

Newlon News



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In this edition you can read the regular update from the Residents' Forum, find out about the role of one of our residents as Head of Special Projects and see if you are interested in our new Resident Services Committee vacancy.



New consumer standards launched

As a registered housing provider Newlon is regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). We think it's important you should know that after extensive consultation with residents, housing providers and other stakeholders, the RSH has recently published it's new consumer standards. These standards came into effect on 1st April 2024 and are designed to protect tenants and improve the services they receive.

There are four standards:

- The Safety and Quality Homes Standard.
- The Transparency, Influence, and Accountability Standard.
- The Neighbourhood and Community Standard.
- The Tenancy Standard.

For more information the full RSH consumer standards code of practice can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consumer-standards-code-of-practice>.





Lloyd Gale-Ward, Chair

Residents' Forum update from the Chair

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

The February Residents' Forum brought together residents in-person and online. We began the meeting with warm reflections on the legacy of Sylvia, a founding Forum member who sadly passed away in December 2023 and will be missed by all who knew her. A moment of silence was held in her honour, may Sylvia rest in peace.

Emma Preston-Dunlop, Resident Involvement Manager, presented an insightful summary report on Newlon's Resident Engagement Strategy for 2023 - 2026, showcasing our community's commitment to continuous improvement.

Although unable to attend, Sarah Shaw, Director of Housing, shared an important announcement about the Forum's formal integration into Newlon's governance structure. Emma and Lloyd, himself a Newlon resident, will collaborate with Sarah to ensure residents actively shape the proposed action plan. A joint Newlon Board and Forum meeting will take place in April where we will begin to understand how the new structure will work and benefit residents.

The Forum survey results from December 2023 were shared, reflecting active and positive engagement from Forum respondents. Emma highlighted the Board's enthusiasm to leverage this data for an upcoming action plan, with plans to repeat the survey in approximately 18 months.

By that time we will have had plenty of opportunity to allow the new governance structure to bed and take shape.

In ongoing scrutiny initiatives, the focus moves onto a new topic: repairs. Three residents volunteered to take part, and Emma expressed intentions to seek out more residents to contribute. Repairs form a large part of Newlon's work and also attract the highest number of complaints, so looking into and improving this will benefit and improve residents' experience. Thanks to those who have or will sign up.

Annette Morrison, Head of Service Improvement, shared encouraging improvements in handling complaints, however, there have been more maladministrations than expected. This could be due to a shift in the Ombudsman's methods of evaluating cases.

Matthew Morrall, Income and Investigations Manager, provided valuable insights into how his team deals with and supports residents experiencing antisocial behaviour and noise.

Finally, just a reminder that support is available for residents concerned about or experiencing financial difficulties, by contacting financialinclusion@newlon.org.uk or calling **020 7613 8080**. Any inquiries about resident involvement are also welcome by emailing getinvolved@newlon.org.uk.

mynewlon online portal

Busy at work and can't get in touch during the day? In a hurry and want to contact us at your convenience? Why not use the My Newlon portal?

You can use it to:

- Pay rent.
- Check rent statements.
- Find out about estate inspections (if you live on an estate or in a larger block).
- Report local issues.
- Report repairs.
- Book appointments direct with Newlon contractors.
- Choose a time slot to suit you for repairs.
- Check how jobs are progressing.
- Access newsletters and annual reports.
- Update your details.



Just go to my.newlon.org.uk/signin.

You will need your seven digit agreement reference or tenancy number to sign up to the My Newlon portal. You will find your agreement reference or tenancy number on any rent statements or correspondence from Newlon. If you are the lead tenant and you are unable to locate any Newlon documents that contain your seven digit agreement reference or tenancy number, please contact the Service Centre on **020 7613 8080** and one of the team will assist in recovering it for you.

Update on rent increases for 2024 - 2025

Each year we review our residents' rent. The amount we can increase rent by to cover increases in our running costs follows a formula set by the Government.

For residents in social rent homes this is based on September CPI plus up to an additional 1%. CPI is the Consumer Price Index, a commonly used measure of inflation.

For most residents in intermediate rent homes we follow the same formula as for social rent housing.

For the majority of Shared Owners we use a formula based on RPI plus 0.5%, often based on September RPI but in some cases this varies according to the lease. RPI is the Retail Price Index, the other most commonly used measure of inflation.

Why do we need to increase rents?

As a not-for-profit, charitable housing association, any money we collect from rents is invested in maintaining our current homes or providing much needed new affordable housing.

Our costs are increasing at a significantly higher rate than inflation, especially for core services such as providing repairs and maintenance, building materials and service contracts. This means we need to increase rents to continue to safely provide key services, improve the homes we manage, invest in critical fire safety works, build new affordable homes and support our local communities.

Service charges

Some of our properties also incur a service charge. We are working very hard to minimise the effect of this for our residents. This includes working in partnership with resident associations to look at all aspects of service delivery, and other ways we can reduce, where applicable, service charge costs. Nevertheless there are likely to be increases in some areas within service charges due to increased contract costs, the effect of higher minimum wage payments and increases in building insurance, where the costs for cover have also increased.

Help and support if you are struggling to pay your rent or service charges

We know that many people are facing financial difficulties at the moment because of rising prices and energy bills.

If you are struggling to pay your rent or service charges please contact us as soon as possible so we can agree a payment plan.

The sooner you contact us if you are struggling the easier it will be for us to help you. Please contact us on **020 7613 8080** or **0800 316 7989**. You can also email **income@newlon.org.uk** or arrange to come into to our office by appointment to discuss your circumstances.

Other help and support available

To find out about the help and support that is available from the Government and from your local authority, please visit **www.newlon.org.uk/cost-of-living-support**.

For help and support from Newlon, please email **financialinclusion@newlon.org.uk**. The team can offer support and help to individuals, couples and households struggling to pay for food, fuel and other essential items of furniture and equipment. They can also provide guidance for problem debt and help with benefit claims.

Nutley Edge - the perfect place for a peaceful break

Are you looking for an affordable, relaxing break away from the city? Why not book to stay in one of the cottages at Nutley Edge and experience the peace and tranquillity of the Sussex countryside. Overlooking Ashdown Forest, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Nutley Edge offers a choice of holiday stay options at great rates for Newlon residents.

Nutley Edge belongs to Outward, our specialist charity that supports vulnerable people in north and east London, and is part of the Newlon Group.

All profits from Nutley Edge go to providing better care and support for Outward's residents, so by staying there you will also be benefiting some of London's most vulnerable people.

To find out more about Nutley Edge please visit their website at **www.nutleyedge.org.uk** and if you would like to book a break please email **nutleyedge@outward.org.uk** or call **01825 712 377**, remembering to say that you are a Newlon resident.



Resident Services Committee co-opted **member vacancy**

We're looking for a new member for the Resident Services Committee (RSC) and we want to ask all residents with transferable skills to think about applying.

The RSC is part of Newlon's governance structure, where we make the day-to-day decisions about how we look after your homes. It needs residents involved who have some experience of how committees are run and what is entailed in preparing for meetings as there are quite a lot of papers to look through beforehand. There are four meetings a year, in the evening on a weekday at our office in Tottenham Hale, which is an accessible building. The dates are planned well in advance.

The role isn't just for people who have worked in an office. All types of people have gained these skills over their lifetime.

It needs a good listener and a broad thinker who can put in the time to do the preparation. It's an opportunity to represent all residents, not a platform to raise your own issues.

The role is paid (£3,150 each year) to reflect the time commitment required for meetings and preparation, and the skill set.

If you are successful in becoming a member of the Resident Services Committee, you will also be expected to follow the code of conduct for involved residents which you can find on our website www.newlon.org.uk/code-of-conduct-for-involved-residents.

Please read the role description (below) and if this sounds like something you would be interested in please contact getinvolved@newlon.org.uk.

Resident Services Committee co-opted member role description

Purpose of the role:

To work with other committee members and the management of the Trust to ensure the delivery of high-quality resident services, maintain compliance with regulatory requirements that relate to service delivery and take responsibility for other functions formally delegated from the Trust, Board related.

As a member of the committee, you will need to have a commitment to upholding the organisation's mission and values, and foster an environment of accountability,

transparency, and resident-centricity. You will be responsible for developing an understanding of Newlon's legal and regulatory obligations in relation to housing services and seek appropriate assurance that they will be met.

You will work with committee members and management to develop a clear vision for services, contributing to setting plans and targets that drive continuous improvement in service delivery.

Key accountabilities:

1. Leadership and governance:

- Uphold the values of honesty, accountability, and transparency in all committee activities.
- Maintain an understanding of the legal and regulatory requirements related to housing services and seek assurance that they are being met.
- Stay informed about emerging trends within the sector and beyond, assessing potential impacts, risks, and opportunities for the organisation.
- To support the Chair in providing strategic leadership and creating a positive climate which fosters constructive challenge to management.
- To show an active commitment to understanding resident needs and preferences and developing strategies to meet them.

2. Financial management and control:

- Authorise the write-off of former tenant debts up to £15,000, adhering to principles of fairness and accountability.
- Consider financial implications and value for money in service changes and customer services, maintaining a commitment to quality and fairness.
- Monitor rent collection and risks to rental income and ensure that there is a suitable framework in place to help support residents in financial difficulty.

3. Housing and property management:

- Promote a culture of reliability and trustworthiness in providing high-quality services to residents.
- Monitor customer service performance, complaints and satisfaction levels, identifying areas for improvement and overseeing corrective actions.
- Advise on setting strategies, targets, plans and policies for housing management and maintenance services ensuring consistent and respectful treatment of all residents.
- Support resident participation, consultation, and information initiatives, demonstrating a commitment to listening and responding to residents' needs and concerns.
- Monitor compliance with landlord health and safety responsibilities and relevant customer standards, prioritising resident safety and well-being in all aspects of housing and property management.

4. General oversight:

- Make recommendations to the Board on relevant matters within the Committee's scope, guided by principles of fairness, quality, and safety.
- Regularly review risks relevant to resident services, with a focus on maintaining the organisation's reputation for providing high-quality affordable housing.

Residents' Forum and Newlon's **governance structure announcement**

You said

We listened

At the Residents' Forum on 7th February 2024, an important announcement from Sarah Shaw, our Director of Housing, was shared with all attendees.

"We have been thinking a lot in the last few months about how we can amplify resident voices within Newlon. The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 is now law and aims to rebalance the landlord and tenant relationship across the sector. At Newlon we have long focussed on the importance of resident engagement, but we can always do more.

In November 2023 we suggested to the Board that the Residents' Forum become a more formal part of Newlon's governance structure (the framework we have for making decisions). The Board immediately agreed that the Residents' Forum should be made a part of the formal governance structure to ensure it has the opportunity to influence decision making to the same degree as other sub-committees.

We now have plenty to think about in terms of how that will work, how communication and work will flow between the Forum and other committees and the Board, and most importantly of all, that it remains useful and meaningful to the Forum members. In a recent survey we had great feedback from Forum members that they feel heard and engaged. But we also know that Forum members want to develop as a group so that there is more discussion and less being presented to. We hear that and share that aim.

As a starting point we will be having a joint meeting of the Newlon Board and the Residents' Forum in April so everyone can get to know each other and we can talk about how this arrangement could work to provide the best possible channel for resident voice and decision making. To help us shape this work and the session in particular we'd like to hear about what kind of work the Forum would like to be involved with in the future and what the Forum would like to get out of the session with the Board."

So following this announcement and going forward there will be some changes to the Residents' Forum:

- The type of things that are brought to it for discussion, review and for information may vary.
- There will be discussions as to how best to use it as a way to exchange information with the Board and Resident Services Committee, and how to keep each other informed, preventing duplication of work.
- The constitution and related documents will need tweaking, as the role will have slightly changed.
- It is likely that there will be an interview process of some kind for new Forum members.
- This will have a knock-on effect to other documents e.g. the Resident Involvement Policy.

Struggling with food costs? We can help.



During the ongoing cost of living crisis people can sometimes find themselves facing difficulty meeting basic needs such as food costs.

If you find you're struggling with money, please reach out to the Financial Inclusion Team for assistance. The team offers benefit advice, debt guidance and can provide vouchers for local food banks where individuals and families can access food when needed.

Events such as a new baby, illness, job loss, and reduced working hours can all contribute to the growing need for food assistance regardless of what type of housing you live in.

Residents who need assistance with food costs, as well as other help, can contact the Financial Inclusion Team by emailing financialinclusion@newlon.org.uk. Whether you are experiencing temporary financial difficulties or are facing more long-term challenges, the team is committed to providing support and guidance tailored to your specific needs.



Community wellbeing activities

Wellbeing programmes at our Barnsbury Community Centre

The following wellbeing programmes for individuals and families take place at the Barnsbury Community Centre, N1 0FE. The Centre is easily accessible by public transport and the majority of activities are free or low cost and open to all Newlon residents, not just those who live locally to the Centre.

- **Family art sessions** - this programme aims to build creative skills and to develop life skills such as communication, confidence and awareness. There are limited spaces so please register by calling or texting **07487 708 115** or by emailing **info@nairtfr3edom.com**. These family art sessions run twice a year for six classes at a time during May - June and September - November.
- **Islington Bangladesh Association (men only)** - is offering free exercise and fitness classes including badminton. If you would like to take part please contact **asad@ibal.org.uk** or call **020 7833 2608** or **020 7833 0591**.
- **Islington Bangladesh Association (women only)** - is offering free exercise and fitness classes from yoga to aerobics. If you would like to take part please contact **asad@ibal.org.uk** or call **020 7713 8971**.

| Day | Time |
|----------|------------------------|
| Thursday | 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. |

| Day | Time |
|-----------|-------------------------|
| Wednesday | 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. |
| Thursday | 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. |

- **Gardening** - residents who are interested in allotment boxes or maintaining flower beds can register their interest by contacting the Barnsbury Office on **020 7833 2525**. There are some potential spaces for Barnsbury residents only but there may also be opportunities for non-Barnsbury Newlon residents in the community garden.

Kids In Motion at the Barnsbury Community Centre

“We explore, learn and grow in motion.”

Kids In Motion is a nursery based at the Barnsbury Community Centre. It provides children with an engaging learning environment within safe indoor and outdoor spaces. Kids In Motion has designed its own unique curriculum that follows the Early Years Foundation Stage standards and encourages learning in the natural way; by moving, doing and exploring.

The nursery is open from Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

There are two and three year old funded places available and there is a baby room, toddler room and a pre-school room.

For more information please email **islington@kidsinmotion.co.uk** or call **020 8075 6500**. Alternatively drop into the Barnsbury Community Centre for a chat or a viewing.



Meeting the Head of Special Projects

by Jeannie Lowen, Newlon resident.

Newlon as an organisation, endeavours to work closely with its residents, and many members of staff are themselves residents. One such resident is Angelene Clarke, who is Head of Special Projects.

I was very pleased to be able to meet with Angelene and hear a little about the work of this department, and Angelene herself. Angelene's background is in architecture and her creative approach was evident in the interactive presentation she created to explain the operation of Special Projects to other departments within Newlon.

Special Projects came into existence after the catastrophic tragedy of the fire at Grenfell. Newlon Housing Trust is not alone in having been impacted by these failures in fire safety.

Following the Grenfell Tower fire, a significant number of building safety problems were identified nationally in high rise residential developments. To address this remediation works have either already been completed or are underway to make all residential high-rise buildings safe. The responsibility to make buildings safe has been strengthened by the Building Safety Act. This is legislation that aims to make high-rise residential buildings safer.

Special Projects are a small team of seven people who oversee a large number of schemes. There are 40 cases currently in progress with five buildings undergoing on-site works. Due to the complexity of each case these can take a long time to resolve.

The team investigates major latent defects - which is a hidden flaw or defect usually as a result of poor workmanship, design material or construction. They assess any fire and safety risks and then remove any defects such as combustible elements which are then replaced with compliant materials.

The encouraging news is that Newlon has a programme of remediation to fix these problems. It is a process that involves working with residents but also calling on expert witnesses from within the industry regarding fire and structural engineering. The team frequently works with other departments across Newlon such as the Development and Asset Management teams. This enables Special Projects to build up a picture of potential issues via all available information such as maintenance records and residents' records and feedback.

A major part of the work is establishing who is liable to pay for these works. This is quite a long legislative process which requires building a case which potentially can end up in court. So far Newlon has been successful in obtaining funding to cover these remediation works from either the contractors, the Building Safety Fund or at Newlon's own expense.

Throughout this whole process Special Projects have a communications schedule to let residents know what is taking place. Angelene understands that residents can feel trapped when there is no date for the remediation works. Although there may be no specific timelines, Angelene notes that "things are happening" and the overall aim is to ensure residents are in safe compliant homes. Regular updates such as newsletters and other correspondence give residents an overview on how things are proceeding and once construction work starts there are monthly Zoom meetings.

After the works are completed and the building is compliant Newlon can issue an EWS1 certificate enabling leaseholders to sell. Special Projects also issue Landlords Certificates for those that require them.

For residents awaiting work to be carried out, it can be a frustrating process. Angelene sympathises with the frustrations that residents can feel with the challenges of the process. Investigating and then taking the required action takes time. It can seem that there is no progress but things are happening and the team is dedicated to resolving these challenges, and achieving their goals.

If you have any questions regarding current or up and coming defect cases or you would like more information about major works please email the Special projects team at specialprojects@newlon.org.uk.

Pension Credit - are you entitled to it?



Pension Credit is a benefit aimed at supporting people over state pension age who are living on a low income.

Pension Credit tops up your weekly income to a guaranteed minimum level of £201.05 a week for single pensioners or £306.85 for couples. It may also make you eligible for benefits such as Housing Benefit.

It is estimated that at least 85,000 eligible people do not claim pension credit each year. You may still get Pension Credit if you have not paid National Insurance contributions, have some savings or a small pension, own your own home.

You can check your eligibility by using the online pension credit calculator www.gov.uk/pension-credit-calculator or alternatively you can email financialinclusion@newlon.org.uk.

Please don't assume that you or the older people you know are not eligible.

How to make a **complaint**

We aim to provide all our residents with a quality service and to get things right the first time. Therefore if something has gone wrong for you, please tell us about it so that we can put it right as simply and as quickly as possible.

If you are unhappy with the services we provide, you can make a complaint in the following ways:

- Email us at **serviceresolution@newlon.org.uk**.
- Fill in our online complaints form at **www.newlon.org.uk/residents/making-complaint/complaint**.
- Call our Service Centre on **020 7613 8080** and tell them that you wish to make a complaint.
- Visit us in person at Newlon House or any of our other offices. If you wish to visit Newlon House please make an appointment by calling our Service Centre on **020 7613 8080** or e-mail **serviceresolution@newlon.org.uk**.

If you have a complaint about the behaviour of neighbours rather than our services then this is treated as antisocial behaviour (ASB). As a result you will need to report it to the ASB team. You can find details about how to do this on our antisocial behaviour page **www.newlon.org.uk/residents/anti-social-behaviour**.

Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman Service (**www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk**) can offer support to residents making a complaint but will only consider complaints that have been through Newlon's stage 1 and stage 2 complaints process.

We have completed a self-assessment form which demonstrates our compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code.

Related documents

You can find our Complaints leaflet, Complaints Policy, Complaints Procedure and self-assessment with the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code by visiting the complaints page on our website **www.newlon.org.uk/residents/making-a-complaint**.



Visiting our Head Office

Newlon has a hybrid working approach which means that the majority of staff members are spending part of the week working from home and part of the time in the office. Please only visit the Head Office if you have an appointment. It means that the member of staff you need to see will be in the office on that day rather than working from home.

If you are due to attend an in-person event at our office, please reschedule if you develop any cold, flu or COVID symptoms. We can arrange to carry out appointments through video conferencing such as Zoom.

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 **newsletters@newlon.org.uk**.

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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