



RESIDENTS' REPORT 2020-2021

LOOKING BACK AND MOVING FORWARDS

Hexagon

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Chair & Chief Executive Officer Welcome

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In a year like no other, Hexagon Housing continued to deliver services to residents, responding quickly and efficiently when the pandemic hit. Having successfully maintained services to residents during this time, and with the lessons learnt from remote working, we are looking to the future and exciting opportunities to work in new and improved ways.

Engagement with residents continued to play a key focus this year, but with a different way of working. Many residents embraced new technology and used Zoom meetings to engage with us. The Residents Advisory Group inputted on a number of policies; the Estate Graders continued their important work; and the Performance Review Group provided valuable feedback.



Tom McCormack
Chief Executive

The year has seen a continued focus on our commitment to environmental sustainability, with a focus on improving poor-performing homes to improve their energy efficiency. We have also started a project aimed at creating a roadmap to meet the sustainability goals of zero carbon by 2050.

Fire safety continued to be a key area of attention for the Association with remedial works being completed; the Association spent over £1.5 million on fire safety work in the past year. We have been preparing for when the Fire Safety Bill and the Building Safety Bill both become law.

A big thank you to all our residents who engaged with us this year providing their feedback and input, and adopting new ways of interacting with us e.g. via Zoom. Thanks also goes to the staff who adapted admirably to the move to home working; the Board members; and all our partners who commit their skills and time into helping Hexagon Housing deliver the best service to its residents.

June 2021

Simon Fanshawe
Chair



Ensuring Continued Customer Service

Almost overnight due to the pandemic, the Hexagon Customer Services Team switched from being an office-based team to completely remote working. Our strong digital set up meant we were able to do this with minimal disruption to our services.

Our telephones and computers were switched to home and our homes became our workplace. The organisation had invested in our telephone technology and staff have access to cloud-based telephone systems, which meant they could work from anywhere to ensure there was no disruption to core customer services. There was no reduction in our core operating hours compared to previous years.

Hexagon Customer Services received 66,187 calls from our customers over the past year, with 80% of these being answered within 20 seconds. This represents a fall of 8,599 calls against the previous year when 57,588 calls were received. For the first two quarters of 2021 we were in lockdown and customers were understandably concerned to have contractors in their homes and very much following Covid Safety guidance. This explains the comparable drop in received contact against the previous year.

Unlike many landlords, when lockdown came Hexagon kept taking calls for routine and urgent works. We could only carry out emergency works, as per the Government guidance, but we made sure that all other works were logged and ready to be issued – when we were allowed to do so – safely in our customers' homes. Carrying out inspections became difficult as we were used to doing these in person and were no longer able to do so. The Surveying Team moved swiftly to



accepting photos and videos of required works and raising orders on that basis. This practice will continue as it alleviates the need for residents to be in at set times for us to inspect.

Safety and Wellbeing of Residents

We identified more than 500 residents aged 70 or over who may need additional support during the Covid-19 pandemic. We launched a new Wellbeing Calls service, contacting every resident in this group to make sure they had support. We checked they could meet their own needs such as food and access to medication, we were aware that some residents may have been feeling isolated so we offered regular wellbeing calls, where we would check in on residents, have a chat and ensure everything was ok.

Colleagues from across Hexagon including one of our contractors, The Bell Group, came together to provide this service. We spoke to 521 residents, which is 98% of residents in this client group. 114 residents received regular wellbeing calls throughout the pandemic.

Keeping everyone safe is always our highest priority, including keeping our residents safe from infection. As the UK started to unlock, we put in place risk assessments that demanded a high level of safety for residents, contractors,

and Hexagon officers alike. These included the use of disinfecting hand gels, face masks, gloves, disinfectant spray, and keeping two metres apart – but has since moved on to the lateral flow testing of contractors. We have also made sure that if residents are self-isolating or shielding that we acknowledge this unless it is a true emergency.

Revenues Team

As the office space was closed for lockdown, we were unable to invite our residents in for meetings in the way we'd all grown accustomed to. We switched to remote communications such as email and telephone contact with our residents. Overall, the team felt that these modes of communication enabled strong and positive relationships to continue to be built at a time when many residents might otherwise have been felt very stranded.

As our new system was introduced in November 2019, this ensured the Revenues Team were able to provide the same level of service our residents had come to expect pre-pandemic.

Due to the pandemic, the Hexagon Customer Services Team switched from being an office-based team to completely remote home-working.

We were able to take calls and provide the right information to our residents in a timely fashion. Despite constant changes around furlough, grants to support self-employed workers, and advice on how residents claim Universal Credit, we were able to keep abreast of providing up-to-date information to residents in need of this information. This played a key role in managing rent arrears.



We identified **more than 500 residents aged 70 or over** who may need additional support during the Covid pandemic.



We spoke to **521 residents**, which is **98% of residents** in this client group.



Of these, **114 residents** received **regular wellbeing calls** throughout the pandemic.



Justin Howarth, Responsive Repairs Manager, was just one of our staff who worked to ensure customer services continued to adapt during the pandemic.

New Builds



Rye Lane (SE15)



Rye Lane



White Post Street (SE15)

Project Name / Address	Rent	Shared Ownership	Outright sale
Horseshoe Pub, Thornton Heath, Croydon	20		
Willet Road, Thornton Heath, Croydon	17	13	
Russell Hill, Purley, Croydon		13	
Thomas Moore, Purley, Croydon		12	16
Derrick Av, Purley, Croydon	37		
White Post Street, Old Kent Road, Lewisham		20	5

Where have Hexagon completed new homes in the latest financial year?

38 new homes



22 shared ownership
Rye Lane, Peckham



16 rented
Watling Street, Bexleyheath

As an Investment Partner of the Greater London Authority (GLA), Hexagon continue to provide new homes in the boroughs of Southwark, Lewisham, Greenwich, Bexley, and Croydon.

We had a successful year despite the challenges faced due to the pandemic which has impacted on completion dates, and extra unforeseen spends on Fire Safety works.

We continue to deliver the following projects as part of the current GLA programme, with 153 homes on site to be completed over the next three years.

We also continue to seek opportunities for future developments across our five partner boroughs.

Sales

The pandemic has required covid-safe viewings to be undertaken which means that we need longer for each individual viewing. Financially, some of our purchasers pulled out due to job security concerns or being on furlough.

Marketed as Unity Place, our latest shared ownership development is located at 190

Rye Lane, Peckham. It is a gated development that consists of a mix of 22 x one, two, and three bed apartments across two blocks with two garden areas. The first sale completions occurred recently. The scheme has been well received by prospective purchasers. Priced between £104,357 – £175,000 for a minimum 25% share, with a low rent on the unsold equity made these apartments affordable to households on incomes as low as £48,000. At time of writing (June 2021) there are only a couple of unreserved flats left.

The development at 95 Peckham Road (SE15) recently won the RIBA London Awards 2021 and the RIBA National Awards 2021 – for the building's design.



Fire and Property Safety

The Property Safety Team was created at the start of the year 2020/21. The aim was to pull together separate compliance and fire safety functions, as well as adding additional staff and resources.

A new Head of Property Safety, Michael Galt, was appointed in September 2020 – with fire safety a key priority for this team.

There is still work to be done, however significant progress has been made in the first six months with this team in place, including:



Over **1,000** FRA (Fire Risk Assessment) recommendations completed



A **reduction of over 50%** in the number of overdue FRA recommendations



A **reduction of over 70%** in the number of overdue high priority recommendations



Over **200** new fire door sets installed



Approximately **£1.5 million** spent on fire safety related work

Parkspring Court / Atrium Court

These blocks of flats were completed in 2008. Following recent government regulations, the blocks are undergoing major work in regards to Fire Safety remediation and balcony work to replace the combustible materials with non-combustible material. The contract is being led by Hexagon's Development Team and was awarded to United Living Contractors. The works are expected to be completed by the end of March 2022. We have maintained regular communication with residents and are working closely with them to ensure disruption is kept to a minimum.

Recent / upcoming fire safety legal changes

Hexagon and the Property Safety Team are working to ensure we put systems and resources in place in advance of upcoming legal changes in relation to fire and building safety. A key aspect of this is our appointment of a Building Safety Manager who will take the lead in ensuring all parts of Hexagon work together in keeping the homes we're responsible for as safe as possible.

Surveyor inspecting cladding at Parkspring.

Removal of cladding from Parkspring Court, Erith High Street, Kent.



Michael Galt
Head of Property Safety

Improving Our Environmental Sustainability

A housing association's stock is responsible on average for 99% of its total carbon footprint. We have focused on energy sustainability for over 10 years. Our net zero carbon roadmap will build on that firm foundation by developing a plan with clear milestones.

Standard Assessment Procedures (SAP)

To achieve targets set in the Climate Change Act of 2008 all housing now aims to achieve an average SAP of 86 – (band B) by 2050. Currently around a third of our homes – 430 properties – are below band C. We are working to improve these properties. We aim to have all our homes in EPC band C and above (SAP 69) by 2030.

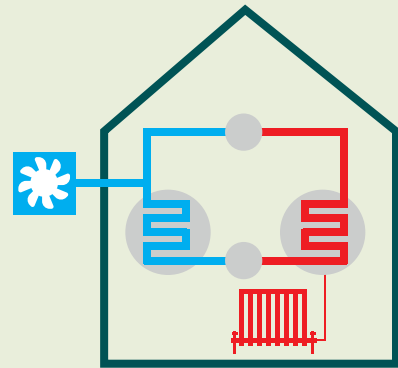
Awarded Gold SHIFT Status

SUSTAINABLE HOMES FOR TOMORROW (SHIFT)

We submitted to SHIFT our sustainability plan, including data on our corporate strategies, offices, existing homes and new builds in relation to recycling, energy efficiency, biodiversity, and contractor activities with a carbon emissions calculation for each. New innovations include currently trialling limestone paint in our offices, absorbing carbon dioxide to enhance air quality. We were again awarded Gold SHIFT Status.

Driving down bills

We continue to inform residents on ways in which they can reduce their domestic energy usage and bills. We do this with our resident magazine Home News, on our website and when our gas contractors provide information to residents on using thermostats efficiently.



We have committed to using air source heat pump technology and electric boilers instead of gas boilers at:

- Old Kent Road, Southwark, **46 flats**, with **38 shared ownership**, and **eight rent**
- Blackwall Lane, Greenwich, **27 flats**, with **21 shared ownership**, and **six rent**
- Island Yard, Southwark, **eight flats**, with a mixture of shared ownership, and rent.

Journey to 2050

Following a comprehensive tender process, consultants have been employed to help us create a roadmap towards zero carbon by 2050. Strategies will include how our stock is performing, how improvements can be achieved, and how these will be funded. This will contribute to the development of a clear strategy for the future. As part of this process we have been focusing on older properties and 'quick wins' that can be achieved such as lofts insulation and heating control upgrades. Our current energy programme has identified funding from ECO 3 (Energy Company Obligation), a fund supplied by the energy companies. The Association is

working hard to partner with Local Authorities to be part of their funding programmes.

We are also working to secure a green homes grant via the GLA to improve energy efficiency in homes.

We will be talking to residents when changing their heating to electricity, on the different approach to heating their homes and their hot water supply to hybrid heat pumps and electric heating.

New build programme

This plan will also ensure that we build all our new homes to a higher energy efficiency, band A. With the new build programme, we are responding early to changes that we know are coming in legislation. As gas boilers are being phased out we have taken the commitment to not install any in our new build projects. Where we have acquired sites, it is giving us the opportunity to pause and consider the design of these projects, focusing on using electric solutions instead.

When considering options for air source heat pumps we consider the capital cost, lifecycle costs, running costs for residents, and maintenance costs for Hexagon. We are looking to use tried and tested systems that provide value for money. All new projects will have solar panels installed.

Ahead of the game

We aim to reduce our carbon emissions before legislation comes into force. A combination of air source heat pumps, electric boilers, and solar panels will work together to support our long term sustainability goals.



These solar panels on the roof at Brampton Road, are an example of how all new projects will have solar panels installed.

Currently we hold Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) data for **89%** of our homes:

73% of our homes are EPC band C and above

25% of our homes are EPC band D

45 homes (1.2%) are EPC band E

March 2021: average SAP rating for our homes is 72.8

88% of our stock is equal to, or above, SAP 65



Rumana Khair
Stock Improvement Manager

Lockdown No Barrier to Engaging with Residents

Despite significant challenges for a service built on and shaped by face-to-face meetings with residents, social restrictions during the pandemic did not stop 2020/21 from being a successful year for engaging with residents.

Lockdown restrictions meant that residents' meetings couldn't go ahead, but the Resident Involvement Team rose to this challenge by creating new ways to work together with residents. Meetings between residents and staff moved from the Hexagon office or estates, to Zoom.

The Residents Advisory Group

The Residents Advisory Group (RAG) provide a residents' oversight into strategies and policies before they are approved by the Board of Directors. A new Chair was recruited this year, and the group have determined their work plan for the year.

Residents Involvement Strategy

The government's Social Housing White Paper sets out a vision as to what social housing residents can expect from their landlord. In response, we developed the three-year Residents Involvement Strategy. The RAG, internal stakeholders, and the Co-op Forum were all consulted before this strategy went to the Board for approval. This resulted in greater involvement with other Hexagon teams – specifically the Repairs and Housing teams – with the core aim to raise engagement and resident satisfaction.

Residents Inspection

The Residents Inspectors are a group of residents who inspect the service areas delivered by Hexagon. This year they inspected Hexagon's handling of anti-social behaviour. Of nine

recommendations the residents proposed for improvement, eight were accepted – primarily around the consistency of recording information, and the consistency of communication. This has led to a marked improvement on how the Housing team responds to anti-social behaviour reports.

Estate Graders

The Estate Graders had to adapt to a different work method this year due to Covid-19 restrictions. A risk assessment was undertaken, with measures put in place to ensure the safety of each Grader, and PPE equipment was provided. The Graders undertook visits individually, before meeting over Zoom to discuss their findings and agree their gradings.

Performance Review Group

This group monitored Hexagon's service delivery during the pandemic. A resulting commitment by Hexagon to clear the backlog on routine repairs, which had built up during the first lockdown, was satisfied by summer 2020.

The group also monitored rent collections, specifically what assistance Hexagon had put in place for residents who were furloughed, or had lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic. Hexagon responded with a programme to assist residents who were experiencing difficulties.

Residents Design Panel

This panel gave their views on the development of new build properties, focusing on health and safety standards such as safe escape routes and lighting in the event of a fire emergency. They also highlighted the potential issue of bin stores located near opening windows, which were successfully relocated in the new build plans.



Connecting with residents via Zoom

Disability Inclusion Group

Members of this group felt particularly isolated during lockdown and were keen not to experience a downturn in service. One key area for concern is the misuse of disabled parking bays. Hexagon are assessing ways to clamp down on this misuse through parking enforcement companies. External lighting was also highlighted as an issue.

Repairs Group

The Repairs Group was relaunched in February 2021, as a dedicated resident-led group working with Hexagon to scrutinise and help guide the Repairs Service.

Together with Tenants

This is a national initiative where the key aim is to strengthen the relationship between residents and housing association landlords. The Board agreed that Hexagon should be involved in this voluntary six-point charter. Mirrored by the government's White Paper, ultimately the charter will become law, and Hexagon will be regulated on these commitments. We have agreed a robust way of complying and measuring our commitment. By committing now, Hexagon will be fully prepared and transparent when external evaluation becomes mandatory.

Looking ahead

We intend to return to some face-to-face meetings after the pandemic, however Zoom has demonstrated the benefits of using digital technology by offering the potential for engaging with more residents. Moving forward the Resident Involvement Team will utilise both approaches to better appeal to all our residents.

WHAT HAVE THE RESIDENT ADVISORY GROUP CONTRIBUTED TO DURING 2020/21?



Succession policy



Value for Money strategy



Disrepair policy



Tenants in Prison policy



Shared Ownership policy



Complaints policy

14 ESTATES INSPECTED BY RESIDENTS



Brian Hughes
Resident Involvement Manager

Raising Awareness of Services and Support

COVID-19 impacted on individuals, households and society in a range of different ways. Our priority was to identify the different ways residents could be impacted by the pandemic, and how we can best help residents navigate through these challenges.

In partnership with local authorities, voluntary organisations, food banks, and mutual aid networks, we worked to open up resources and services for residents.

Wellbeing

At the end of October 2020, we started our campaign to contact every Hexagon resident by telephone to check in on their wellbeing, offer a friendly voice, and connect them with Hexagon services and those of our partners.

This proved a very effective way of reaching out to residents to ensure they were aware of the support available. The service has been overwhelmingly well received by residents. We were also able to get updated or new email addresses from 180 residents, further boosting our database of residents email addresses.

Digital Skills Support

Our team of Digital Champions adapted their way of working to deliver a 100% remote service, including provision of digital skills support to residents with little or no digital skills 100% remotely.

We launched a new digital device loan scheme, offering over 20 devices available for loan to residents to help improve their digital skills.

Employment Training and Support

Our Employment and Skills Service provides a personalised service for both unemployed residents looking for employment: and employed residents who are looking to further develop their career.

Many residents working situation changed during the last year. We witnessed an increase in demand for our service with 110 residents accessing employment support, a 54% increase from previous year.

We receive funding from the European Social Fund towards the Love London Working Employment Support programme. 49% of residents who enrolled on this programme secured employment.

Money Matters

During the last year we supported 219 residents to help resolve their money worries. As a result £286,754.21 income came into Hexagon and to residents directly.

We successfully applied for 60 grants on behalf of residents towards the purchase of essential items such as white goods, furniture, flooring, and school uniforms.

UC Hub Info

The UC hub is a partnership between the Revenue and Financial Inclusion teams. It aims to support residents in the early weeks of their claim to ensure that the claim is set up correctly and rent payments are being made. The service also offers residents support with any other money related issues they may be having at the time.

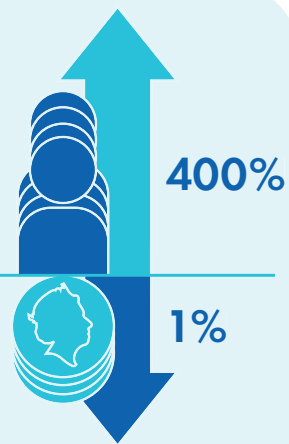
Following lockdown in April and May 2020 we saw a significant increase in Universal Credit claims (400% above our usual claim volume of 20 cases per month). Above the 300 we had anticipated, 594 residents are now Universal Credit claimants (up 19% on previous years).

The UC Hub Team maintained regular weekly contact with residents moving onto Universal Credit, to limit the impact of this transition and provide help, advice and guidance.

An independent review of the UC Hub process was undertaken by our auditors Mazars in November 2020 gave an assurance that we are providing our residents transitioning onto Universal Credit the best possible support, advice and guidance.

The year showed a reduction of our Universal Credit debt by 1% (£78,014.56 in monetary terms) against our previous financial year.

Despite the ravages of the pandemic on the economy as a whole, with 4 times as many residents seeking to go onto Universal Credit than normal, we showed a reduction of 1% in our Universal Credit Debt against the previous financial year.



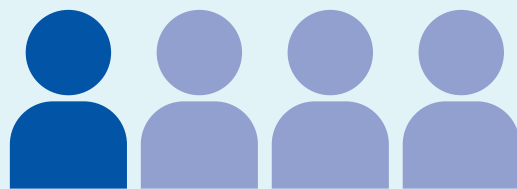
1850
calls attempted



865
calls connected



467
referrals to services and support



1:4 referred to a new service



Nicky Hazelwood
Community Investment Manager

The Social Housing White Paper

The Social Housing White Paper was published on 17 November 2020, 27 months after the Social Housing Green Paper ("A new deal for social housing"). White papers are statements of policy intent that will require legislation. The Charter for Social Housing Residents aims to set out a new vision for the way that social housing residents are treated. This article briefly sets out what's included in the White Paper – treating residents with respect, listening to their concerns and putting in place a fairer and safer system for all those living in social housing.

The Charter "sets out what every social housing resident should be able to expect" in seven themes:

- To be safe in your home. We 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 access to help, if you want it, for you to learn new skills 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. "Residents" refers to all those who occupy social housing, including tenants and leaseholders.



Hexagon works to ensure every home is safe and secure for residents to live in. Safety measures such as checking fire doors are suitable and intact, are part of the Government White Paper.



Rebecca Outram
Housing Services Director

Care & Support

15

Our Care Services offer supported housing for people with mental health issues. These homes performed well during a very challenging period and retain their “good” rating from local authority inspections. Despite the pandemic nine residents had “positive move-ons” – meaning these individuals were assisted to move on to a less supported environment, allowing them a greater level of independence in their lives.

Over the past year Covid has proved challenging, requiring significant changes in day-to-day functioning and a significant curtailment of the recovery-focused activities we usually offer in this community.

During the height of the second wave at Christmas, several staff either contracted the virus or were required to isolate. Our remaining team members rallied to ensure service continuity. Thankfully at no time did we fall below required staffing levels.

Sadly a resident who had underlying health conditions passed away after contracting the virus.

As the worse of the pandemic recedes both staff and residents have been able to return to a “new normal”, focusing on the recovery-based activities that are the heart of our services for people with mental health issues.

Support in Care Services 2020/21



14

Kirkwood Road: 14 residents supported with 3 positive move-ons



5

Landcroft Road: 5 residents supported with 1 positive move-on



18

Newstead Rd: 18 residents supported with 5 positive move-ons



100%

of support plans and risk assessments were reviewed on time across all services.

Customer Complaints

Overall numbers of complaints are down compared with recent years, this was particularly noticeable in the early stages of the COVID pandemic.

In the 2020-21 financial year, we recorded 229 complaints compared to 366 in 2019-20.

We made some changes during the year in terms of the way in which we recorded and reported complaints internally. This was based on recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman to all housing associations. This led to some targets being changed too. The targets are now:

- **Informal – 10 working days** – these are usually dealt with by front line staff
- **Stage 1 – 10 working days** – these are generally dealt with by Managers
- **Stage 2 – 20 working days** – these are generally dealt with by Directors

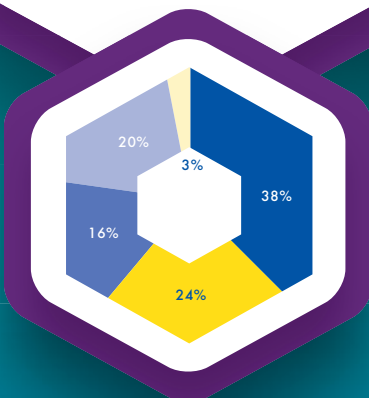
We measure performance against targets – we performed less well than we had during the previous year. We recognise that we need to do better on this and are sending weekly reminders to managers on outstanding complaints.

Just over half of the complaints related to the repairs service in 2020/21 – something broadly similar to previous years.

Financial Statement 2020 – 2021

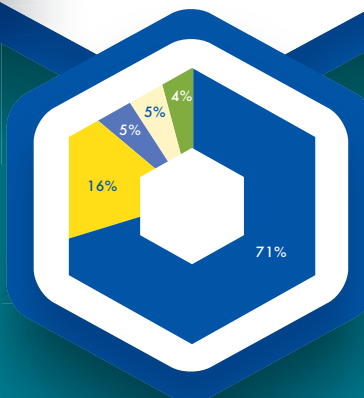
How every £ of rent was spent

Planned maintenance and home improvement programme	38%
Responsive repairs	24%
Interest on loans	16%
Housing management and tenant participation	20%
Community development	3%



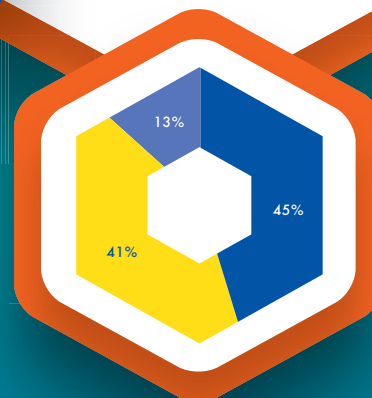
Turnover breakdown (£000s)

General needs	24,933	71%
Low cost home ownership lettings and sales	5,679	16%
Supported housing	1,679	5%
Agency managed	1,692	5%
Other	1,279	4%
Total	35,263	



Balance sheet funding (£000s)

Grants	221,266	45%
Loans	202,485	41%
Reserves	65,193	13%
Total	488,945	



Meet Our Board

Our board has overall responsibility for Hexagon's direction, reviewing our performance and making strategic decisions about the future. The Board does not get involved in the day-to-day running at Hexagon. Of the twelve members on the Board during 2020/21, four were Hexagon residents. In 2020/21 these were Mark Allan, Dermot Finn, Louise Richardson and Denise Senner.

Name	Board Service	Employer	Occupation
Mark Allan	4½ years	Chisel Housing	Co-ops & Tenants Officer
Carol Bernstein	3½ years		Portfolio of roles / Chartered Accountant
Ruth Chambers	6½ years	Self-employed	Campaign & Public Policy Consultant
Simon Fanshawe (Chair)	1 year	Self-employed	Company Director, Writer & Broadcaster
Dermot Finn	8½ years	Self-employed	Microsoft Web Application Developer
Jeanette Kenyon	7½ years	Self-employed	Property Development Consultant
Tom McCormack	9½ years	Hexagon Housing Association	Chief Executive
Louise Richardson	1.5 years	Bird College Conservatoire for Dance & Musical Theatre	Academic Assessments & Policy Co-ordinator
Denise Senner	3½ years	Self-Employed	Horticulturalist
Ian Watts	7½ years	PA Housing	Executive Director of Customer Services
Paul Williams (Vice Chair)	1 year		Retired

Hexagon

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