

# Resident Engagement Strategy 2023-26

Newlon Housing Trust



## Introduction from the resident co-producers

**“** We have been working hard to come up with working ideas that would fit residents’ needs. It is amazing that my voice as a resident is being heard and I can make a difference for my fellow residents, along with helping Newlon improve and make their services more accessible, effective and congruent with their residents.

I look forward in working with this team and monitoring and working with the resulting data.

**Dana**

**“** Being a resident and part of co-producing the Resident Engagement Strategy has been an amazing journey with no regrets. It’s been an absolutely great pleasure.

The diversity is top notch and I’m hoping that the organisation would put into perspective all that has been put in place and ensure it works for the better growth and cordial relationship between landlord and residents.

I look forward to being part of continuous monitoring.

**Peter**

**“** I am very impressed by the ideas and plans in the Resident Engagement Strategy. I think it will lead to more much needed interaction between the residents and Newlon, with more open dialogue on the important day to day issues that resident have.

Moving forward, hopefully it will lead to better services for residents in the long run.

**Daniel**

The pandemic saw organisations across the country shift to delivering services and communications using more digital methods.

Employees and businesses moved online, adapting to working from home, and customers were offered new ways of communicating.

Housing providers had to change the way in which they worked and communicated, with opportunities to innovate and adapt, and residents and landlords joined on the journey to making digital and hybrid methods work.

We have also seen fundamental changes to the housing sector through new regulation and guidance. The Social Housing White Paper, The Tenants’ Charter and the Social Housing (Regulation) Act require all housing providers to enhance how they engage with and respond to residents. There is a big focus on offering opportunities for scrutiny and co-creation of services. The priority for the housing sector to better engage is also reflected by the new Tenant satisfaction Measures introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing in April 2023.

# The vision for the next three years

This Resident Engagement Strategy 2023-26 was co-designed from the outset with residents, to signify a stronger partnership to help improve our services and satisfaction levels.

It will inform how Newlon will better engage, involve and listen to residents and will help us act upon their insight and to embed the value of the resident voice and lived experience in all areas of our work.



The strategy sets out new and enhanced ways of partnership and neighbourhood working to meet the diverse needs of our residents. In it, we strive to involve everyone more effectively in meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise decision making, service planning, policy and service delivery. It aims to strengthen community participation and engagement across all areas where our homes are located using a resident-first approach.

## Our vision for this strategy is to:

- Increase residents' confidence that their voices will be heard and scrutiny acknowledged.
- Engage with more residents much more effectively across Newlon as a whole, providing them with multiple accessible opportunities to share their feedback.
- Listen and be accountable to resident feedback, acting on the results, and feed back to residents on the changes that have been delivered, creating a strong feedback loop with measurable impact.
- Ensure residents have more influence over the way we deliver our service by promoting a range of easy to access channels to have resident voices heard and treating resident lived experience with the respect it deserves.
- Meet the regulatory standards (safety and quality, transparency, influence and accountability, neighbourhood and community and tenancy standards) and key legislation on engaging and listening to residents.
- Have residents regularly review the progress of the strategy, making changes as necessary.
- Improve the way we communicate with residents, listen and act on their preferences providing impactful services that better meet their needs and expectations.
- Increase satisfaction levels.
- Engage and enable the residents, who co-designed the strategy, to monitor and feedback during its lifecycle regarding its performance, making it resident-centred throughout.
- Benchmark this approach to strategy across the organisation.

# A strong foundation: what the last Resident Engagement Strategy achieved:

## Pre, during and post pandemic: capturing an extraordinary time

- We completed or progressed the majority of our previous strategy objectives, achieving an overall performance rating of 4.2/5.
- Newlon introduced the Think Tank – a group of residents from whom we can pull focus groups or consultative meetings on an ad-hoc basis, or as part of task and finish workshops.
- Newlon colleagues facilitated continued engagement throughout the pandemic by shifting involvement to digital meetings and providing training to support residents to engage.
- Newlon residents continued to Mystery Shop staff responsiveness and tone three times a year, incorporating data analysis from 92 residents presenting over 280 enquiries to proactively prepare for the introduction of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures. These TSMs form part of a new system developed by the Regulator of Social Housing to assess how well social housing landlords are doing at providing good quality homes and services.
- We supported 13 formal and informal residents' groups to be involved in local neighbourhood decision making.
- We facilitated training sessions on topics including The White Paper, Scrutiny, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Building Better Boards, Running a Residents' Association, Unconscious Bias in Recruitment, Co-production and Resident Involvement, Engaging residents in Service Improvements, and in report writing, minute taking, Chairing skills and facilitation.
- 1,192 residents, a 23% response rate, responded to surveys on frequency and design of cleaning and grounds maintenance contracts, concierge service levels and overall service satisfaction, resulting in upwards of £500,000 in cost savings.
- Facilitated residents attending the Housing Quality Network and Tpas annual conferences, and national conversations on cladding, fire safety, damp and mould, the role of the Ombudsman and involving residents in delivering Social Value.
- Involved residents in the recruitment of front facing staff, including two Directors and the Chair of the Board.
- Resident inspectors carried out 483 inspections of their neighbourhoods.
- Enrolled 390 residents onto the Step Forward Programme who received information, advice and guidance with training and/or employment support – 212 in training, 22 in unpaid work placements, 105 in employment.
- Delivered a range of focus groups to involve residents in reviewing complaints and repairs processes, Newlon Gold, our Service Standards, if we offer value for money, if we are easy to deal with, and how we deliver service charges.

# Embedded at the heart of Newlon

This Resident Engagement Strategy is part of our Corporate Plan 2022-25 and other key strategies, policies and procedures which include:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.
- Our service standards.
- Ten year vision and plan.
- Trust Newlon – the customer satisfaction improvement programme.
- Consultation procedure (to be written).
- Resident Involvement policy.
- Health and Safety project delivery plan.





# Resident priorities

We continue to call upon our Think Tank of over 200 involved residents to find out what resident engagement means to them, and we survey residents on an ongoing basis. Throughout the shaping of this document, a resident strategy forum helped co-create the content, and they will monitor it through its lifecycle and feedback on its progress. From this the following resident priorities emerged:

- Residents want to be involved in shaping, scrutinising and improving services.
- Residents want more consistent, higher quality communication from us and clarity around how we evidence the impact of each piece of work we do with residents, and mutual expectations.
- Residents want to be involved in reshaping the service standards we set for how we work with residents.
- Residents identified repairs, communication between teams and reply timescales as areas needing improvement.
- Residents told us they want meetings to be flexible, online and outside of working hours, as well as face to face, to allow them to take part and get involved in ways that suit their lifestyle and diversity.
- Building on the seven White Paper commitments this strategy concentrates on two:  
TPO5 – satisfaction that the Landlord Listens to Tenant Views and acts upon them and  
TPO6 – satisfaction that the Landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them.
- Satisfying the Together with Tenants Charter from the National Housing Federation.
- Satisfying the RSO Consumer Standards.



## Strategy themes

1.

Co-designing your  
services with us

2.

You say;  
we listen,  
we do

3.

Your voices  
amplified

4.

Your Resident  
Engagement  
Strategy

# 1. Co-designing your services with us

## We will achieve this by:

- Involving residents in existing processes such as recruitment, procurement and building/safety programmes.
- Involving resident in performance and policy review, and the creation of new strategies, policies and processes, removing barriers for staff engagement with residents and vice versa, and highlighting residents' role in accountability..
- Reforming existing relevant processes that are not designed to sufficiently involve residents.
- Looking at relevant funding streams and applications in partnership with residents.
- As part of procuring new contracts for resident facing work, ensure that residents are involved in designing and influencing the specification, providing insight into selection, and have an enduring voice across the lifetime of the contract.
- Being mindful of the diverse backgrounds of our residents and ensuring that there is equality of access to co-design opportunities.
- Making staff and residents aware of the differences between co-design, collaboration and consultation.





## 2. You say; we listen, we do

### We will achieve this by:

- Sharing feedback about resident recommended improvements – ‘You said; we did/listened’ and providing updates on our successes and lessons learnt across the organisation, improving transparency.
- Carrying out more consultations with residents to improve our communication and getting feedback that it is effective so that we are able respond in a timely manner and accurately evidence outputs.
- Designing and embedding a new approach to residents’ scrutiny, maximising fair and equitable access including induction and training, and widening participation. Supporting this scrutiny by collecting and providing relevant information.
- Raising awareness of resident engagement opportunities and benefits internally and externally.
- Ensuring residents’ communication preferences are acted on. Information that is provided should be easy to understand so residents can use our services, know what to expect from us and know how to hold us to account..
- Using the data and results from Mystery Shopping exercises to drive improvement and embed culture change.
- Improving the response to communal repairs raised through inspections and linking estate inspection with planned works.
- Proactively providing information to residents about legislative changes that affect them in jargon free formats in newsletters and on our website.
- Creating a Consultation procedure so that there is consistency across the organisation when asking residents for their input.
- Providing building and fire safety information to residents affected by cladding and fire works, setting out new policy and procedure for producing building safety cases, and developing a programme of consulting residents on aspects of Health and Safety, satisfying the requirements of the Building Safety Act.
- Sending a quarterly resident newsletter to all residents via post and email, highlighting ‘you say; we listen, we do’ activity.
- Developing the expectation of proactive resident contact for all services, increasing warmth, empathy, fairness, respect and trust.
- Offering mandatory training to resident facing staff in resident involvement skills and linking it to their development plans.

### 3. Your voices amplified

#### We will achieve this by:

- Ensuring residents have continued influence in Newlon's strategic decisions by maintaining resident member roles on Committees, Forums and the Board through regular recruitment, training and mentoring thereby assuring the Board that residents' views have been actively sought and considered as part of overarching decision-making.
- Making sure that the residents' voice is heard as a regular part of Board meetings and that data is shared at board level with an understanding of impact on residents.  
  
Scoping an effective scrutiny function that drives meaningful action and review and that is shared at Board.
- Maintaining the Think Tank membership above 200 and keeping membership informed of training opportunities and legislative updates..
- Creating a more robust resident engagement structure, which will include the creation of a consultation procedure, a training offer for staff linked to Personal Development Plans, a review of our service standards and a whole-Newlon approach to how resident involvement is captured and analysed across the organisation.
- Encouraging the creation of more local residents' associations and groups, and the upkeep and success of those already in existence by forming meaningful and effective feedback loops to help us to further understand residents' needs and, where necessary, take action to meet those needs in a fair and equitable way.
- Working in partnership with residents to introduce more opportunities for developing and improving services together, including involvement in resident facing staff recruitment, reviewing policy, influencing Social Value priorities and designing resident involvement into procurement decisions as well as incorporating feedback from resident involvement activities..
- Training residents to be resident inspectors and fire safety champions, as well as providing opportunities to enhance other skills sets relevant to resident engagement.
- Ensuring residents are informed of and can take part in national conversations about social housing and community investment in person and digitally via our corporate Tpas and Housing Quality Network membership. Training and participatory opportunities will be provided in a clear and timely manner, with a variety of options to increase accessibility and choice.
- Further embedding the use of the Think Tank across the organisation.
- Recognising and thanking residents for the valued contributions they make to their neighbourhoods and communities, and showcasing the positive effects these have.
- Pooling of all resident involvement work across the organisation, which should be celebrated and shared.
- Incorporating resident involvement training as part of induction for all new staff.
- Refreshing the role given to Mystery Shoppers and Resident Inspectors to keep them valid and to drive positive change.

## 4. Your Resident Engagement Strategy

### We will achieve this by:

- Involving residents in the co-design process of the strategy via a series of focus groups.
- Members of these strategy groups continuing to monitor and assess the successes and lessons learnt at regular intervals throughout the lifecycle of this strategy.
- Incorporating this information to make the strategy more robust.
- Ensuring that the strategy remains responsive and if necessary developing it further within its lifespan.
- Publishing this information to all residents via the newsletter and on the website.
- Recruiting new members to the strategy groups to maintain numbers if necessary.



# What does success look like and how will we measure it?

- We will deliver on strategic Resident Engagement performance measures throughout the strategy lifecycle in years one, two and three.
- These performance measures will not be self-awarded; they will be determined and assessed by the Resident Strategy Group who will meet at six monthly intervals.
- We will work in partnership with our stakeholders to share best practice.
- We will listen within our teams about involved residents and proactively request feedback to learn from other teams, sharing best practice across the organisation, with residents and with the Board. Where relevant, this feedback will be converted to actionable results that can be monitored.
- We will listen to resident feedback, which will show us where improvements should be made and we will share this widely and act on it.
- We will encourage more residents to be involved in resident engagement activities and talk to us through engagement measures and via the portal.
- We will produce an annual update on our successes and lessons learnt.
- These measures are designed to see improved satisfaction levels, better relationships with our residents, and over-deliver on the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, in particular TP05 - Satisfaction that the Landlord Listens to Tenant Views and acts upon them and TP06 - Satisfaction that the Landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them.



## How will we keep residents updated?

- Report progress updates to the Residents' Forum and Resident Services Committee and Board (two resident members), which meet quarterly.
- Report on resident engagement outcomes in our quarterly newsletter and via rent statement inserts.
- Provide annual feedback through the Annual Report.
- Collaborate with our stakeholders regarding their communications so that information is consistent.



# Resident Engagement Action Plan – key objectives

	What we'll do	Outcomes – what are we aiming for?
<b>1</b>	<b>Co-designing your services with us</b>	
<b>1A</b>	What – Involving residents in existing processes such as recruitment, procurement, policy review.	Think Tank utilised in four procurements annually – tied to a Key Performance Indicator for the Resident Involvement team. Experience and skillset for residents enhanced. Involve residents in the recruitment of new front facing staff. Review our employment policies: remove barriers for staff engagement with residents. Hybrid engagement tools, such as Teams, rolled out fully. Staff encouraged to increase their engagement skills and utilise opportunities made available to them e.g. Think Tank.
<b>1B</b>	How – reform existing Newlon processes to mandate residents being a part.	Involve residents in performance review e.g. Barnsbury cleaning contract. Think Tank utilised for feedback sessions. To feed into potential added value and development of new Key Performance Indicators. Outcome of feedback reported to Residents' Forum and on to Residents' Services Committee and Board.
<b>1C</b>	Who – Think Tank members, mystery shoppers.	Working together with contract managers to identify methods for integrating resident feedback. Resident views during lifetime of contracts fed into continuous improvement and integrated into the review and monitoring of key services. Reporting to the Residents' Forum. Maintain the Think Tank above 200 members. Add new strands of involvement to the Think Tank's activities. Innovate to invigorate.
<b>Supports</b>	Consumer Standard 'Transparency, Influence and Accountability' departmental targets.	Demonstrate top down support for resident involvement e.g. from the Board and Directors. Demonstrate across Directorates, avoiding siloed working. Regular key messages delivered to staff through multiple channels via Communications team. Improved understanding of the importance and benefits of involving residents.



What we'll do		Outcomes – what are we aiming for?
<b>2</b>	<b>You say; we listen</b>	
<b>2A</b>	What – demonstrating to all residents that we listen and act on their suggestions and experiences.	Residents monitoring the strategy state, this is about managing expectations and showing that we are listening and acting as far as is feasible. Bite size consumer and legislative information on the Newlon website. Surgery prior to the Residents' Forum. Design and embed new approach to Scrutiny.
<b>2B</b>	How – focussed brand in resident facing communications.	Co-develop a Consultation procedure which sets out organisational standards on how we will consult residents. Incorporate a Resident Involvement programme of training and skill enhancing opportunities for staff into the quarterly Learning and Development offer. Link training to appraisals, Personal Development Plans and Service Standards. Measure staff satisfaction. Co-develop a programme of training and skill enhancing opportunities for residents to build on their existing knowledge, skills and ability to engage. Measure resident satisfaction.
<b>2C</b>	Who – Resident Involvement team, Communications, Service Improvement amplifying across the business.	Review our Resident Involvement policy, making explicit the roles and responsibilities for staff delivering involvement. Incorporate a co-produced resident involvement competency, outlining an appropriate skills profile for staff. Policy reviewed (Think Tank approved) and promoted to staff through multiple channels. Clarity provided on the nature of resident involvement and staff responsibilities. Training incorporated via Learning and Development offer. Training offer Think Tank approved. Promote the message of the benefits of Resident Involvement, to both staff and residents in terms of outcomes.
<b>Supports</b>	Trust Newlon work stream Trusting Newlon; Tenant Satisfaction Measures.	Empathy; trust; warmth. Review the Constitution of strategic resident groups to ensure they support the current Resident Engagement strategy and Trust Newlon values.

	What we'll do	Outcomes - what are we aiming for?
<b>3</b>	<b>Your voices amplified</b>	
<b>3A</b>	What - ensuring success and longevity of our existing fora, associations and groupings. Capture and report all resident involvement activity across Newlon, not just those supported by the Resident Involvement team.	Maintain current resident membership of the Board to amplify the resident voice at that level. Hone the skills of others to step up when the time is right. Annually review the diversity of involved residents to see that they reflect our residents. Work with other departments within Newlon to capture, report and share data accurately. Forming meaningful and effective feedback loops with/ for Residents' Associations and groups.
<b>3B</b>	How - streamline and modernise how residents can access these groups. Recruit new and diverse voices to join.	Expand the use of digital consultations to residents. Offline and online promotion of consultation and collection of data so that residents, irrespective of their digital literacy or ownership of digital devices, can take part. Feedback results and how they were used to residents. Expand the collection of real time feedback, as currently employed in our repairs satisfaction app, to other services and teams. Monitor and maintain this feedback. Update residents in a number of ways, including the portal. With regard to building safety work, each building within scope needs to have a bespoke resident engagement strategy which will be developed jointly with the residents and is a living document.
<b>3C</b>	Who - existing groups of residents. This is when residents come together.	Establish an annual networking event for local residents' groups and Resident Inspectors to meet with each other, sharing key issues. Opportunity to identify common issues and possible solutions. Collect satisfaction data. Increase the number of residents employed as staff members at Newlon, Outward and our contractors. Reinstate the STAR Awards.
<b>Supports</b>	Consumer Standard 'Transparency, Influence and Accountability' Departmental Targets.	

## 4 Your Resident Engagement Strategy

- 4A** The success of this strategy should be measured by residents at regular intervals.
- Initial focus group members formed the strategy group and volunteered to monitor the strategy throughout its lifecycle – meet every six months.

**Supports** Consumer Standard 'Transparency, Influence and Accountability' Targets.



## What next?

### Over the life of the strategy we will:

Monitor implementation of the White Paper, Consumer Standards and TSMs, engaging residents in service response.

Implement new resident-led policies and procedures.

Promote involvement, effectively increasing numbers whilst maintaining diversity.

Assess the impact of our involvement streams and review them annually, replacing or refreshing those which are underperforming. Create an enhanced scrutiny function.

Maintain a flexible approach to engagement while embracing digital, providing opportunities for involvement to the degree and level residents choose.

Increase our awareness and understanding of local neighbourhoods and tailor our involvement opportunities and communications to target groups, including those currently under-represented.

### To ensure support and resources are available for effective involvement we will:

Support resident groups to develop skills and access information and advice.

Ensure our venues are accessible to all residents.

Vary the times and locations of activities, including evenings, and offer a mixture of face to face and digital meetings and events.

Provide the appropriate staff to attend and support events and activities.

Provide dedicated financial resources to support resident involvement.

Assess the training needs of individuals and groups for involvement purposes and provide the resources to meet the need.

Regularly publicise our involvement work so residents know what is on offer, and how to access it.

### By 2026 involvement at Newlon will be improved because it will:

Be embedded consistently across the organisational culture, ensuring residents are at the heart of every decision that affects their homes and local neighbourhoods; over-delivering on TSMs.

Have a broad range of effective involvement strands which deliver positive change for both residents and staff.

Have a growing number of engaged and diverse residents so that decisions reflect the needs and priorities of more residents.

Provide or sign post to training and support that will empower residents to play a full and active role in engagement.

Have clear outcomes for involvement activities and transparent reporting methods, allowing everyone to see the value of involvement across the organisation.

## Contact us

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