

Newlon News



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Welcome to our Summer newsletter

We hope you and your families and friends are well as we continue to deal with the coronavirus outbreak.

Large numbers of our residents are key workers, including at the NHS, and our care and support partner Outward provides critical services to over 1,000 vulnerable adults. Our thanks go to all of you who are working so hard to support our communities and help people get through this difficult time.

In this edition you can find an update on how our services are currently running during the lockdown period, as well as feedback from our Residents' Forum.

We are also running a photography competition - which you can find out more about on the back of this newsletter.

Remember your ideas and thoughts on Newlon News are always welcome.

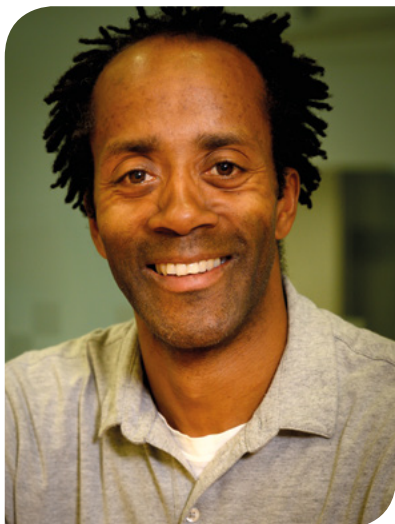
Just email us at newsletters@newlon.org.uk to get in touch.



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Residents' Forum

update from the Chair



Lloyd Gale-Ward, Chair

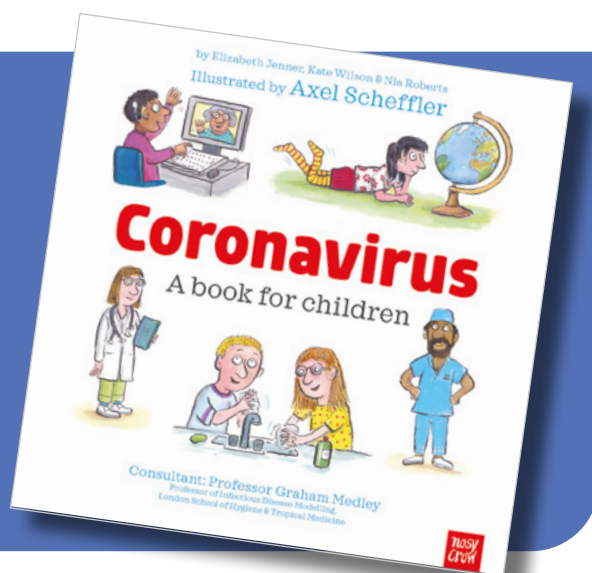
The Residents' Forum is a group of residents who meet every three months to look at Newlon's work and monitor performance.

- The recent Residents' Forum meeting was understandably dominated by Newlon's response to Covid-19 and how they were working hard to support us, their residents.
- Like many meetings of late, ours was held online using video conferencing technology - this was a first for the Forum and generally went well.
- We heard from the Head of Resident Services on the review of the repairs contract. The current supplier is Wates, and guidance was sought from Forum members on how residents may be involved in the upcoming review. It is likely the contract will be renewed and extended for another five years, so it is an ideal time to see how the contract can be improved, with a view to it providing a better service for residents.
- There was a special report on how Newlon's Resident Services team has supported vulnerable residents impacted by issues related to Covid-19. This includes providing key information, signposting and financial support to help mitigate the impact of the coronavirus on vulnerable households. The Forum was very impressed by the report and praised the hard work of the team.
- We learned how Newlon's management had responded to a recent Scrutiny Panel report on communication and repairs. The Forum is keen to ensure their responses feed into the renewal of the repairs contract, as the two are very closely linked.
- The Housing Services Director also gave an update on how services continue to be delivered during the coronavirus pandemic. It was impressive to hear that the vast majority of services have continued to be provided, with staff largely working from home. The support for households was also welcomed.
- If residents are experiencing financial difficulties they should make contact with Newlon in order to access help and support.

Coronavirus: A free book for children

Independent publishing company, Nosy Crow, is offering a free audiobook for children about the coronavirus, voiced by Paddington and Downton Abbey star Hugh Bonneville and illustrated by best-selling Gruffalo illustrator Axel Scheffler.

You can download it for free. Just go to <https://nosycrow.com>.



Queensland Road residents transform gardens

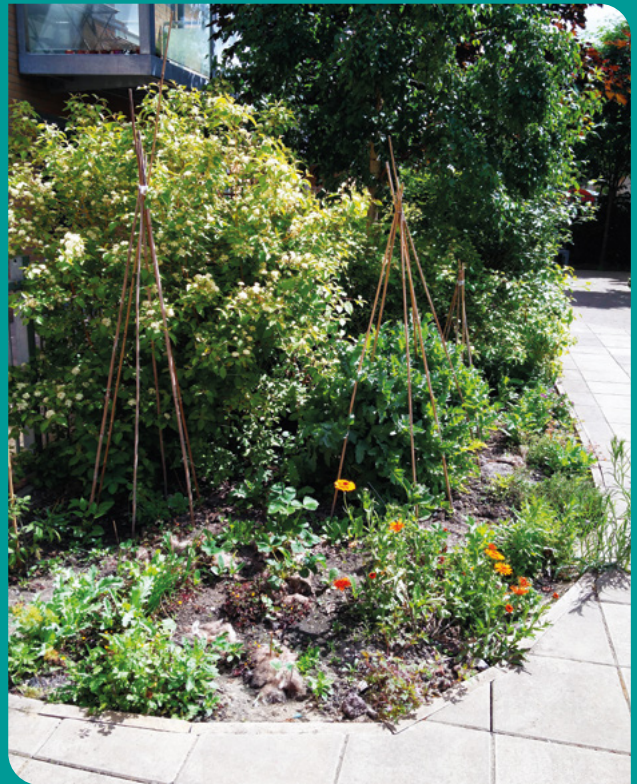
Residents at Queensland Road have been working hard in their communal garden, planting beans, tomatoes, beetroot, wild flowers and more.

The bees, butterflies and birds have flocked to the newly transformed space and neighbours have commented on how impressive it now looks.

As well as enjoying spending their time in the garden over the lockdown period, residents have told us about the sense of community it has created during this difficult time.

If you would like to get a residents' garden project running where you live, we may be able to offer financial assistance of up to £300, as well as other support.

Find out by emailing getinvolved@newlon.org.uk.



Don't suffer alone

focusing on kindness and mental health wellbeing

18th - 24th May was Mental Health Awareness Week. This year it came at a very appropriate time with so many of us facing isolation and being cut off from our normal social networks due to the lockdown.

The theme of the week was kindness - maintaining a focus on mental wellbeing and support for each other. You can find more about this at the Mental Health Foundation's website at www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-awareness-week.

Our Resident Services team are working hard to find ways to assist residents who are struggling due to isolation, such as signposting them to appropriate local advice and support. You can find more information about this at www.newlon.org.uk/resident-services-help.

If you have experienced any acts of kindness, or have helped to support your neighbours or the wider community during this difficult period, please let us know about it and we may cover it in our newsletter or online.

You can contact us at newsletters@newlon.org.uk.

Go digital

our online services

Newlon has a range of digital services designed to make things quick and simple for residents, which are available 24/7 You can:

- Explore our online database of common questions and answers.
- Pay your rent by text or through our allpay app.
- Report a repair online 24/7.
- Take part in online live chat to connect immediately to one of our Service Centre Advisors.

Go to www.newlon.org.uk/residents/do-it-online to find out more.



Our services an update

This section provides an update on the current position regarding services for each of the key areas we work in. This may be subject to change in line with government advice. Any changes will be communicated via our website.



Full repairs service to resume from 1st July

During June we will be moving from providing repairs for urgent requests to reintroducing a full repairs service. We are pleased to say that you can now request all repairs as normal.

There is a small backlog of outstanding non-urgent repairs and in the short term there may be slight delays in scheduling some appointments. There may also be some delays due to some parts being hard to get, although this situation is improving. Complex jobs that require multiple operatives are likely to be more difficult to organise than usual due to social distancing requirements. Appointments that involve home visits, such as inspections by surveyors, may also need to be handled differently with as much as possible being carried out remotely.

Where necessary we have managed to make specific safety arrangements to carry out emergency repairs if people have confirmed coronavirus symptoms, are self-isolating or shielding. This will continue to be the case for people in these circumstances.

In non-emergency instances, if you have any coronavirus symptoms or are self-isolating, we will need to wait until the quarantine period has been completed before carrying out repairs.

What we need you to do

To avoid putting you in danger our contractors have adopted safe working practices. When they visit you to carry out a repair

we will need your support with some simple safety measures. These include leaving internal doors open so that they can access spaces easily and minimise touching of surfaces and making sure you stay in another room to maintain social distance and reduce contact.

Let us know if you have coronavirus are self-isolating or shielding

To ensure everyone's safety please make sure you let us know if you or anyone else in your household has coronavirus symptoms, are self-isolating or shielding, when booking a repair or any kind of appointment with our staff or contractors.

If you have an emergency repair request we can usually arrange a safe way for it to be carried out.

Please keep reporting emergency and urgent repairs

Please continue to report any urgent or emergency repairs. We realise that residents may be concerned about allowing operatives into their homes at this time. All our contractors have safe operating procedures and if you have an urgent or emergency repair requirement it is likely to get worse or cause additional damage if you leave it.

Allow access for gas safety inspections

Please provide access for gas safety inspections. We are legally required to continue to carry out gas safety inspections and these are important for making sure residents can remain safe in their homes. Our contractors have procedures in place to make sure they can carry out these inspections safely.

Fire safety works



In a small number of our blocks we are carrying out remedial fire safety works as part of our ongoing programme following Government guidance issued after the Grenfell Tower fire. These works are continuing subject to new working practices and social distancing guidelines for contractors. We will contact you in advance if this affects your block.

There have been a small number of instances where residents have attempted to stop such works taking place. This is both dangerous and prevents important health and safety work being completed. If you have a concern about any works or you feel contractors are failing to follow social distancing, contact us on **020 7613 8080**.

Estate inspection and cleaning services

All services such as cleaning and health and safety inspections are continuing to be carried out. In some cases this may be at a slightly reduced level due to social distancing measures but on the whole services are running at close to normal levels.

Please continue to follow NHS guidance on personal hygiene. This is a very important part of maintaining safety in communal areas.



Resales, staircasing, remortgaging and lease extensions

If you own your property you are free to buy or sell it. However, we are adopting new practices to minimise the risk of coronavirus.

This will include doing more of the process online, vacating your current property while other people are shown around, ensuring your property is thoroughly cleaned before and after viewings, and the use of face masks and gloves.

If your home is being surveyed, you should ensure the surveyor has access to all the parts of the property they need to inspect and make efforts to minimise contact by staying in another room while they are inspecting your home.

If you have any further questions, or are interested in moving to a Newlon shared ownership home, email resident.sales@newlon.org.uk.

Resident Services team

how they can help

The Resident Services team are continuing to provide the majority of services as normal, including advice with employment support. Residents can continue to seek advice from our in-house welfare benefits adviser. The team is also signposting to local community support initiatives.

However, all our community halls remain closed for the immediate future.

The team are also coordinating our work to contact and liaise with our most vulnerable residents to make sure they have the support they need during this difficult time.

More detailed information about their ongoing work can be found on page 6.

Email community.services@newlon.org.uk or call 020 7033 4605 if you need to get in touch with a member of the team.

ASB and Enforcement

Our enforcement services are still running normally, ensuring that proper action is taken against noise nuisance, harassment and vandalism.

If you need to contact us for ASB matters please email asb@newlon.org.uk.

Income and rent

If you are experiencing hardship due to coronavirus, for example because your ability to work is affected, we will be as supportive as possible. Please contact us by emailing income@newlon.org.uk.

Universal credit should be available to assist residents in this instance and we may be able to signpost you to our in-house welfare benefits adviser for additional advice and support.

The Income team may contact people separately to provide advice on financial support where we become aware that residents are experiencing difficulties.

Lettings

We have introduced safe working practices to allow people to view any vacant homes and sign up virtually, and are also trailing virtual viewings.

In advance of any viewings advice will be given around new conditions, which will include limiting the number of people who can attend a viewing. We are managing most other requests remotely, with staff working from home.

During the period of lockdown we are also working closely with local authorities and domestic violence agencies to house those most in need, making the best use of our vacant properties and freeing much needed space in women's refuges.

To get in touch with the lettings team contact lettings@newlon.org.uk and see properties we have to rent at www.newlonlettings.org.uk.



Offices closed to the public

In line with government guidance we are maximising working from home. As a result unfortunately all of our offices will be closed to the public until further notice. Face to face appointments are also not available.

Further queries

If you have any other questions please contact our Service Centre by emailing customerservice@newlon.org.uk or calling 020 7613 8080.

How we've helped

supporting vulnerable residents during the crisis



Newlon's Resident Services team helps residents in precarious employment, households receiving welfare benefits as well as many of our most vulnerable residents in hardship. The coronavirus has pushed some of these people to the brink.

We have had to respond quickly to the crisis - putting in place mobile working processes, and providing crucial help to overcome some of the initial and medium term impact on residents impacted.

For the safety of our residents and staff we are not offering face to face meetings, training, groups or panel events. We have also closed our community centres. However, by adapting quickly and effectively we have been able to continue to provide all services remotely including:

- employment support
- welfare benefits advice
- resident engagement and involvement
- community well-being support
- enhanced hardship and emergency funding

We anticipated a huge impact on vulnerable households with low incomes, who are struggling to pay bills, so we expanded our Hardship and Tenant Emergency Funds. These funds support residents suffering from food or fuel poverty by providing grocery and utility vouchers, and also helping residents who may require essential furniture or kitchen items, such as a fridge or cooker. The goal is to keep residents in their homes. We are already seeing a five-fold increase in need, which we are responding to effectively.

We promoted all of our support services through a variety of communication channels, including social media, text and emails - in order to share information across our teams to best help vulnerable and isolated residents.

Crucially, we launched a well-being programme to provide signposting, reassurance, information and advice to residents who need it. This included calling hundreds of residents aged over 70.

The programme has been a huge success - our team found that through personal contact and conversations, residents feel supported. Staff were all moved by the genuine connection we made with our older residents, through this difficult time.

We provide clear information and links for residents for help and support, which you can find on our website at www.newlon.org.uk/resident-services-help.

Residents could also call our team directly on **0207 033 4605** or email community.services@newlon.org.uk.



687
residents

aged 70+ received a phone call from the team



£54k

in funding secured from contractors and partners for the Hardship and Tenant Emergency Funds



£15k

funds distributed between March and May



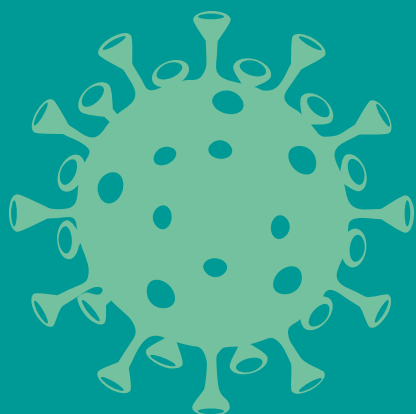
£20k

in welfare benefits income secured for residents



60
residents

registered for employment and training support in response to the impact of coronavirus on jobs.



Financial help for those affected by coronavirus

We appreciate that many of our residents will feel a financial impact from the coronavirus outbreak, so we have some questions and answers on our website at www.newlon.org.uk/financial-support-coronavirus, which may assist.

The information cannot cover every eventuality, but seeks to provide an overview of the support available if you are affected either financially, by loss or reduction of earnings, or through having to self-isolate.

Fire safety update

Fire safety investigations and remedial works

In the last newsletter we explained that following the Grenfell fire the Government issued a succession of advice notes and guidance for landlords relating to the fire safety of buildings. These require building owners to review the safety of external cladding and insulation, and internal and external fire stopping measures.

We have set up a special projects team and appointed specialists to carry out a programme of investigation works to meet these requirements. We are making good progress, prioritising investigations for buildings over 18 metres and those with external cladding, in line with Government advice. Where we are carrying out investigations we will notify residents before works commence and update them on the outcome as soon as we are able to. Once investigations are completed we may need to arrange a programme of works, and will communicate with residents in detail if so.

Selling or staircasing your home

We are aware of the difficulties some residents are experiencing selling or staircasing their home, because of the approach lenders are taking to the Government's advice notes. This has been less of a problem during the lockdown, but now the housing market is opening up again we are expecting these issues to continue.

Many lenders are asking for EWS1 – a form signed off by a specialist fire safety engineer to assess a building's claddings' fire safety compliance. This process is taking place for many thousands of buildings nationally and previously we had no real control over the lead time for receiving the forms.

This situation has improved slightly as we have been able to appoint our own engineers to carry out a programme of assessments specifically so that we can get EWS1 forms for all our buildings over 18 metres. We initially thought that this process could take at least two years, but are hoping we will have forms for all of our taller buildings before the end of 2020.

Please note that although many lenders are asking for an EWS1 as a requirement, if your building requires remedial fire safety works this may still impact on your ability to sell or staircase.

If you are considering selling your home it is a requirement of your lease that you inform us of your intention to do so, even if you are a 100% leaseholder. We recommend contacting us before you incur any costs or make any long-term plans. Our Resident Sales team will be able to provide support with the sales process, as well an indication based on people's recent experience as to whether you are likely to be able to sell or staircase in a particular building.

For any enquiries about selling or staircasing email
resident.sales@newlon.org.uk.

Option to sublet

We have also introduced a policy to allow people sublet if they want to move, but are struggling to sell or re-mortgage their home because of issues related to the Government's fire safety guidance. Applications can be at www.newlon.org.uk/residents/home-owners/subletting.

Further enquiries

More detailed information about our approach to fire safety can be found on our website at www.newlon.org.uk/fire-safety.

If you have any related enquiries please email
firesafety@newlon.org.uk.

If your query urgent call us on **020 7613 8080**, or in an emergency ring **999**.

Fire safety at home

Fire kills. So make sure you follow some simple rules to keep yourself safe.

- Test your smoke and heat alarms weekly. If they are not working check the batteries then contact us if needed.
- Ensure your electrical items are in good working order and you don't overuse or overload extension leads.
- Eliminate or reduce the use of candles. If you do use them avoid placing them on or near items which could burn, such as curtains
- Make sure everyone knows how to get out your property in case of fire. Familiarise yourself with your building fire strategy, which will be displayed on your building's notice board and in your property handbook.
- If your front door enters into a communal space ensure your door closer is working correctly.
- At night ensure you close all doors inside your home before going to bed – these provide additional fire protection in case of an emergency.
- Ensure you don't store anything on your balcony or decorate your balcony with combustible items which could catch fire, such as bamboo screens.

Improving wellbeing within our community spaces

Over the past year, nearly 3,000 residents have used our vibrant and award-winning community centres, particularly the Barnsbury Community Centre in Islington - whether it was for our adult exercise classes with Juliette, the Gen Z youth club, Tutors United classes, child care provision, arts programmes or a community group or private booking.

So much has changed in the past few months. It has been a challenging time for all of our residents with coronavirus impacting the health of our communities. But throughout the crisis, our Resident Services team has been ensuring that our centres have been managed carefully and that our wellbeing programmes are here for you where possible.

Prior to the wider spread of coronavirus and before the lockdown we made sure the Barnsbury Community Centre was extra clean and hand sanitisers were available to all visitors.

When the lockdown was announced in March, we emailed all hall hire clients and shut the centre for the safety of both staff and the public.



Although the centre is closed, we have monitored the building remotely. Staff are working from home, providing assistance to ensure the centre is safe and supporting the Samford House gardeners. We ordered compost, gardening tools and a greenhouse for the gardeners to make the most of their experience under the lockdown period.

We have also reached out to over 130 vulnerable Barnsbury residents with support and advice. In addition we continue to provide tuition for young children with our partner organisation, Tutors United.

We are reviewing guidelines for safe re-opening in the coming months ahead. In line with governments guidance we will make sure the centre is up to date with safety measures.

Although we don't know what the 'new normal' world will look like, or how community centres will be able to function, we are ensuring that our plans take into account all scenarios in order to offer a space that is supportive and safe for residents in the future.

If you want more information about our community centres contact the Resident Services team at community.services@newlon.org.uk.



Life under lockdown

By Jeannie Lowen, Newlon resident.

As the pandemic began to take hold nobody really knew what to expect, how dangerous it would be and the huge effect the virus would have on our lives. The onset of lockdown seemed fraught with panic. We were afraid for our loved ones, coming to terms with protecting the vulnerable and not being able to meet with family and friends.

Work was thrown into confusion, special events were cancelled and foreign excursions put on hold. During that chaotic first week one of my neighbours had a significant birthday event cancelled at the last minute. As a little gesture to cheer him up we went out to sing Happy Birthday under his window.

Shortly after the lockdown came into effect our building went into isolation due to possible Covid-19 infection. A couple of households had symptoms, fortunately all fairly mild. We informed Newlon, so they could help protect the cleaners and any others who may have been due to attend. The neighbours rallied round to do shopping for all individuals concerned.

I might have had it but had very mild symptoms. Although I wasn't that ill I still observed strict isolation - my main concern was not infecting anyone else. Nobody wants to be a link in a chain which could harm vulnerable people.

After a few weeks when everyone had recovered, we let Newlon know it was safe to return. As testing wasn't available then, none of us know if we actually had Covid-19.

Besides shopping for each other, we all wanted to contribute something positive. The Norton Folgate Community Group decided to provide funds towards an appeal for NHS and Care Homes PPE on behalf of the residents here.

Personally, I've been finding it hard to maintain a routine during all this disruption. I'm realising how important it is to have some structure to the day. I'm sure I'm not alone in getting into some weird sleep patterns, whilst furiously scrolling in outrage through Twitter! One thing I do know is it helps to try and achieve something each day, no matter how small.

I have been doing mindfulness meditations using an app on my phone as this helps me focus and clears my head. Back in the pre-pandemic days I had been attending a pilates class. I am trying to keep up the exercise routine but it's so much harder on your own. I'm so looking forward to getting back to the class, when it can resume.

As everything stalled, it became much less stressful here. The building developments ceased, traffic disappeared and we experienced clean air and a calmer atmosphere - peace. Bird song, flowers and nature provided a positive counterpoint to the upheaval.

I'm very lucky to have a friendly community and a communal garden. We have been able to have socially distanced chats there, which really helps. However, some people are finding the isolation very hard. Neighbours have lost loved ones to the virus and many are unsure about work and the future. Such difficult times we are in.





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.

Clapton Square

Previously in our series on the lesser known history of the areas where Newlon provides housing we have looked at the Mother's Hospital site, which was later redeveloped for affordable and supported housing as Mother's Square, and the Millfields and lower Clapton area.

Situated between these two areas is Clapton Square, a designated conservation area. Two sides of the square are lined with tall Georgian terraced houses. Newlon owns a pair of these houses, which were fully restored and converted to provide high quality supported housing for older people in housing need in 2012.

The square was originally laid out in 1816 as an upmarket residential square in the fields of the manor of Hackney and was intended to be homes for senior merchants, officers and financial brokers.

It has boasted many eminent residents. One famous visitor was Russian revolutionary, Lenin, who came to see his friend Theodore Rothstein when he lived in the Square in 1905.

Eminent scientist Joseph Priestley, who has been credited with the discovery of oxygen, lived in a house in the passage adjoining the square after a mob – opposed to his support for the French Revolution – had hounded him out of his house and laboratory in Birmingham.

Another curious fact is that Thomas Briggs, the first person to be murdered on a railway train in 1864, lived at 5 Clapton Square.

The east side of the square was destroyed by the blitz during World War II and later extensively rebuilt.

The Clapton Square conservation area was designated in 1969 and extended in 1991 and 2000. It is dominated by St. John's Church, built from 1792-97 and St. John's Gardens, together with the terraces of listed buildings lining the square.

Neighbouring Sutton Place is also part of the conservation area, containing well preserved listed buildings dating from the late eighteenth century as well as Sutton House, a preserved Tudor Manor House, owned and managed by the National Trust.

An interesting fact relating to Newlon's housing in the local area is that one of our blocks in Laura Place was formerly a Salvation Army knitting home. In the late Victorian period the Salvation Army were working across the East End supporting people in poverty. One activity included setting up knitting homes in Clapton, where vulnerable young women were taken in and taught knitting as a trade so that they would be able to support themselves. Most of the girls came from very vulnerable situations and many were in their early teens when they entered the homes.



If you are interested in finding out more about this fascinating part of London, which has fluctuated between periods of fashionable wealth and extreme deprivation, one interesting resource is the Hackney Society's historic walks map which provides an annotated route from Clapton Pond to Clapton Square. It can be found at www.hackneysociety.org/documents/From_Clapton_Pond_to_Clapton_Square.pdf.



Photography competition

share your lockdown snaps



We want to find out about how our residents have been getting through lockdown. So we are running a photography competition to document this time.

Your photos could be anything from people where you live clapping for the NHS, your favourite exercise routine, experiences of home schooling, garden projects, a favourite walk or someone who has helped you during the lockdown period.

There are two categories - over 18s and under 18s.

We are giving a £50 voucher of your choice to the winner and a £30 voucher to the runner-up in each category.

Please email your photos to newsletters@newlon.org.uk.

Renowned photographer and author Mark Crick will judge the entries.

The deadline for emailing them in is **Friday 17th July**.

We will display the winners and a selection of the most interesting photos we receive in the newsletter and on our website.

Rules

- Photos must be your own work.
- Do not send hard copies of your photos.
- If you want to send a file over 10 megabytes please contact us.
- Please do not send any inappropriate or obscene images.
- You should have the permission of anyone directly photographed or who is the subject of a photo to use their image.

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

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