

Newlon News



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A helping hand

We know that the Christmas period can feel very lonely, especially if you are vulnerable or on your own. Our Resident Services team is here for you, and working hard to support vulnerable residents to ensure they have additional help and access to support services available.

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

Christmas closure times

We will be closed for the festive period from 5pm on Thursday 24th December until Monday 4th January. During this time our contractors will only provide emergency repairs, which 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 we will not be able to reply to any text messages or emails over the closure period.



Follow us on Twitter
at [@NewlonHT](https://twitter.com/NewlonHT)

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 Residents' Forum met on Zoom for our October meeting. At the beginning members were given the opportunity to talk about their positive experiences since the previous meeting. It was great to hear and helped in some way to bring us closer - important at a time where many feel isolated.

The Head of Resident Services gave the Forum an update on how their team had progressed the important work of embedding resident involvement across the organisation. One of the key elements of this work is for staff, including those who may not normally come into contact with residents, to improve their understanding of Newlon residents. Staff took part in Zoom calls with residents, attended workshops and the Forum meeting. We hope these experiences help to improve staff empathy and enhance the way services are delivered.

We learnt that the Housing Ombudsman has published a new Complaint Handling Code. A key part of the code will be to ensure landlords like Newlon use feedback from complaints to improve how services are provided and speed up the time it takes to produce a response. It was good to hear Directors and senior managers are taking these changes seriously, and are working with residents to implement the new ways of working necessary to comply with the code.

Hundreds of residents responded to recent requests for feedback on Concierge and Grounds Maintenance contracts - thank you if you were one of those. The feedback received from residents will be used by Newlon to ensure these contracts are fit for purpose. This is a cost effective way of involving residents, and when a similar approach was used for the re-tendering of the cleaning contract over £500,000 was saved, with services showing improvement.

Please look out for future requests for feedback from Newlon - it's in our interest.

There was more good news as results of the Autumn Mystery Shopping report, which gives a glimpse into how staff are handling resident queries, showed a sizable improvement when compared with the Spring exercise. This is positive to hear as the majority of Newlon staff have been working from home.

Finally, we are pleased that the post of Senior Resident Involvement Officer has been filled. This role is key in leading in the delivery of many of the strategic activities that will benefit residents. Welcome aboard Emma!

Update on services

We are continuing to provide close to a full service in all areas. The latest information can be found at www.newlon.org.uk/residents/coronavirus-information-on-services.

In line with Government guidance our offices, including our Head Office at Tottenham Hale, remain closed to the public. Please do not turn up at

our offices as the majority of staff are working at home and it will not be possible for you to meet anyone.

Instead please contact us by calling **020 7613 8080** or emailing customerservice@newlon.org.uk.

For residents at the Barnsbury Estate, the Estate office is continuing to open two hours a day, Monday to Friday. Our specialist accommodation office at the Royal Free Hospital is also open for NHS residents based there.

If you are self-isolating because you have coronavirus or its symptoms, we will still carry out emergency

repairs if you let us know in advance. For non-urgent repairs we will wait until the isolation period is over.





step forward

Employment programme gets results

Last year, Newlon's Step Forward employment programme supported hundreds of residents into work and was shortlisted for three national awards, including the prestigious Guardian Public Service Awards.

This year it has continued to support residents into work, helping them adapt to the difficult and changing situation created by the coronavirus. Over the past nine months, we have registered over 130 residents and helped 70 residents re-train and gain new skills, helping them achieve employment in sustainable jobs ranging from administration to finance, including managerial positions.

In addition, we actively hire residents to work at Newlon. At present nearly 18% of our staff are Newlon residents, including many within the Service Centre. Owing to the success of this programme we are now working towards a goal of increasing the number of residents employed across Newlon to 21% by the end of the financial year.

If you want to learn more about the Step Forward programme contact Paula in the Resident Services team on **020 7033 4605** or email community.services@newlon.org.uk.



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of our staff are Newlon residents



Our goal is to increase the number of residents employed across Newlon to

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Resident Services team how they can help

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

Our community halls are currently only open on a limited basis for some specific COVID-secure activities. You can also contact us about future bookings.

We have also produced up to date guidance on financial support for those affected by coronavirus, which you can find at www.newlon.org.uk/financial-support-coronavirus. The information provides an overview of the type of support available if you are affected financially, including through loss of earnings.

You can find out the ways the team can help you at www.newlon.org.uk/resident-services-help. Alternatively you can get in touch by emailing community.services@newlon.org.uk or calling **020 7033 4605**.

Mystery Shoppers reveal their findings

Mystery Shoppers are Newlon residents who we ask to measure how well we deliver our customer service. They call or email us with queries based on pre-written scripts we give them, and assess how they are handled. Mystery Shoppers ask staff about topics including fire safety, antisocial behaviour and tenancy issues.

We check whether staff respond correctly and within our 2-ten timeframe. 2-ten is our customer service standard for dealing with enquiries, which requires staff to respond to queries within two working days and reply in full within ten.

Our recent Mystery Shopping exercise highlighted some positives as well as areas for improvement.

Mystery Shoppers reported positive interactions with our staff, particularly when calling the Service Centre, and had praise for how professional our Service Centre Advisors were. They told us that they all felt listened to and received clear and helpful answers to their queries.

We were pleased that 75% of responses exceeded or met the 2-ten standard, an increase of 8% compared to our previous exercise. We aim to maintain this positive trend.

However, even with this increase our responsiveness still needs improving across the organisation. To achieve this we will provide reminders to staff about our service standards, and continue to promote a culture where staff are expected to respond efficiently and effectively to enquiries.

Introducing Emma

managing our involvement strategy



We are pleased to announce that Emma Preston-Dunlop has joined us as our Senior Resident Involvement Officer within the Resident Services team.

She will be leading our work in response to the considerable changes we are seeing across the social housing sector. Some of these changes came about as a result of the Grenfell Tower tragedy and others have been set out in the recent Social Housing White Paper, including new regulatory requirements focusing on resident involvement and engagement.

One area Emma will be focusing on is the implementation of our three-year Resident Involvement Strategy which guides our work towards improving our resident engagement process. Our goal is to ensure that residents are consulted and involved in developing, selecting, monitoring and reviewing Newlon's services, in line with regulatory changes and sector trends.

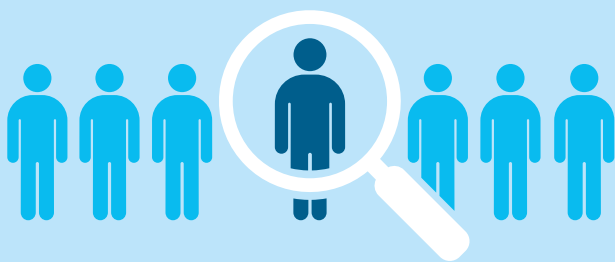
Emma is insightful, experienced, and an excellent communicator who was selected following a rigorous recruitment process involving both residents and staff.

We are looking forward to the positive contribution Emma can provide here at Newlon.

Interested in getting involved?

We are looking for residents who can help us to design and monitor upcoming contracts as part of our Procurement Panel. We are also looking for residents to take part in interview panels when we hire new staff.

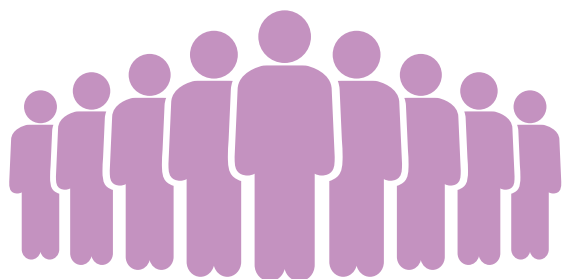
There may also be opportunities to join our Residents' Forum, Readers' Panel or other groups who help to improve our services.



Here are just a few reasons to get involved:

- You'll play a part in helping us improve how we look after residents' homes and have a greater say in your community.
- You'll have the opportunity to put into practice skills you have and gain experience to use if you are looking to develop your career.
- You'll meet other residents and make new friends.
- You'll be rewarded for some activities and be paid for out of pocket expenses.

If you would like to find out more you can contact us for an informal chat by calling **020 7613 8084** or emailing getinvolved@newlon.org.uk. You can also find out more on our website at www.newlon.org.uk/residents/getting-involved.



Intermediate Rent tenants - advice on moving

If you are an Intermediate Rent resident and want to move to another property, please bear in mind that we do not do transfers. Instead we advise checking our lettings website at www.newlonlettings.org.uk or the websites of other housing providers.

How residents help us recruit

We actively involve residents in the recruitment process for roles at Newlon. Having a resident on our interview panels can provide insight to help us choose the best candidate. Nine residents were recently involved in the recruitment of the new Chair of Newlon's Board, ensuring that residents' voices were heard in securing a key leadership position at the organisation.





Each and Other: Alone Together

By Jeannie Lowen, Newlon resident

The worst thing is the isolation; the worst thing in the isolation - me. Each day I am confronted with myself. Each day the puzzle of, what am I doing, what will I do... It is challenging to make plans for the unknowable future that lies ahead.

Like many I'm trying to find a vision of how to get through the coming challenges. There is hope on the horizon with positive news of a vaccine. Along with signs that we may begin to confront global warming and reassess how we proceed as a species. However, this will take time.

I have to remind myself that this moment of history is full of potential. Once we find our way out of the myriad coming upheavals. We as a global community can realign into something new, refreshed and transformed.

The scale is daunting as it's not just one's own personal life but it's everyone everywhere. However, there is strength in remembering we are not alone. We, as a community, are all experiencing this together and if we can be there for each other, that is how we will get through these testing times.

I know personally many are facing despair. In normal times we can fill our time with work, shopping and social activities. But these pauses can be a fruitful opportunity. A time to re-evaluate our lives, a time to deal with matters ignored; a time to heal.

When a crisis hits, I know from my own experience that issues such as debt can be terrifying. It can seem really difficult - but don't ignore problems. It really is worth talking and renegotiating repayments into something more manageable. So many of us are struggling but there is help and understanding out there.

In these difficult times we can feel lost and isolated, but do seek help - you are not alone. I have found that just asking for help can set one in a new direction and alleviates a lot of worry.

Look out for each other. It is so important to keep connected. If you are able, do check in with your neighbours. Try and be patient and compassionate with people. Just listening to someone who may be having a hard time can help them enormously. In the dark and cold of winter, and being under lockdown again, one can become very isolated and not get out. I've set myself the goal to try to get out for a daily walk and talk to someone, even briefly.

I know many are really struggling but eventually we will emerge from this situation. There is so much potential for a glorious future with the world remade anew. I'd like to believe there is a better world coming; it's just going to be a bit painful getting there.

If you do know anyone having serious issues with depression encourage them to contact their GP. The Samaritans also provide amazing support whatever you're going through, 24 hours a day 365 days a year on **116 123**. The call is free.

You can also contact Newlon's Resident Services team on **020 7033 4605** or email community.services@newlon.org.uk or go to www.newlon.org.uk/resident-services-help.

Procurement how your feedback helps

Thank you to those who took the time to respond to the Concierge, Grounds Maintenance and Barnsbury Services surveys. We sent these surveys to nearly 5,000 residents and had a 25% response rate, which is very positive.

We offered £100 to six lucky participants selected at random. Congratulations to our winners, who we have already contacted. We plan to use the data from the surveys to inform the upcoming contract tendering process and improve our services.

Social housing white paper

what does this mean for you?

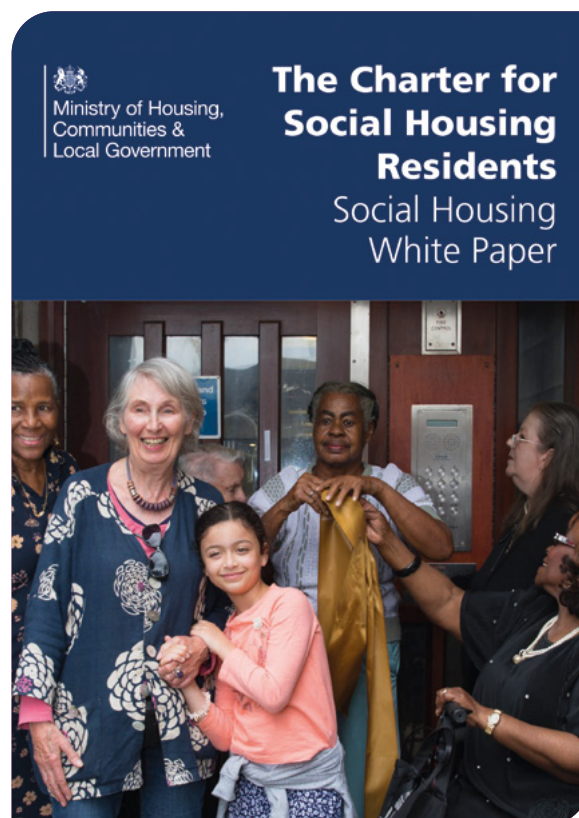
The government has published its long awaited social housing white paper. It establishes the following Charter, which sets out what every social housing resident should be able to expect.

- To be safe in your home. The government will work with industry and landlords to ensure every home is safe and secure.
- To know how your landlord is performing, including on repairs, complaints and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.
- To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly, with access to a strong Ombudsman who will give you swift and fair redress when needed.
- To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for tenants.
- To have your voice heard by your landlord, for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its Board. The government will provide help, if you want it, to give you the tools to ensure your landlord listens.
- To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in, with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.
- To be supported to take your first step to ownership, so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.

We will be communicating further on the recommendations in this white paper in the near future, and are committed to ensuring the voices of our residents are taken on board.

You can read the full white paper at

www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-charter-for-social-housing-residents-social-housing-white-paper.



Update on fire safety

There are two important pieces of legislation that are currently being progressed by the Government – the Fire Safety Bill and the Building Safety Bill.

These will introduce a new regulator for building safety, give residents a more direct voice in the safety of their buildings, and include new responsibilities for building owners.

Among the likely changes will be a requirement to check fire safety doors regularly and to review what is kept on balconies to make sure there are no flammable materials. As a result we may need access to your homes twice a year to check front doors.

We may also be required to look at what is being kept on balconies and ask people to remove or dispose of items.

We will update you further as the legislation progresses through Parliament.

Domestic violence don't suffer in silence

Sadly the festive season usually sees an upsurge in reports of domestic abuse. If you are a victim of domestic violence, or worried someone you know could be, it is vital you seek help.

You can report domestic abuse to us on **020 7613 8080**. All calls will be kept confidential.

If you need more urgent assistance contact the National Domestic Violence helpline on **0808 2000 247**. If you are in immediate danger, call the police on 999. Further information can be found at www.womensaid.org.uk and www.hestia.org.

We are signatories to the 'Make a Stand' pledge, which encourages action to tackle domestic abuse. Read more at www.cih.org/policy/make-a-stand.



A focus on complaints

The Housing Ombudsman Service – the independent regulator who has the power to look into complaints of dissatisfied residents – has launched a new code. This sets out best practice for handling complaints which landlords, such as Newlon, should follow.

You can read this at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords/complaint-handling-code.

In many ways what Newlon already does is good – we are open and transparent with our reporting, we have a dedicated Service Resolution Team to handle complaints, and we keep the number of stages in our procedure to a minimum.

We also know some complaints take too long for us to deal with at the final stage where we try to address concerns raised, if we have not managed to do so earlier in the process. We are going to introduce changes to resolve complaints quicker if they reach this stage.

Another area for improvement is in learning from complaints. No one makes complaints for the sake of it, and we know we can find out a lot about how our services can be improved from what goes wrong.

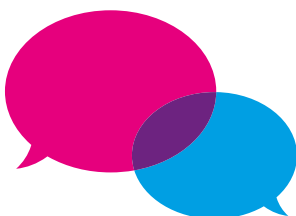
In learning lessons from our complaints, although we have picked up some common themes we need to make this more formal. As part of the learning process we have recently identified the following:

- We need better communications with residents about appointments which require more than one person.
- We need to improve how we manage empty properties.
- When issues are raised around ventilation systems, we need to ensure it is clear which repairs and works can be done.
- We need to improve our approach to looking at vulnerability when we sign people up as new tenants.
- We need to look at how approvals to contractors' requests for extra work are handled and the impact this has on residents.

We are setting up a project group comprising of staff to review complaints, and will also be involving residents in this process.

The Ombudsman has also asked us to give greater publicity to their service as they want to offer support and guidance to residents – you can find out more about them at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk.

If you want to make a complaint about our services or read our complaints procedure then go to www.newlon.org.uk/residents/making-a-complaint.



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.



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:

Subletting

Our subletting policy was amended to permit homeowners to sublet if they want to move but are struggling to sell because of issues related to the Government's fire safety guidance.

Lettings policy

In assessing priority for who we let our Intermediate Rent homes to, we have expanded who qualifies as a Key Worker to include people working in health, social care, education, child care, food production, public safety, national security, and other roles essential to the delivery of the coronavirus response.



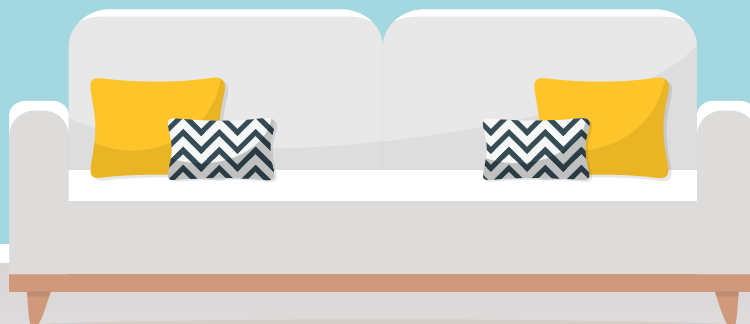
Insurance are you covered?

As the freeholder for your home Newlon provides buildings insurance which covers issues with the structure of the building. We do not provide insurance for the contents of your home including your personal possessions, furniture or other household items.

We therefore recommend that you take out a home contents insurance policy to cover you against risks such as theft, fire, vandalism and burst pipes.

There are schemes specially designed for social housing residents such as the My Home contents insurance scheme provided by Thistle - www.thistlemyhome.co.uk.

You can also use comparison sites or insurers' own websites to compare cover options and prices, find any offers available or tailor cover for your personal needs.



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
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