



Annual report to residents 2020-2021





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# Chief Executive's statement

It has been an unprecedented and challenging year mainly due to the impact of the pandemic.

As Chief Executive my overriding commitment has been to the safety and wellbeing of our residents and staff and to maintaining services to the highest level possible.

When the first lockdown came into effect we had to move overnight from being an entirely office based organisation to one where everyone worked from home. I am pleased to say that we were able to manage this transition.

Due to the technology we had already set up we were able to quickly adapt key services, such as our call centre, to allow our staff to answer enquiries from home. Increased use of digital and online services has also helped us change the way we work.

With the support of our key contractors we have been able to maintain near to normal service levels at most times. Many other housing associations moved to providing emergency only services for long periods – but we were always able to do more than this.

The wellbeing of residents has been at the heart of our thinking and over the last year we have made direct contact with 3,000 residents, including all of our most vulnerable households. We have also increased funding for our hardship and emergency funds which support residents in the most need.

Following the terrible tragedy of the Grenfell Fire, fire safety has been an area of intense scrutiny. The Government has issued successive guidelines which have required us to carry out investigations and where needed remedial works at many of our taller buildings.

We are doing our utmost to get through our programme of investigations and remedial works as quickly as we can. We realise that this is a real area of concern for a number of our leaseholders, who are worried about the value and safety of their homes, and in some instances are unable to move if they want to. In addition they could be facing the prospect of potentially picking up the costs for remedial works.

Although we cannot guarantee that no costs will be passed back we are committed to avoiding this. Unlike many other organisations we have not passed costs back for interim safety measures such as fire wardens and thermal imaging cameras.

We are making progress with our bids to the Government's Building Safety fund and where necessary we will progress with legal action against contractors to protect residents' interests. Some of this work is lengthy and complex, which I realise is frustrating, but I want to reassure you that we are prioritising all issues relating to fire safety and making steady progress, even if it may outwardly seem slow.

This report is slightly different to previous years as it reflects the seven areas of priority set out in the recent social housing White Paper, which provides a new framework for reporting on our performance and engaging with residents.

Some of the areas covered in the White Paper have been developed more than others and some are subject to further legislation or regulatory changes, but we have done our best to reflect our performance in each of the key areas in this report.

At the end of the report is a scorecard which sets out our performance against the draft satisfaction targets published in the White Paper. Where data is available we have indicated our performance against comparable providers.

We are very focused on improving our performance and learning from complaints and hope that things will improve during the year as we return to some level of normality.

If you have any comments you can contact us by emailing [residentsreview@newlon.org.uk](mailto:residentsreview@newlon.org.uk).



# Section 1 Being safe in your home

To keep residents safe in their homes we conduct ongoing programmes of safety inspections – carrying out any actions, repairs or upgrades where required.

These include fire risk assessments, regular gas, water, electrical and lift safety inspections and a programme of asbestos safety management.

We are required to report compliance in a number of these areas:

For 2020-2021 our performance was:

 **Gas safety 100%**

 **Electrical safety 97%**

 **Fire safety 100%**

 **Water safety 100%**

 **Lift safety 100%**

We have recently started measuring residents' satisfaction with the safety of their home as this is included in the draft performance measures set out in the White Paper. At year end this was 77%. As this is a new measure we are not yet able to compare this with other similar organisations.

## Importance of allowing access

We are required to show 100% compliance for gas and electrical safety checks. We were very slightly below this at year end, either because people were concerned about allowing access due to coronavirus or had to postpone appointments because they were isolating.

We understand that because of coronavirus residents may have concerns about allowing operatives into their home. However, if you receive a request to allow us access for gas or electrical safety checks please ensure you respond to the appointment request as these are critical for keeping you and residents living near you safe.

Our contractors follow COVID-secure practices and thousands of inspections have been successfully carried out since the start of the pandemic without any reported issues related to spreading coronavirus.

Enforcement action is always a last resort, but where residents repeatedly fail to allow access we may need to go down this route to keep people safe and meet our statutory requirements.

## Fire safety works programme

During the last year remedial fire safety works were completed at Rivers Apartments, which has been entirely re-clad with new low combustibility cladding and also at Fenton Street. Programmes of works are progressing at a number of buildings at Hale Village and at the Ashburton Triangle.

At the time of writing we are optimistic that we will be successful with our Building Safety Fund submissions and will soon be able to start onsite at a number of buildings.

If you have any questions or concerns about fire safety please e-mail [firesafety@newlon.org.uk](mailto:firesafety@newlon.org.uk) in the first instance.

## Taking safety seriously – preparing for the Building Safety and Fire Safety Acts

There are two major pieces of legislation due to pass into law in the near future. The Building Safety Act and the Fire Safety Act.

Although they could be subject to change it is likely that the main elements already publicised by the Government will come into force and we are preparing for these.

One main change is that we will need to have Building Safety Managers directly responsible for managing and overseeing all aspects of safety for groups of buildings. We are currently recruiting to these roles, which will contribute to an overall 10% increase in our staffing in the current year.

We will also need to create a process for active engagement with residents about safety decisions affecting their buildings and will be liaising with you about this over the coming year.

For residents who pay service charges this legislation will inevitably increase costs as additional services and inspections will need to be introduced. We will do our best to minimise these and we will work with residents on procurement and to communicate requirements of the Acts as they come into effect.



1. Rivers Apartments – with new cladding



# Section 2 Our performance

The draft satisfaction measures set out in the White Paper propose that housing associations report performance in the following areas:

- Keeping properties in good repair.
- Maintaining building safety.
- Effective handling of complaints.
- Respectful and helpful engagement.
- Responsible neighbourhood management.
- Overall satisfaction.

Our performance in each of these areas is included in the report card at the end of this report.

## Quick highlights

### New affordable homes



During the year we completed 165 new affordable homes and 62 as part of our award-winning joint venture with Vistry Group.



We owned or managed 8,187 homes as of March 31st 2021.



We are working on completing a further 900 new homes in the next five years, continuing our commitment to help meet the demand for affordable housing in north and east London.



During the year our development of new homes was equivalent to 2.9% of our stock, significantly higher than many other housing associations nationally or in London.

### Overall satisfaction

Overall satisfaction for residents who rent their Newlon home dropped slightly to 71%. Although disappointing given the impact of the pandemic we consider this is a reasonable result and are committed to improving satisfaction year on year.

Our Group care and support provider, Outward, once again achieved 100% good Care Quality Commission ratings, demonstrating the high standards of care and support they provide for Newlon residents.

94% of residents were satisfied with the housing services Outward provides.

### Services for residents

99% of communal areas met the required standard - an increase from 94% in the previous year.

93% of responsive repairs were completed right first time - a slight increase from the previous year.

89% of residents were satisfied with the handling of their complaint - an improvement from 84% in the previous year.

### New financial measures

The draft measures in the White Paper ask organisations to set out a number of new financial performance measures. These are detailed below:

### Executive remuneration compared to the size of organisation:

In 2020/2021 our Chief Executive earned £164,856.

This is difficult to compare directly to other organisations, although the social housing sector magazine Inside Housing publishes an annual survey on Chief Executive's salaries. This provides some grounds for comparison.

In terms of overall salary, pay per home managed and Newlon's turnover our Chief Executive's pay is generally slightly lower than comparable organisations, including many organisations outside London where wages are usually lower.

Overall Executive remuneration was £700,274. This includes the salary of the Chief Executive, all Newlon Directors and the Chief Executive of Outward/Group Director of Supported Housing and Care.

Newlon has a salary policy of benchmarking all salaries at the median point for the sector and reviews are carried out regularly on this basis. This is designed to ensure staff are fairly remunerated and that we can attract high quality people to work for us while not overpaying.

### More information on use of funds

- Group turnover increased by 10% to £100m from £91m.
- Operating costs were £61m, a £7m increase on the last year.
- Interest payments at £18m decreased by £1m compared with the previous year, while the average cost of borrowings decreased slightly to 3.4%.
- The Group continues to invest in existing stock and new affordable housing for rent and Shared Ownership. In the year £7m was invested in existing stock and £36m in new affordable housing.
- As a not-for-profit organisation we are required to make surpluses in order to cover the interest for investment in new affordable housing. Any surpluses are reinvested in new affordable homes or maintenance of existing stock.
- We invested an additional £6.8 million in interim fire safety measures and fire safety works in 2020/2021.

# Section 3 Complaints

We are committed to resolving complaints quickly and to residents' satisfaction and to reducing complaints and the reasons they occur.

We follow the Housing Ombudsman's updated 2020 code and our complaints process is fully compliant with the code.

We also follow best practice by regularly self-assessing against the Ombudsman's code. You can find more information online at [www.newlon.org.uk/residents/making-a-complaint](http://www.newlon.org.uk/residents/making-a-complaint).

During the year we streamlined our complaints process and stage 2 complaints are no longer reviewed by a residents' panel. This is because the time taken to arrange panels meant that it was taking too long to finalise responses.

Since changing the process we are meeting turnaround times and resolving complaints more quickly.

We are committed to learning from complaints and are working with residents who were on the complaints panel and running two cross-business project groups to understand the main areas of concern and how these can be addressed.



By year end 89% of complaints had been responded to within agreed timescales, a significant improvement over the year and better than many comparable organisations.



The number of stage 1 complaints was slightly lower than the previous year - 520 compared to 550. A higher proportion 162 compared to 129 escalated to stage 2.



98% of stage 1 complaints were responded to within target times an increase from just under 90% in the previous year.



Approximately 70% of stage 1 complaints relate to repairs. The second largest service area complained about is estate services, which includes communal repairs, cleaning and gardening.

The White Paper proposes new targets about complaints in relation to communal areas and antisocial behaviour by size of landlord. There is no direct way to compare this to other landlords at this stage, but for 2020-2021 we had 8,187 homes at year end and received 37 complaints about estate services which include communal areas and 21 about antisocial behaviour.

Examples of some of the key areas for improvement our work on learning from complaints has identified include:

- Where initial works have been carried out and have not been successful, target timescales for any new works and next stage completion need to be agreed and clearly communicated to residents.
- We need to develop a better system with our contractors for dealing with multiple visits which do not result in resolution of an issue.
- Our overall approach to roof and leaks repair management needs to be improved.
- We need to manage situations where we cannot gain access for works better. In particular we need to ensure that the 'no access' policy is followed by our contractors.
- Our process for updating residents on communal repairs needs to be improved.







## Section 4

# To be treated with respect backed by a strong regulator

This section in the White Paper is mainly about changes to regulation, including the way that housing associations are monitored to ensure that they are meeting core standards. Much of this work is yet to be finalised by the Government or the Regulator for Social Housing and some will require additional regulation.

It also envisages a new transparency standard and will include legislation to require housing associations to have a nominated person responsible for safety compliance.

Newlon is committed to transparency. Our key performance indicators are updated quarterly and published on our website at [www.newlon.org.uk/us/performance](http://www.newlon.org.uk/us/performance).

You can also find key information about our Board members, how we deal with complaints and our approach to diversity at [www.newlon.org.uk](http://www.newlon.org.uk).

One new area that the White Paper asks us to report on is the number of complaints relating to fairness or respect, relative to the size of the landlord.

Although we usually record complaints against service areas such as repairs, our analysis of the complaints received show that there were two complaints relating specifically to this area in the last year. One concerned reasonable adjustments for people with hearing impairments and the other related to whether we had fairly taken into consideration a person's mental health issues as a contributing factor for their rent arrears.

No other residents directly complained that Newlon treated them unfairly compared to other residents or that we failed to show respect as the main subject of their complaint.

6.

1. Supported housing residents and staff pot some balls
2. Gen Z - Barnsbury Youth Project
3. Fire safety works at Hale Village
4. Supported housing resident at Forest Glade
5. Nutley Edge activity break
6. Fire safety works at Hale Village



# Section 5

## To have your voice heard by your landlord

Our Resident Services team works to directly engage with residents. They organise a wide range of routes for residents to get involved with us including our Residents' Forum, scrutiny panels, mystery shoppers, communications panels, resident liaison officers, as well as formal and informal residents groups.

They also work to ensure residents are involved in all key procurement projects. In the last year this included taking part in procurement for concierge, gardening and cleaning contracts. Recently, Newlon residents involved in shaping key contracts have helped make savings of over £500,000.

During the year the Residents Services team directly engaged with 2,000 residents across a range of activities, including arranging 225 mystery shopping exercises to monitor aspects of our performance.

You can find information on how to get involved with us on our website at [www.newlon.org.uk/residents/getting-involved](http://www.newlon.org.uk/residents/getting-involved).



### New residents' 'Think Tank'

To respond to the White Paper's aims to improve engagement and tailor routes to getting involved to suit people's circumstances we have set up a new residents Think Tank.

200 residents have signed up for this quick and easy way to get involved.

It's a new approach to getting residents' views and hearing ideas about decisions that affect them, made up of a diverse group of residents from different boroughs and tenures.

There's no commitment, residents can choose how they use the Think Tank, by being very light touch, or more hands on.

This approach also reflects the 'Together with tenants' approach set out in the National Housing Federation's charter developed in response to the White Paper.

We report on engagement and involvement activities and opportunities in each quarterly newsletter for residents.

We also work with residents on routes to professional training and development for staff and residents such as courses run by the independent tenant engagement specialist Tpas.



1. Gen Z - Barnsbury Youth Project
2. Activity break at Nutley Edge
3. View of proposed community growing gardens at Barnsbury
4. BILI - women's fitness and wellbeing at the Barnsbury Community Centre
5. View from Hale Works at Hale Village
6. BILI - women's fitness and wellbeing at the Barnsbury Community Centre





## Section 6

# To have a good quality home to live in

### Meeting decent homes standards

At the end of last year out of our total stock three homes were judged not to meet decent homes standards.

Works are underway to carry out any required repairs or renovations to return these homes to the required standard.

### Energy efficiency

We are committed to providing energy efficient homes.

Many of our newer homes meet the highest standards for energy efficiency and in a number of cases power is supplied through district heating networks, which are a key part of the Government's plans for reducing carbon emissions.

The Barnsbury Estate represents around 8% of our total stock and a higher overall proportion of our least energy efficient homes. Therefore our work with residents to

transform the Estate will play a significant part in our energy efficiency strategy. This will provide residents with warmer, more energy efficient homes and contribute significantly to the carbon neutrality of our housing.

### Provision of green space

Access to green space is set out as an important consideration for social housing residents in the White Paper. This forms a key part of plans for the transformation of the Barnsbury Estate, where we will be providing additional green space and landscaping and unlocking unused green areas.

For any new developments access to communal space, private outdoor space and local green space are significant design considerations and part of the planning process.



## Supporting mental and physical health

Avoiding loneliness is another important aspect of the White Paper and has been especially significant during lockdown. In the last year we directly contacted 3,000 residents, including everyone on our vulnerability register.

As well as speaking with residents to assess their wellbeing we also signposted them to local support services and the services Newlon provides to support people in the most need.

During the year we provided welfare benefits advice for 120 residents and secured over £166,000 in backdated and ongoing housing and other welfare benefits.

We distributed £70,000 in hardship funding to 183 households and a further £15,000 in emergency funds to 194 households.

Services promoted by our Resident Services team include the award-winning BILI wellbeing and fitness programme for women run from the Barnsbury Community Centre. This is open to Barnsbury Estate residents and the wider local community.

We offer a range of services for Newlon residents at the Barnsbury Community Centre and at our community centre in Limehouse. You can find out more online at [www.newlon.org.uk/residents/resident-services](http://www.newlon.org.uk/residents/resident-services).

We also think that an important aspect of having a good quality home to live in is having a secure tenancy. One way of achieving this is to be securely employed and during the last year we supported 130 residents into employment or with employment advice.

## Supporting residents affected by ASB

Newlon takes antisocial behaviour (ASB) seriously. To improve the way we deal with enquiries and support residents experiencing ASB we set up a new tenancy compliance team during the year. We can now commit more resource and expertise to dealing with issues such as ASB, including being able to work more closely with local agencies and the police.

## Domestic violence

Newlon works with specialist agencies to provide housing for survivors of domestic violence. We are also committed to supporting people who are suffering domestic abuse. You can find information and advice online at [www.newlon.org.uk/us/domestic-abuse](http://www.newlon.org.uk/us/domestic-abuse).

# Section 7 A pathway to home ownership

The White Paper is committed to offering social housing tenants a route to home ownership. A number of ideas are under consideration, including the possibility that residents could buy a small share of their existing home and gradually increase this over time in a form of Shared Ownership.

This is quite a complex area and Newlon is waiting for further Government guidance and information about funding approaches before developing detailed plans and options.

We are an active provider of new Shared Ownership homes which could be an affordable option for many social housing tenants. You can find out more at <https://www.newlonliving.co.uk>.



1. Rivers Apartments - with new cladding
2. BILI - women's fitness and wellbeing at the Barnsbury Community Centre
3. Gen Z - Barnsbury Youth Project



## Annual report card - the year in numbers

Performance area	Mar-20	Target March 21	Mar-21	Target March 22	Performance comparison (where available) / notes
<b>Keeping properties in good repair</b>					
Decent Homes Standard compliance	100%	100%	100%	100%	Three homes did not meet Decent standards in 2020-2021. Programmes are underway to bring them back up to standard.
Responsive repairs completed right first time	93%	93%	93%	93%	
Satisfaction with repairs and maintenance service	62%	-	56%	-	London median - 72%
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall condition of your home?	72%	72%	69%	69%	
<b>Maintaining building safety</b>					
Gas safety	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Electrical safety	97%	100%	97%	100%	Result reflects transition to a shorter inspection period and some issues with access due to the pandemic.
Fire safety	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Water safety	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Lift safety	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Satisfaction with the health and safety of their home	-	-	77%	-	
<b>Effective handling of complaints</b>					
Percentage of complaints responded to within agreed timescale	89%	-	98%	-	
Satisfaction with complaints handling	84%	90%	89%	90%	London median - 63%
<b>Respectful and helpful engagement</b>					
Satisfaction that Newlon listens to your views and takes notice of them	60%	-	57%	-	London median - 65%
<b>Responsible neighbourhood management</b>					
Percentage of communal areas meeting the required standard	94%	96%	99%	98%	
Satisfaction with handling of antisocial behaviour	83%	80%	53%	80%	March 2021 result reflects change in survey methodology and reporting method.
<b>Overall satisfaction</b>					
Tenant overall satisfaction with the service their landlord provides	75%	76%	71%	71%	



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## **Newlon Housing Trust is a charitable housing association**

Chair: Aman Dalvi OBE Group Chief Executive: Mike Hinch

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