents from different backgrounds as well as two Newlon Staff members. We were given a history of the homes we visited, which included the recently completed Pimento House at Goodman's Fields in Aldgate and much older homes in Cable Street in Shadwell.

The contrast of the different types of housing was very interesting and we got to learn about the development of new stock and the locations Newlon is able to develop in.

I have been a Newlon resident for 15 years, in the same home, so the tour gave me a good insight into the wide range of other housing Newlon provides, to meet a spectrum of ever changing needs.

I have also been employed by Newlon for seven years but my current role within the organisation doesn't require visits to residents' homes, so I have always relied heavily on information relayed to me by others. As a result I was really glad to have joined the tour, as visiting a variety of housing developments gave me more knowledge and insight which I can bring to my job.

I hope there are more of these tours going forward, and I would certainly encourage other residents to participate in them, in order to gain a better understanding of Newlon's homes and communities."

Barnsbury Estate news



Barnsbury Community Centre Jays Street, Islington, N1 0FE.

We run a wide range of programmes within the community centre – and we are always open to new ideas. Most activities are free and open to everyone in and around Barnsbury.

Please stop by the community centre, call us on **020 7033 4605** or email community.services@newlon.org.uk to find out more.

Barnsbury activity schedule

Monday	Time
Free exercise classes for women	10am – 11am
Historical and European Martial Arts	11:30am – 12:30pm
Free Tutors United - Maths and English Tuition	4pm – 6pm
Tuesday	Time
Free exercise classes for women	10am – 11am
Free coffee and craft workshops for women	11am – 12pm
Wednesday	Time
Zumbini	10am – 11am
Yoga (fee applies)	1pm – 2.15pm
Thursday	Time
Free exercise classes for women	5pm – 6pm
Generation Z Youth Programme	6pm – 8pm
Friday	Time
<i>Spaces free to book</i>	
Saturday	Time
General use	
Sunday	Time
Communalism - Philosophy (second Sunday of each month)	1pm - 3pm

Readers’ Panel help make service charges clearer

Some residents have previously told us that publications relating to our service charges can be a little difficult to understand. As a result we worked with our Readers’ Panel to find ways to improve them.

They looked at the frequently asked questions and glossary of terms and gave some suggestions, which we acted on.

This included making it clearer that our 2-ten timeframe meant a response within 2 working days and a full reply in 10, being more specific about how long you have to dispute charges and general improvements to the wording.

Both the publications were awarded a ‘produced with resident consultation’ two-tick kitemark, to illustrate the level of resident involvement.

Message received – how involved residents influenced our pets policy

Our policy on pets has been updated to allow residents, in exceptional cases, to have permission to keep a companion cat or dog.

After a stimulating discussion at the Forum, initiated by member Africa Alconchel-Guido, Newlon agreed to consider special cases where residents could have a companion cat or dog in their home. Residents can now apply for permission if they are able to show supporting evidence why they need a companion cat or dog and how it will have a positive impact on their disability or ill-health.

Events in your area



Camden Christmas Ice Rink

When? Until 9th Jan 2020

Where? North Yard, NW1

Cost? From £6

Camden Market's magical makeover sees the North Yard transformed into an illuminated North Pole. Expect an enchanting encounter with Santa and skate under the sparkle of antique chandeliers on North London's longest ice rink at 25 metres. Transform into your favourite figure skater for the semi-professionals out there or grip onto the sides for dear life for those just starting out.

www.camdenmarket.com

The Hackney Christmas Market

When? 14th - 15th December

Where? Bohemia Place Market, E8

Cost? Free

This free festive market will feature over 50 independent traders. Come along and enjoy Santa's grotto, a giant snow globe and Christmas trees. Get your hands on some artisan Christmas gifts and decorations. There is street food available, including for vegans, as well as mulled wine and craft beer. You can also enjoy live entertainment. Open from 11am - 6pm.

www.bohemiaplacemarket.com

Christmas at Columbia Road Flower Market

When? 18th December

Where? Columbia Road, E2

Cost? Free

The independent shops and artisan makers of one of London's most famous flower markets come together for a Christmas shopping evening with atmosphere. Everyone is welcome to this free festive market.

www.columbiaroad.info

London Pantomimers' present Cinderella

When? Until 18th December

Where? Bernie Grant Arts Centre, N15

Cost? From £12

Now in their 74th year, the award-winning London Pantomimers bring their annual Christmas pantomime to the Bernie Grant Arts Centre. Cinderella blends a classic, timeless tale with an evening of panto mayhem, brought to life by an original script and live band. The cast is made up exclusively of young people and adult leaders who are involved in the Scouts in North London. Proceeds go to support the mental health charity Mind.

www.berniegrantcentre.co.uk

Sliders Curling

When? Until 21st December

Where? Roof East, Stratford Car Park, E15

Cost? £10

The Winter curling spectacle has returned to Roof East. The roof is complete with a glowing neon theme. With drinks and food, the lane games take place beneath shelter and in warm tents. Over 18s only. Book in advance.

www.roofeast.com

Frost Fair Festival

When? 21st - 22nd December

Where? Museum of London Docklands, E14

Cost? Free drop-in

When the River Thames would freeze over, many years ago, huge celebrations called Frost Fairs were held on the ice. Come to the Museum of London for a weekend of festivities recreating the magic of these special festivals, with interactive games and workshops, enchanting performances and arts and crafts. Plus learn about winter traditions from around the world in this wintry festival for the whole family.

www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london-docklands

Christmas Tales

When? Until 30th Dec

Where? Rayne Theatre, N14

Cost? £10

The festive show, Christmas Tales, is back for another year. With a sprinkle of magical snowflakes, Tales from the Shed has been supersized to bring this colourful, energetic and vibrant show to the Rayne Theatre. With puppets, singing, dancing and some larger-than-life characters, Christmas Tales is an event for the whole family, young and old.

www.chickenshed.org.uk

Mystery shopping - rating our services

Mystery Shoppers are Newlon residents who we ask to measure how well we deliver our customer service through telephone calls or via email.

They assess how queries are handled, based on pre-written scripts we give them. Mystery Shoppers ask staff about topics ranging from fire safety, anti-social behaviour and tenancy issues. We then check if the staff member responded correctly and provided a response within our 2-ten timeframe.

Our recent Autumn mystery shop highlighted some improvements needed, including staff responsiveness, taking ownership and the need for clearer guidelines concerning the checking of group inboxes.

Mystery Shoppers noted some problems with the quality of our writing, noting poor grammar, spelling and punctuation. There were also some concerns over the choice of language used.

On a positive note the majority of our staff are answering queries correctly and the Mystery Shoppers were content with how their queries were handled and the information that they received. The Service Centre telephone responses in particular were of a high standard. Mystery Shoppers also commented on the friendliness of staff and how they listened attentively and sounded interested when dealing with their queries.

Overall, we will be promoting a culture of better staff responsiveness and there will be a refresher on the 2-ten standard.



New parking contractor

Following a suggestion last year from the Residents' Forum we piloted a potential new parking contractor, Parking Control Management (PCM), at Isobel Place in Haringey. We have been happy with the pilot and are now expanding their service over all our estates with parking restrictions.

They can report unauthorised parking immediately through a customised app and can also take offenders to court.



Contract management your help needed

As part of our plans for involving residents we want to work more closely with you to improve the services we provide by designing them together. We call this co-design and we've already had some successes with this approach, such as in choosing the new cleaning company. This new approach includes involving residents in monitoring how well our services are performing. Now we're looking to set up a procurement panel of residents, including those with skills and experience in:

- Day to day and communal repairs.
- Grounds maintenance and gardening.
- Gas and heating systems.

If you wish to apply your skills and experience to help us improve both your home and those of other residents then get in touch at getinvolved@newlon.org.uk.

The benefits of getting involved include meeting other residents and Newlon staff, understanding how Newlon works and being rewarded with Love2Shop vouchers.

Improving our cleaning services

After extensive resident consultation and involvement which included surveys, workshops and marking tender applications, we have selected a new cleaning company.

Smarter Services Limited will now be the only cleaning company across all our housing and are starting on 2nd January 2020.

Matt Phillips, Assistant Director of Housing Services, said:

“We have worked with Smarter Services for many years and they clean a number of our estates and blocks. We are pleased to be working with them on a wider scale as we believe they will give residents the quality they told us they wanted.”

The new cleaning contract has been influenced by much of the feedback residents gave us. It will be delivered at less cost for most homes, as this is something residents said was very important to them. To make sure it is done to the standards that we and residents expect, our Estates team will be doing their own checks in addition to those already carried out by the estate inspectors.

We would welcome any resident who wishes to take part in our monitoring meetings with the new cleaners. If you are interested in getting involved like this then please get in touch at getinvolved@newlon.org.uk.

A “meet your cleaners” session is being arranged at our head office to give residents the opportunity to ask questions about the new cleaners and we will let everyone know when it will happen.



Service Charge presentation to residents' groups a success

12 residents from seven local residents' groups recently attended a presentation about Service Charges given by Bill Henderson, Newlon's Housing Services Director. He covered Service Charge fundamentals and trends, arrangements for the Barnsbury Estate and upcoming procurement projects.

Bill also explained that we are actively encouraging residents to get involved in procurement, including setting up a Procurement Panel, which was recently agreed as part of our new resident involvement strategy. We will soon be recruiting for residents to get involved with this.

Bill also gave the latest position on cleaning and the savings that will be made through having one cleaning contractor - Smarter Services. The presentation was lively and residents had the opportunity to interact and ask questions. Overall the session was well received by residents groups.

If you have any queries relating to your service charges, please contact our Service Centre in the first instance on **020 7613 8080** or **e-mail customerservice@newlon.org.uk**.

For more information on how to get involved with the Procurement Panel, please keep an eye on our website in early 2020 and in future newsletters.



Kids' Quiz!

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

- 1) LISHEG
- 2) LABUEB
- 3) LANBLOWS

- 4) LITSEN
- 5) REPSNETS
- 6) REKSRACC

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 **3rd January 2020**. 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

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