

Newlon News



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Welcome to the autumn edition of Newlon News

Inside you can find an update on services as we gradually return to normal following the lockdown period, an update from our Residents' Forum Chair and more.

Please note that our Head Office continues to remain closed to visitors in line with Covid-secure working practices. We will update you as soon as there are any changes to arrangements. We appreciate your patience.

The Residents' Review - our annual report for residents about our performance in the last year - has also been sent to you with this newsletter.

If you have any ideas or suggestions for including in this newsletter please contact us by emailing newsletters@newlon.org.uk.



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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.

It has been a challenging year so far for Newlon, and we are undergoing some big changes.

Newlon's current Chair, Sarah Ebanja, will end her tenure this year and the process for appointing a new Chair is underway. I will join Newlon's Chief Executive and two current Board members on the selection panel for the new Chair. Then in December there will be a formal Board vote on the recommended candidate.

A number of high value resident service contracts will be retendered this year. I am pleased to report that the Resident Services team are actively seeking resident involvement in the shaping of these new contracts. It is great that Newlon is taking this approach as it means residents, including myself, have a greater say in the services we receive and pay for.

Our Chair recently made a statement on the Black Lives Matters movement to staff. Commenting on how the impact of the death of George Floyd would have hit people differently, and that it was important we express, discuss and share our feelings - and then to consider thoughtfully what can be done to eliminate racism and oppression in all guises.

Throughout the pandemic, which has hit us all hard, Newlon has continued to provide its services to its residents, largely with staff working remotely. While the impact of coronavirus has been a challenge, it has enabled teams to work in ways that prior to Covid-19 would have seemed impossible.

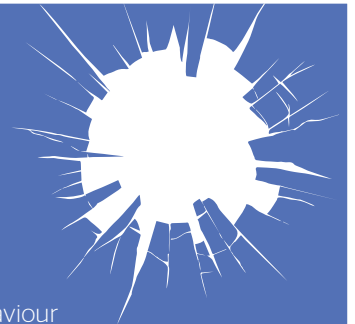
Newlon's senior management team are exploring new ways of working and innovations. This gives rise to the possibility of changing the way some services are delivered in the longer term, for the benefit of residents.

Dispose of bulk refuse properly

Bulky rubbish, such as unwanted furniture, will not be collected as part of regular refuse collections. Bulky items cost Newlon a lot of money to remove, which is rechargeable to residents. Contact your local council to find out how to dispose of bulk refuse properly.



Tackling ASB



Our Enforcement team deals with antisocial behaviour (ASB), in close partnership with the police and local authorities. ASB includes noise nuisance, harassment and vandalism.

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.

Update on **services**

Repairs

Following the peak of the lockdown the majority of services we provide, including the full range of repairs, have almost returned to normal.

There was a backlog of non-urgent repairs which we had recorded but not actioned during the height of the pandemic. We are progressing through these and they are reducing in number.

Thank you to all residents for your patience and understanding if you needed to wait for a non-urgent repair to be completed.

In a few instances we experienced problems obtaining parts for lift repairs as these are often sourced from Europe and there were some supply chain issues. This problem is also easing.

Where surveyor visits may be required to assess and verify repairs we are asking residents to use photographic evidence as far as possible to minimise any visits.

All of our staff and contractors have adopted Covid-secure working practices. If you have an appointment it is important that you let us know if you, or a member of your household, develop any coronavirus symptoms, or if anyone is quarantining, shielding or self-isolating.



Visiting our offices

Our Head Office at Tottenham Hale remains closed to the public. Please do not visit as we will not be able to see you. We will update residents as soon as the building is re-opened.

We are currently trialling a partial return to office based working but the majority of our staff continue to work from home and only a small proportion can be in the office at any one time to meet Covid-secure guidelines.

In the meantime if you need to contact us call **020 7613 8080** or use one of the dedicated email addresses you can find on our website at www.newlon.org.uk/contact-us.

The Barnsbury Estate office has now re-opened for a short period each week to deal with urgent enquiries from residents.

We are also re-opening our community halls with safety measures in place to minimise the number of people who can use them at any one time. If you are interested in using either of these facilities at Barnsbury or Limehouse please email community.services@newlon.org.uk or call **020 7033 4605**.

Lettings and mutual exchange

As our offices are closed, our Lettings team are carrying out work remotely and managing their cases in the new ways of working. We have had some staff changes too.

We have created video tours of some properties to enable virtual viewings. However, other viewings are being carried out in person. We are following strict procedures to minimise risk which you can read about on our website - newlonlettings.org.uk.

These include only permitting up to two adults to attend viewings, and no children, as well as asking people to minimise touching surfaces in the properties. Once a property is accepted we will arrange for the sign up to be done remotely and only meet in person to hand over the keys.

Where we normally visit properties to see residents, we will now try to offer alternatives to this wherever possible, such as carrying out telephone calls.

As mutual exchanges have been on hold for a long period, we have a backlog of applications to work through, so we would appreciate your patience while we do so. We do not know whether all other landlords are accepting mutual exchange applications yet, so we will need to clarify this once an application is received.



Gas and electrical safety checks



We have a legal obligation to carry out annual gas and electrical safety checks in residents' homes. If you have been contacted to make an appointment for one of these checks and have not replied because you are worried about coronavirus please do respond. These checks are vital for everyone's safety. Our contractors follow strict Covid-secure guidance and it is very important that being concerned by one possible danger does not increase another.

Getting ahead with Step Forward



Since April over 40 residents who are registered with the Newlon Step Forward employment programme have started or completed free accredited short courses online or through virtual classrooms. These help to develop knowledge and skills to improve prospects of finding work.

Each course normally costs between £500-£2,000 but are free for Newlon residents. You can also do as many courses as you like, provided you are eligible

We have had some good feedback from residents who have taken part in the Step Forward programme.

One resident, who is currently working at a primary school, recently completed an accredited online course called *Caring for Children and Young People*. She has also started another

course, *Understanding Autism*. She praised the courses as being very helpful.

Another resident took part in a virtual classroom course called *Creative Media Content and Production* and found it valuable, so they have applied to do another one - *Digital Marketing Fundamentals*.

A recently unemployed resident wanted to change careers. He completed free training as a security officer and was pleased to receive funding for his security badge, worth over £200.

If you would like more information about how you can access free courses such as these, and learn more about the Step Forward programme, please contact Paula at community.services@newlon.org.uk or on **020 7033 4605**.

How we handle complaints

We strive to provide the best possible service, but there are times where you feel we may have fallen short. As a result we have a formal complaints policy which we make sure we follow if someone decides to submit a complaint.

Our complaints process

Stage One

When you contact us to make a complaint it will be logged as a stage one complaint and our Service Resolution Team will deal with your enquiry and give you a full response within 10 working days. Where this deadline cannot be met due to the complexity of the case you will be advised when you will get a response.

Stage Two

If you are unhappy with the response you receive at stage one you should contact us to appeal within 28 days. Please state why you are unhappy with the stage one response, what issues remain outstanding and what you would like Newlon to do to resolve the matter. Your complaint will then be reviewed by a Complaints Panel which will include residents.

The Housing Ombudsman Service

If you are still not happy with our response after stage two you can contact the independent Housing Ombudsman Service. The Ombudsman has the power to look into complaints against us from our residents, but will only help once our complaints procedure has been followed.

Who can complain?

- Any Newlon resident.
- Anyone who has applied to be housed by Newlon.
- Anyone who pays a service charge.
- A group of residents who wish to complain about common issues (explicit consent should be obtained by named residents who are part of the group).

Exceptions

Some issues may not follow our normal complaints process. In these cases we may follow a different procedure instead, or you may be directed elsewhere. Such issues may include complaints subject to legal action, such as if there is an upcoming court hearing, and issues which occurred more than a year ago.

When handling complaints we will always ensure that your personal details are kept confidential.

To make a complaint please go to www.newlon.org.uk/residents/making-a-complaint.



This new century

By Jeannie Lowen, Newlon resident

One day during a rush hour lockdown, I emerged onto the sparsely occupied forecourt of Liverpool Street Station. Like nearly everyone else there I was clad in a pale blue face mask. It suddenly felt unreal, I was in a cinematic moment - a scene in some futuristic dystopian movie - but not an entertaining one. Even the colours here were desaturated tonal greys and blues. I looked at a passing commuter as he hurried past and, just from nowhere, I felt a momentary wave of sadness - maybe this was how our lives would be from now on. Drained of colour and everyone distant.

The world has changed utterly but I don't think we really know it yet - I realised I still expect things to return to normal, but actually they never will.

2020 is when the 21st Century, this new century, finally made itself felt.

Nobody knows how it will play out, it is impossible to plan a future. This is not the nuclear holocaust that haunted the vision of the future from my childhood. This is our own unique unfathomable future.

I now fill my time with tiny daily routines - I'm learning French on a phone app, I do a short guided meditation via another app and a twice weekly pilates session from memory. In the autumn I'll be doing this via Zoom, as the adult education centre I attended will not open until next year. I'm joining the online class to keep our tutor employed. I'm struggling to achieve much else.

Neighbours are busily decorating and reorganising their flats. I expect it may be to better accommodate their new work-home requirements. Some are also cocooning, enveloped in self-care while the world prepares to emerge transformed and renewed.

Midweek I cycled into the city. There were people wandering around but it was a strange scene. Many places are closed, a few offices barely open and many not. I wondered what will become of these big office blocks if they are no longer required.

There is a lag where the old world hasn't yet caught up with the new reality. I am surrounded by huge city building sites. These projects are stuck in a loop of the 20th century model. Maybe these large windowed high-rises will have a future as vertical farms. Once when I lived off the Commercial Road, I had a vision of a car-less future where the big roads had become fruit orchards and there was free healthy food for everyone. This strange idea doesn't seem so outrageous now!

This reminds me that along with my childhood fretting about nuclear Armageddon, I was strangely obsessed by crop rotation. I spent ages working on a system for work rotation. How a society could be restructured so activities could be shared fairly. Part-time flexible occupations with rotating activities throughout the year.

I mention these thoughts because I expect we will need to fundamentally rethink the way society operates. And although the transition will be difficult there is hopefully an opportunity for something better to arise.



Residents at the Barnsbury Centre garden, pre-Covid.

Centres continue to be at heart of the community

We have been working hard to maintain community wellbeing programmes despite the major impact of coronavirus.

These include online tutoring courses provided by our excellent partner, Tutors United, as well as nursery provision at our Lascar Wharf community centre where Global Kids Daycare provided care for children of key workers, even throughout the height of the lockdown.

On the Barnsbury Estate in Islington, we were forced to close the centre for the safety of community members, but we re-opened as soon as we were able to in August, having put in place measures to ensure the safety of those who attend.

Newlon has been a leader in this area, as we are one of the only housing associations to have opened its community centres.

A few of our regular hirers have returned – those who can provide activities that are safe and allow for social distancing. The nursery, Tiddley Tots, has also re-opened to support children and families.

Although we are not accepting any one-off bookings at present, we are still here for residents, ensuring that the front reception at Barnsbury and our offices are open on a limited basis in the mornings, five days a week.

We have also been supporting our vibrant community gardens in the past couple of months, both at Barnsbury and Samford House, where an active group of volunteer residents have been tilling the soil. The gardens that we create not only improve the look of the estate, but also provide fruit and vegetables for healthy eating, as well as a place to relax in a welcoming outdoor space.

Please contact us if you have any questions about the community centre or wellbeing activities, and any ideas for ways in which we can further support our residents.

You can email us at community.services@newlon.org.uk or call on 020 7033 4605.



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:

Deposits

The procedure for deposits was updated to make clear that we will not accept deposits for rented properties from third parties.

Pests

We have updated our pests policy to make it clearer what our responsibilities are depending on the type. For example, we will handle prevention measure for some pests, but not for bedbugs.



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 is another of our regular features exploring them.

Until relatively recently Spitalfields, Aldgate and the areas heading towards Docklands in inner East London were among the capital's most deprived districts. Impacted by industrial decline, bombing during World War 2 and slum clearance. Even as recently as the late 1980s and early 1990s parts of these areas were characterised by extreme dereliction.

Regeneration of the area first started with the renovation of warehouses in Wapping. As people have increasingly moved eastwards due to prices rising in the rest of London, these were among the first areas where housing costs increased dramatically. In recent years population growth has been strongest in East London and since the mid-2010s for the first time more Londoners live east of Tower Bridge than west. This trend is set to continue, with another 600,000 people predicted to settle in East London in the next 15 years.

We think it is vital that we can continue to provide new affordable housing, such as our recently completed homes at Goodman's Fields, in areas where property values have increased dramatically in recent years. Situated adjacent to the City of London in Aldgate and only a few minutes' walk from Tower Bridge we have provided 171 homes here in a mix of affordable tenures as part of this major local regeneration by Berkeley Homes. The most expensive penthouse homes in the private parts of the development by Berkeley have stunning views over London and sold for around £5 million. A far cry from the poverty that characterised this area for much of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

The site has a fascinating history, dating as far back as 1293 when a house of minoresses (nuns), which gave its name to the nearby road Minories, was set up in Aldgate. The nuns ran a farm which was initially tenanted and eventually sold to Roland Goodman. His son inherited the site and let the ground out for grazing horses, giving the name to the area. From the 16th century, the open ground was divided into garden plots. It was bought by Sir John Leman, Lord Mayor of London, whose great-nephew William Leman laid out four streets, named after relatives. By the 18th century the area had acquired a reputation for wild behaviour and in 1737 there was a shootout in Goodman's Fields involving the highwaymen Dick Turpin and 'Captain' Tom King.

From this time on the previously fashionable area became poorer and was encroached upon by warehouses and subdivided by railways. The area suffered major damage in the Blitz and coupled with the decline of the nearby docks came to be characterised by mass dereliction by the early 1980s, despite its proximity to the City of London.

In a fascinating example of the way that London is regenerated and reinvented it has now come full circle as one of the capital's most expensive and desirable places to live. We are proud that through developments like Goodman's Fields we can continue to provide the affordable homes that local people need in areas with really high property prices.

Take a break at Nutley Edge



If you are after a quiet countryside retreat then you should consider Nutley Edge Cottages.

Nutley Edge belongs to Outward, a charity that supports vulnerable people in north and east London. All profits they make go to providing better care and support services. So your stay will benefit 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 a number of cottages, including a 17th century Old Farmhouse, which sleeps up to eight.

In addition there are glamping tents kitted out with a double bed and two single camping mats with sleeping bags, with access to compostable toilets and individual fire pits.

There are good rates for Newlon residents.

Measures have been put in place to ensure Covid-secure guidelines are followed.

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

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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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