SPRING 2022

HOME NEWS

Hexagon

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If you would prefer to receive this magazine digitally instead of by post, simply send your name, address and email address to homenews@hexagon.org.uk

This email address can also be used to write your Comments To The Editor. £5 voucher for any we publish!

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TOM'S WELCOME

After 22 years as the Hexagon Chief Executive, the time has come for me to retire. I will be leaving Hexagon in June 2022, so in that context the Home News editor has asked me to leave you with a few reflections which you will find on page 3 (continued page 24). These thoughts include my thanks to all our residents so do please have a read.

Many of our residents are unfortunately facing real financial pressures due to the rising costs of heating bills and food prices. We are a people business, and not just a housing business, so please have a look out on pages 8 and 9 in respect of our money support offer. If you think you could benefit, please don't hesitate to let us know as we are keen to assist.

As I approach my final months at Hexagon, I want to say what a privilege and pleasure it has been to serve you. I am sure the next edition of Home News will feature a word from my successor, so do watch this space!

Tom McCormack, Chief Executive

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All photos by staff photographer Adrian Beckingham (unless indicated otherwise). **Front cover: Resident Sam Eaves (SE23)**

TOM'S FAREWELL: A REFLECTIVE LOOK AT SOCIAL HOUSING

After 22 years as Hexagon Chief Executive, and almost 40 years in the Housing Association (HA) world, the time has come for me to retire, so I will be leaving Hexagon in June 2022.

Home News Editor and Hexagon resident Adrian Beckingham asked me to leave you all with a few thoughts on my time in housing, so as this is my last edition of Home News, here are a few reflections.

Housing need is as acute as it has ever been so our work remains not just relevant, but crucially important. Social housing has a vital role to play in making things a little bit fairer for those who are priced out of the housing market through no fault of their own. There remains much work to be done, and I am certain that Hexagon will continue to play an important role in challenging injustice.

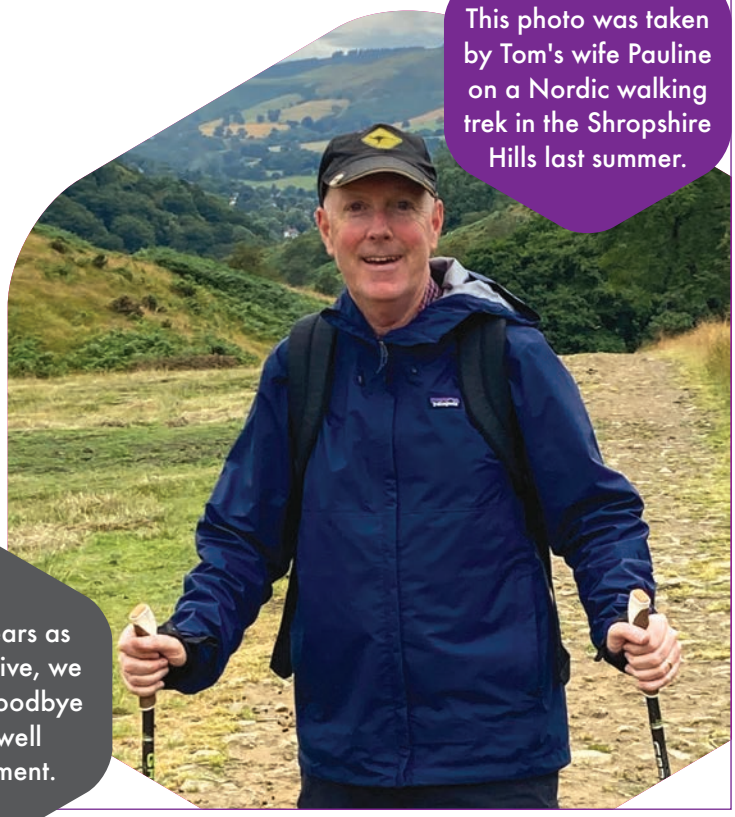
I have seen a lot of changes to the way HAs are funded. When I joined the sector in the 1980's it was almost entirely reliant on public funding for building new homes – but there was simply not enough public funding to meet growing demands. The then Tory Government introduced the 1989 Housing Act, which enabled housing associations to attract private finance to supplement public funding. This was the context for the creation of what I would describe as "social businesses" in the early 1990s.

A Labour Government followed in 1997 which invested heavily in refurbishing poor quality council housing, but at the expense of what most now recognise as a serious underinvestment in new social housing. Nonetheless, the sector and Hexagon continued building as many new homes as they could over this period.

The Tory/LibDem coalition government of 2010 seemed to have very little time for social housing and indeed many of their initiatives appeared to decimate social housing. A few examples would include ending grant support for rented housing, a push to sell off high value council housing, and a failed attempt to end secure tenancies for new residents.

But what I recall most about all this political chopping and changing, was the enduring commitment to social housing shown by the people who worked in the field. They stayed true to the mission of trying their best to provide good quality affordable housing. To this end, with significant innovation and creativity, Hexagon and other HA staff continued to adapt over several decades.

(Continued on page 24)



This photo was taken by Tom's wife Pauline on a Nordic walking trek in the Shropshire Hills last summer.

After 22 years as Chief Executive, we wave Tom goodbye and farewell into retirement.

YOU SAID WE DID

Welcome to the third instalment of our page "You Said We Did". Compiled by our Housing Services Director Rebecca Outram, readers can see recent examples of where Hexagon has listened to the frustrations of residents and taken steps to adapt our services to work better for you.

Photo supplied by Rebecca

You said.....	We did...
I'm a shared-owner and I find it really frustrating that my service charges vary so much from one year to the next. It also makes it really hard for me to plan my money.	We met with this customer and others in their block and have looked at the estimating process together. We also plan to do some work on analysing the variances so we can track our progress, as we are determined to improve in this area.
I'd like to be able to make a complaint through the website.	We've recently added a form to the complaints pages of the Hexagon website.
I'm not at all happy with the quality of the gardening service around my home provided by the contractor employed by Hexagon.	We've provided clarity that we don't procure a gardening service – we provide a grounds maintenance service and they're quite different. We are just about to start work on procuring a new grounds maintenance and cleaning service, and will be holding a series of workshops (over Zoom) with residents so that you can tell us what is important to you, meaning we can include some suggestions that are made. If you would like to take part in one of these workshops please email: **getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk**
I'm a user of on-line banking, and this has helped me keep a better track of my money – when will I be able to see my rent account on the internet?	We're looking to introduce 'My Hexagon' an app for your mobile device, which will enable you to look at any account you have with us. We'll be starting this work later in the summer and hope to have something in place for the late autumn. We'll need to hold an email address for you to allow you access.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOFT SKILLS

Soft skills are important for just about every job and can make you more successful in the workplace. For this reason soft skills are among the top skills employers seek in the people they hire.

Someone can be excellent with technical, job-specific skills – but if they can't manage their time or work within a team, they may not be successful.

The Department for Employment (DFE) published an Employer Skills Survey in November 2020. This survey found that of the 1000+ employers surveyed, 66% of hard to fill vacancies were at least partially caused by applicants' lack of soft skills. Most lacking among applicants was the ability to manage their own time and prioritise tasks – a skill more in demand than ever with the rising popularity of remote and hybrid working.

Many employers will hire candidates who don't have relevant experience because these candidates have great soft skills. The employers feel confident in their ability to learn the practical skills required for the job.

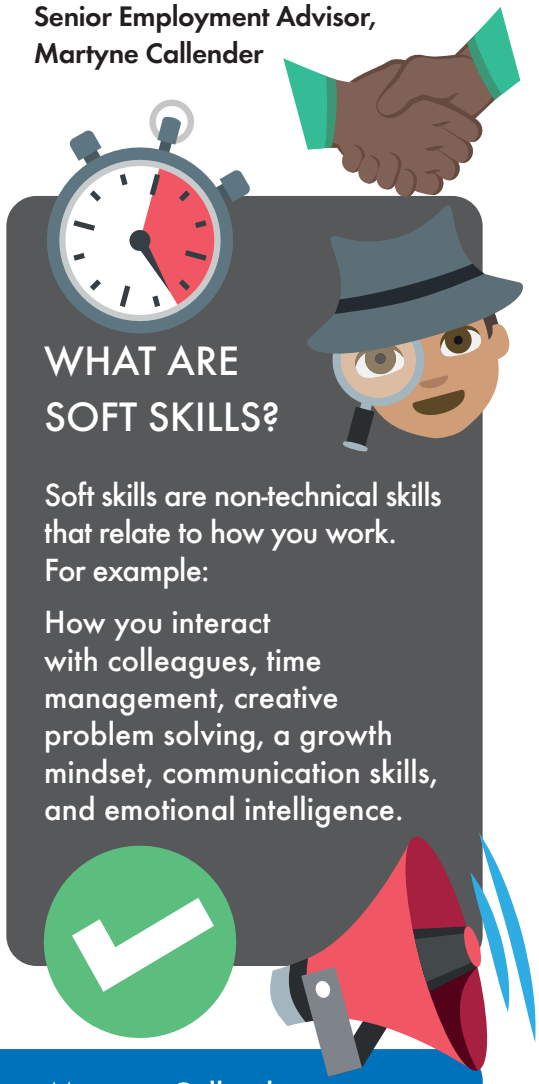
Great soft skills can really aid your job search and career progression. An example is Andrea, a Hexagon resident who we were fortunate enough to recruit and is now working in the Customer Services Team. Andrea had no work experience but excellent communication skills, which helped her get the job.

FREE SOFT SKILLS WORKSHOPS

Hexagon is keen to support residents to develop their soft skills to their full potential. We'll be launching a free programme of soft skills workshops for residents in April. Dates to be confirmed but sessions are listed below:

1. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
2. Attention to detail
3. Communication and Customer Service
4. Leadership and Management
5. Teamwork
6. Managing self, own time and task prioritisation

Photo supplied by Hexagon.
Senior Employment Advisor, Martyne Callender



Contact Martyne Callender on **mcallender@hexagon.org.uk** or **07799 880 675** for more information.

CAREER NEWS

Basic Skills Offer

We have referred 11 residents to our Literacy and Numeracy courses since January and spaces are filling fast.

Courses are online, with a commitment of just 2 x 45 minute sessions per week (with some homework). You get 1-1 support from the tutor, including showing you how to use the online system to complete your work.

Courses are offered from Entry Level up to Level 2. Course length depends on your level of literacy or numeracy but tend to average around 13 weeks.

You can do practice tests to prepare for your exams and can re-take your exams if you don't pass the first time.

You only need to complete one course to get a free tablet or £60 gift voucher.

Please contact Martyne Callender on **mcallender@hexagon.org.uk** or call **07799 880 675** for more information.

LOVE LONDON WORKING

European Union
European Social Fund

Please contact Martyne Callender on **mcallender@hexagon.org.uk** or call **07799 880 675** If you'd like to know when these sessions will be taking place and how to book your place.

CAREERS INFORMATION SESSIONS

Hexagon is delivering short online information sessions, which are open to all residents.

Sessions coming up include:

- Working in Administration
- Starting Your Own Business
- Working Flexibly Part-Time
- Working for the NHS
- Changing Careers

Sessions will include a guest speaker who can provide a greater insight into these topics and answer your questions.

Hexagon recently ran a Working in Housing information session, where Neighbourhoods Team Leader Nicci Talbot-Morris gave helpful tips on starting a career in housing and answered a range of questions from attendees. We received great verbal feedback from those who attended the session with 100% rating the session as very useful.

Get in touch so we can help you strengthen your chances in the employment market.

Contractor Vacancies

Any Hexagon resident who registers for our free employment support can access a range of vacancies and recruitment events – delivered through our partnerships with contractors and housing associations.

We work closely with Cleanscapes, Kinovo Group, Bell Group, Clarion, MTVH and London & Quadrant to secure opportunities for our residents. When Kinovo Group recently held a recruitment event, residents were given the opportunity to speak to staff about live vacancies available and could submit their CV on the day.

We are advising residents affected by the DWPs new Way To Work programme to:

- check and update your jobsearch progress on your UC journal daily
- apply for any jobs your work coach asks you to
- register for employment support with Hexagon, we will do our best to help you find your preferred job

Employment vacancies we can often help residents to fill include electricians, grounds maintenance operatives, plumbers, painters and decorators.

DWP Way to Work

'Way to Work' is a new partnership between government and employers to get 500,000 jobseekers into work by the end of June 2022.

Jobseekers will have increased support from their work coach and there will be 350 job fairs across the UK to help match jobseekers with available vacancies.

Targeted predominantly at those on the Intensive Search Work regime on Universal Credit, the scheme will give claimants four weeks – down from three months – to find a job within their preferred sector. If they don't, they will need to find any available job. If they don't get any job or turn down job offers, they could face benefit sanctions.

Hexagon is regularly sent vacancies for: Administrators, Grounds Maintenance, Electricians, Multi-Traders, Mobile Cleaning Operatives, NHS, Plumbers, Painting and Decorating Apprenticeships and Housing Customer Advisors.

We want our residents to fill these roles. We will help you tailor your CV for the job, help you prepare a cover letter and prepare for interview.

Please contact Martyne Callender on **mcallender@hexagon.org.uk** or call **07799 880 675** to register for support to apply for a role.

MONEY MATTERS

Make your money work for you – positive steps to financial wellbeing!

Make A Budget

- If you have a bank account get your recent statement. If you don't have a bank account – don't worry, just grab a piece of paper
- List all the money you have coming in and going out
- Start making a budget. This will allow you to see what money you have coming in (salary, other income, benefits) and outgoings
- Balance in your debt repayment commitments
- Identify what your wants are versus your needs. This will give you a view of where savings can be made

Prioritise your wants

For example, is gym membership more important than membership of Amazon Prime, especially if you also have Netflix? How many tv subscriptions do you have? Do you need them all, what plan are you on? Prices can vary widely.

Looking at needs versus wants – do you have unnecessary direct debits or subscriptions you can cancel? Remember to cancel with the company that is linked to the direct debit, not just with your bank.

Budgets can be written into a notebook, added to an Excel document or saved on an app on your phone – use the method that works best for you!

There are some great apps to help you create a budget, here are some examples:

1. **www.moneydashboard.com**
2. **www.lumio-app.com**
3. **www.emma-app.com/**

NEEDS

- rent
- council tax
- utilities
- food
- clothing
- medicine

WANTS

- another pair of shoes or unneeded clothing
- purchases of goods and services you can do without may include:
  - Prime
  - Netflix
  - PlayStation
  - restaurants
  - deliveries

Safe as houses? Get your money in order with a budget.

Leanne Cairney, Money Support Advisor.
Photo supplied by Hexagon

FURTHER SAVINGS

COUNCIL TAX

Are you the only adult in your household? Have you applied for the single persons discount?

Or are you on a low income? You may be eligible to apply for council tax reductions. You can apply for both single adult and low income reductions. Contact your local council or go to your local councils' website to apply.

TAX CODES

Talking of tax, if you are working, check that you are on the correct tax code. You may also be able to claim tax relief for your job expenses, particularly if you are self-employed. The HMRC also have an app available for smart devices. Check out these and other tax options on: **www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs/contact/income-tax-enquiries-for-individuals-pensioners-and-employees**.

CHECK YOUR ENTITLEMENTS

Have you checked your benefit entitlement, to ensure you are in receipt of everything you are entitled to? Billions of £££s in benefits go unclaimed each year! Use this online tool to help you assess if there is more money you can claim: **www.betteroffcalculator.co.uk/calculator/new/step1**

Are you a job seeker and on benefits? You may be eligible for free broadband and/or the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount for 50% off public transport travel while looking for a job.

FOOD

How much do you spend on food? Do you have a meal plan? The average family bin £470 worth of food each year! Meal planning can help with spending. Make a shopping list to help with identifying those ingredients you really need and avoid costly extras. Avoid the temptation to pick the sales items – these are rarely items you actually need and research shows they often end up in the bin. It's not always a saving just because it's on sale.

Supermarket loyalty cards can help reduce the cost of shopping.

WATER BILL

If your household income is below £19,747 then you can apply for 50% off your water bill with WaterHelp Scheme. Call Thames Water Extra Care on **0800 009 3652**, or visit **www.thameswater.co.uk/help/account-and-billing/financial-support/waterhelp**

MOBILE PHONE

Has your mobile phone contract come to an end? Is the upgrade a need or a want – could you change over to a sim-only contract? The cost may be reduced by signing up to a scheme such as the Airtime Rewards cashback app, which effectively gets you money off your phone bill. **www.airtimerewards.co.uk/**

Get in touch with our Money Support Advisor Leanne Cairney at **lcairney@hexagon.org.uk**, if you would like to complete a budget with support.

Please note Hexagon cannot endorse the use of any outside company, there are other options available. Check with a price comparison website for contracts that are coming to their end. Can you get a better deal from a different company?

FINANCIAL WELLBEING CALLS

We are doing some targeted work, aiming to reach out to residents who we think may be more likely to be struggling to make ends meet with changes to Universal Credit and rising fuel bills.

Our free Financial Wellbeing Calls offer a phone call to reach out to individual residents to check how they are managing. We use the calls as an opportunity to engage residents in conversations and to refer them to areas of support, including offers from our Community Investment Team and other agencies that we have partnered with such as Groundwork and South London Healthy Homes (SLHH). SLHH offer 1-2-1 support on energy efficiency measures, tips for reducing bills, effective energy management, and energy bills support.

So far, we have reached out to 451 residents and spoken to 229 residents. We have referred just over 50% of residents we have spoken to with one or more services where they are now accessing support.

Did you receive a financial wellbeing letter but heard nothing more? Have you missed your call?

If feel you could benefit from a call please contact our Community Investment Team on **020 8768 7925** or email: **cit@hexagon.org.uk**

REMEMBER TO SHARE YOUR CHANGE WITH US

On Universal Credit or Housing Benefit and had a change of circumstances? It is very important to let Hexagon Housing Association know.

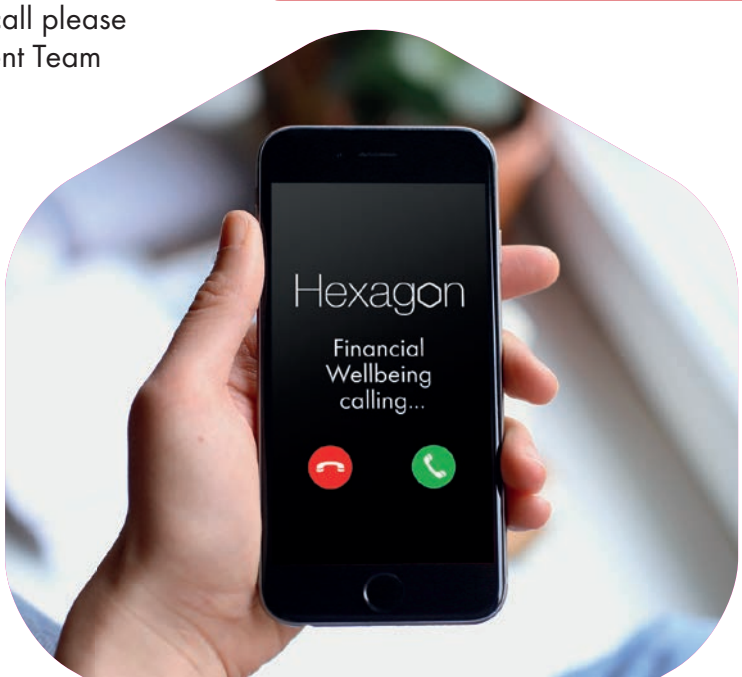
Have you changed your name? When we are confirming information to the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP), if information we have on our system does not match with theirs, then the housing element of any benefits being paid to you may be delayed or declined.

Has someone moved out on your joint tenancy?
Write on your Universal Credit journal ASAP.

Absent joint tenant or 'untidy tenancy'?
An untidy tenancy is the term used by UC where a joint tenant(s) has left the property and is not paying rent, but the landlord is unable to remove them from the tenancy for legal reasons. You may only be paid half the housing element so letting Universal Credit know this information can put full payment in place.

For changes of circumstances please call Hexagon on **020 9878 6699**.

For benefits advice email **moneysupport@hexagon.org.uk**



MORE BASKET FOR YOUR BUCK

Gardening is great for our wellbeing on many levels, helping to keep us fit and to balance our mental wellbeing.

However, perhaps you don't have a garden, or you're looking for a simple, cost effective, achievable project. Rather than a "to do" you want a "ta dah!". If so, why not have a go at planting up a hanging basket?

To start:

Ensure the wall hook is strong enough for your lined basket, which is heavy once wet.

Use lightweight, peat-free compost with added water retention and nutrients.

Hanging baskets offer good value for money:

- seeds can be saved from some plants for the following year (especially annuals)
- plants can be replanted in your pots or garden for the following year
- planting can include edibles or herbs, and perennials (which continue to grow or can be grown again)

Hanging baskets have a great feel-good factor, making you smile every time you come home or go out. Plants often start conversations with neighbours as gardening is a great icebreaker, providing a way to make new friends.

Basket suggestions:

BASKET 1.
Place in sunny position.

CENTRE
1 x cherry tomato plant
3 x strawberry plants

EDGE
3 x thyme plants (insect friendly)

BASKET 2.
Place in sunny position for pollinators.

CENTRE
1 x scabious or cosmos

EDGE
1 x bacopa

BASKET 3.
Position in shade.

CENTRE
3 x fuchsia

EDGE
3 x small-leaved ivy

Your basket needs you – water daily, feed weekly and pinch off dead flowers to keep the plant flowering.

Most importantly... ENJOY.

Look out for our feature on gardening and wellbeing in the summer edition of Home News.

COME ON BOARD

Help to shape Hexagon's future direction

Training & support provided

Salaried position at £5,800 per annum

Hexagon is currently recruiting for two residents to join the Board. Could you be one?

This is a unique opportunity for you to put your skills and perspective as a resident into practice and help give direction to the work of Hexagon.

Hexagon is run by a Board of 12 people who are responsible for agreeing the major decisions which guide the work of your landlord. Four of the 12 places on the Board are for Hexagon residents and this year we have two vacancies available.

Who can be a Resident Board Member?

Anyone who is:

- a Hexagon tenant, shared owner, or a leaseholder
- not more than 6 weeks in arrears
- not been found guilty of a Court judgment for breach of tenancy or lease

What does being a Tenant Board Member entail?

Being on the Board requires that you attend Board meetings (six a year), attend an "away day" meeting (one Saturday a year), attend other occasional meetings as required, and take part in training. The training helps to improve your understanding of the role and equips you to play a full and active part on the Board.

How do I get on to the Board?

If you are interested in being on the Hexagon Board simply send your name, address, phone number and email address using the contact details below. We will then send you an Application Pack which gives you the chance to tell us about your skills and about your interest in standing for the Board. We will also invite you to an interview with a small panel to discuss your application further.

Following the meeting with the panel you may be invited, along with other candidates, to go forward for election onto the Board. All Hexagon residents will then be invited to vote for who they wish to be on the Board. The two candidates who receive the most votes will be deemed to be elected onto the Board.

Interested? Want to find out more?

An Information Session has been arranged for you to find out more about what it means to be a Resident Board Member. This will take place on **Monday 25th April at 6:30pm** over Zoom. If you wish to attend the session, please let us know by emailing **getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk** and we will send you the Zoom link. If you cannot attend but still wish to put your name forward please indicate below and we will be happy to send you the Application Pack.

Full Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone Number

E-Mail address

I wish to attend the information session:-

☐ Monday 25th April: 6.30pm – 8pm on Zoom

☐ I cannot attend the information session but would like to stand for election onto the Board. Please send the relevant information.

Please return this form to Hexagon (see address back page) or email your interest to **getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk** by Friday 22nd April.

A NEW HOMEOWNERS' FORUM

Hexagon manages around 465 homes that are owned by leaseholders or shared owners. December 2021 saw the successful launch of the Homeowners' Forum – a new residents' group to help ensure the collective voice of homeowners is heard at Hexagon.

The first meeting was an insightful and honest dialogue. Hexagon were able to hear first-hand the views of homeowners about their experiences of the service that we provide. This provides a reality check on the quality of service provision, but more importantly of areas where we need to improve.

Listening to residents, some of the key areas for us to address include the standard of communication, quality of repair works, transparency and accuracy of service charges, safety works and recognising that lease owners/shared owners are a component of our resident population just as other tenants are.

The Forum will initially meet every two months and work with all teams across Hexagon in our journey to provide an efficient and high quality service to all residents. In February 2022, the forum reviewed the service improvement plan and developed a plan to scrutinise priority areas over the coming months.

We would like to thank everyone who took part for your involvement and contributions. Our Resident Voice & Engagement Team look forward to working together to ensure the homeowner's voice is heard to help improve service delivery for everyone.

Sam Eaves.
Photo kindly supplied by Sam.

Sam Eaves (SE23) is a member of the newly formed Homeowners' Forum. She told Home News:

"I am really pleased that the Homeowners' Forum has been set up. I'm looking forward to collaborating with others members of the forum and the Resident Voice & Engagement Team to address and agree the priorities for improved service delivery. I am confident that we will achieve a stronger leaseholder/freeholder relationship based on trust, good communication and transparency."

OUR JOURNEY TO NET ZERO

Environmental sustainability – nowadays often linked to achieving net zero carbon emissions – is an area of significant interest for most people at a personal, national and international level.

Hexagon has always been investing in residents' homes as part of our on-going commitment to environmental sustainability. This is evidenced by successively receiving Gold SHIFT awards – we received the prestigious Sustainable Homes for Tomorrow (SHIFT) Gold award in 2014, 2016, 2020 and 2021 – and the fact that Hexagon's residential homes score better in terms of SAP and EPC than the UK's average energy performance figure(s). By the end of the 2017 – 2021 sustainability strategy, Hexagon's existing tenanted housing portfolio had an average SAP score of 72.49 compared to the UK average of 68.

The government has set a target of:

- Minimum EPC Rating C for all tenanted dwellings by 2030
- Net zero carbon emissions for all tenanted dwellings by 2050

Currently, Hexagon has about 940 properties that are below EPC Rating C. Hexagon is currently drawing up a 4-year environmental sustainability strategy, which will reinforce Hexagon's commitment to achieving these two targets. Residents will be invited to play a role.

This new environmental sustainability strategy will shape our response to the targets both for existing dwellings and Hexagon's head office and new builds.

Hexagon's overall approach to retrofitting existing dwellings will be 'fabric first' – meaning we will firstly undertake retrofit works to insulate residents' homes. This will be followed by installation of low-carbon heating systems – this process remains several years away. Finally, we will seek to offset any residual carbon emissions in other ways, for example by facilitating tree planting projects.

TERMS EXPLAINED:

SHIFT
Sustainable Homes Index For Tomorrow is the sustainability standard for the housing sector.

SAP
The **Standard Assessment Procedure** is the methodology used by the government to assess and compare the energy and environmental performance of dwellings.

EPC
Energy Performance Certificates are needed whenever a property is built, sold or rented.

Net Zero
Net zero-carbon housing and zero-energy housing are terms used interchangeably to define **single family dwellings with a very high energy efficiency rating**. Zero-energy housing requires a very low amount of energy to conduct the daily activities performed by the occupying family.

Traditional gas boilers will eventually become a thing of the past.

These solar cells on a roof at one of our properties at Brampton Road, Bexleyheath, have now been in place for some years and help illustrate how Hexagon was already committed to reducing our carbon footprint. The new 4-year plan we are currently designing to meet the government's new carbon zero targets will increase the pace and scale of our commitment.

WHEN WILL THIS HAPPEN?

Our 4-year plan to achieve the government's zero carbon challenge is currently being developed.

Across the UK, the entire supply chain for the retrofit works is not fully developed nor expansive enough to meet the huge demand. Therefore, Hexagon will be 'fishing in a small pond' together with other landlords of various sizes, and there may be a need to form partnerships to deliver the retrofit works. This – combined with ensuring that Hexagon has suitably qualified staff to manage the delivery of the major retrofit works – means that in 2022/23, no major retrofit works will be undertaken to meet the EPC Rating C and Net Zero Carbon emissions targets.

However, the Stock Improvement Team will continue delivering small scale retrofit works in 2022/23 in homes previously earmarked for these works. **A key challenge in undertaking this work is gaining access into residents homes, so we ask you to please co-operate. Benefits to having your home retrofitted include lower energy bills and enjoying a healthier, more sustainable home.**

SUSTAINABILITY COMPETITION WINNER

"These bottles, called eco-bricks, can be used for many things, such as shelves and furniture. To make them, fill your empty plastic bottles with clean, dry, non-recyclable materials such as shopping bags or crisp wrappers. Pack densely leaving no air pockets, with a 1cm gap under the lid."

Christine Matthews (SE26) wins a £20 shopping voucher.

Will residents be actively engaged?

YES!

- residents will play a key role in helping to ensure their homes become more sustainable and environment friendly. **This will help your wallet too with lower bills!**
- delivering a pragmatic and coherent bespoke resident engagement strategy for environmental sustainability – including digital and face to face training
- this will include reaching out to leaseholders and Shared Owners who are responsible for retrofit works in their own homes
- if you would like to get involved in helping guide our pathway to zero carbon, please register your interest by emailing: **getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk**

In addition: Retrofit works will be synchronised with all other relevant works that may be required in a resident's home. This is to avoid unnecessary repeat visits to residents' homes, which can be quite disruptive to residents.

LET'S KEEP EACH OTHER SAFE!

In follow up to the ongoing Grenfell Enquiry the government have issued revised fire safety guidance, made legal changes, proposed new laws and are in the process of setting up a new enforcement regime.

The aim of this is to increase scrutiny on social housing providers and reduce the fire risk to residents. Follow this link to see more details on the new laws and regulations being drawn together as a result of Grenfell:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-safety-bill-factsheets

Our revised fire safety procedures set out the improved way that Hexagon will manage fire safety risk and also introduces an expectation that **residents will play their part to help keep themselves and neighbours safe.**

Housing Associations have been given greater enforcement powers if residents chose to ignore the new fire safety guidance and laws, but Hexagon want to work with residents. To this end we have consulted thoroughly to make sure we have been as balanced as possible in terms of the rules we are setting.

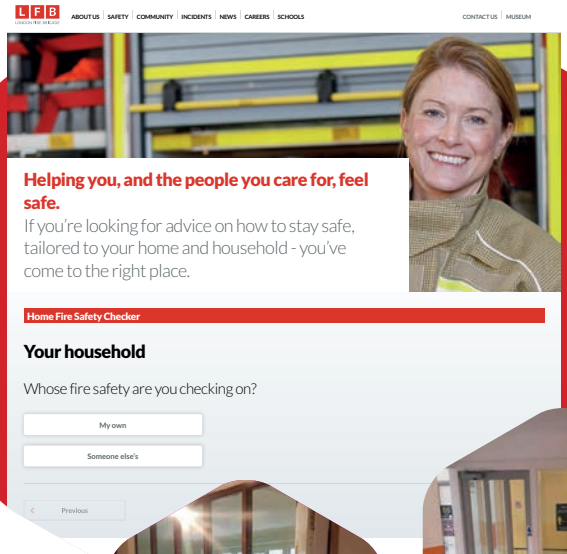
Everybody thinks a fire won't happen to them but remember they do happen sometimes so think of your family and your neighbours!

We recommend you follow the link to the LFB's new Home Fire Safe Checker to familiarise yourself with typical fire hazards around the home and how best to prevent them:
www.london-fire.gov.uk/home-fire-safety-checker/

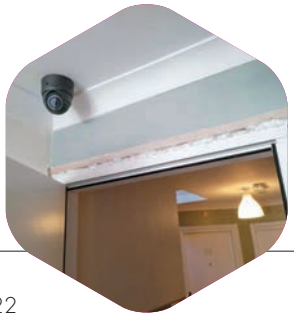
Our part of the deal

As part of our work to reduce the risk to residents in relation to fire we have been:

- Replacing existing fire doors with ones which are of 'best practice' standard
- Installing 'full property' alarm systems to street property conversions
- Revising all of our fire safety related procedures / guidance to make sure that staff, contractors and residents are clear about what needs to be done, by whom and when
- Putting in place a process by which we will work with residents who have concerns about evacuation to make sure suitable arrangements are in place



These images show some of the measures Hexagon are working on to help improve fire safety.



Your part of the deal

- Keeping common ways clear of any obstructions – standard doormats are fine but no bikes or buggies and definitely nothing combustible
- Not smoking in any common areas
- Keeping balconies free of clutter – particularly hazardous materials like calor gas, paints, petrol, etc
- When you are parking, make sure you are not restricting access to the block, the fire hydrant nor the dry riser – London Fire Brigade need every second!
- Outside walkways – you can have portable drying racks as long as you leave a metre free for access, and you must take them in at night. Non-combustible window boxes are fine
- Mobility scooters will block common ways and charging them is a fire hazard – if you have a scooter and cannot store and charge it within your property, please contact your Neighbourhood Officer
- Remember that security door and window locks or grilles will prevent your escape
- Be aware of the emergency access and think about what might happen if you woke up in thick smoke

THE HOMES FOR UKRAINE SCHEME

The Homes for Ukraine scheme will allow individuals to bring Ukrainians to safety – including those with no family ties to the UK.

If this is something that you'd like to do please register your interest on **www.gov.uk/register-interest-homes-ukraine**

If you have a spare bedroom and you'd like to host a household/person fleeing Ukraine for 6 months or more we won't stand in your way. Please just let us know. You'll be paid £350 per calendar month.

Q: If I'm on Housing Benefit or Universal Credit how will the £350 pcm be treated?

A: Payment of the £350 thank you payment can be disregarded for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit.

Q: I'm on pension credit, how will the payment be treated?

A: The payment can be disregarded for the purposes of calculating State Pension Credit.

Q: I'm on Income Support or income-related ESA, how will the payment be treated?

A: The payment will be disregarded for the purposes of calculating ESA.

Q: Will I lose my 25% council tax reduction as a single-occupier lose if a Ukranian refugee moves in?

A: Our understanding is that entitlement to the council tax single person discount should not be impacted by an individual's participation in the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Q: Where the sponsor is affected by the LHA limit or RSRS, how will the refugee be considered?

A: As the Ukrainian national and their family members, if applicable, are to be treated as not normally residing with their host, there is no change to the number of bedrooms which the claimant is entitled to under the removal of the spare room subsidy. We have always been clear that a host will be no better or worse off in terms of their benefit entitlement.

JANE EYLES

RESIDENT VOICE & ENGAGEMENT LEAD

Photo supplied by Jane Eyles

Q1 Job Title and department
Resident Voice & Engagement Lead.
This team used to be known as Resident Involvement. Hexagon have changed the team name to fit in with the government's recent Social Housing White Paper, with an increased emphasis on listening to residents.

Q2 When did you start working at Hexagon?
I started this job in January 2022 but have worked here previously as Policy Officer and as a consultant.

Q3 Previous experience in similar roles?
Head of Engagement at Camden Council and at Genesis. I've also worked for Tpas – a leading resident engagement consultancy – for the last 19 years, working with government and housing organisations around the country.

Q4 Responsibilities in this role?
Leading the Resident Voice & Engagement Team. We run a range of resident groups to enable residents to have a voice which Hexagon listens to, ensuring residents are able to change things. We additionally try to capture all individual feedback so it can lead to improvements.

Q5 What do you enjoy most about your job?
Every time I speak with residents on the doorstep or in a formal setting, I always learn something.

Q6 What is important about your role?
Although some Hexagon residents work for Hexagon, most staff go home at night and don't always understand what's needed. That's why we design services with residents involved in the process.

Q7 What kind of working relationship do you seek with residents?
One that is governed by mutual respect and a bit of fun thrown in for good measure.

Q8 What is the most important message you can give to residents (relevant to your role)?
Contact us on **getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk** and find out how you can change things!

Q9 What main interests do you enjoy outside of Hexagon work?
I'm a fanatic for Brighton & Hove Albion (somewhat dangerous in South East London), and have a season ticket. I also rescue stray lurchers and the odd cat.

Q10 Tell us something interesting/ surprising about yourself?
I lived in the USA for over a year, working at a Domestic Violence Shelter in Detroit and nearly got shot!

NEW REPAIRS CONTRACTOR

Following a rigorous procurement process, in which Hexagon was supported by a specialist procurement consultancy firm, members of Hexagon's Residents' Repairs Group and some of Hexagon's Board members, Hexagon can confirm that it has appointed Gilmartins as its new responsive and void repairs contractor with effect from 1 July 2022.

Gilmartins is a medium sized company that was founded in 1996 and has been working in the social housing sector delivering responsive repairs, void refurbishments, planned maintenance and cyclical redecorations throughout the London and South East regions.

The new repairs service will offer residents greater flexibility and convenience in booking appointments for repairs between 0800hrs – 2000hrs from Monday – Friday and 0900hrs – 1300hrs on Saturdays. In addition to getting a reminder for a booked appointment to complete a repair, a resident will also have the chance to install an app on their phone, which will enable them to track an operative's journey to their home.

Gilmartins will aim to complete a repair on their first visit to a resident's home and if a follow-up visit is required, an operative will book an appointment that is convenient for the resident before leaving their home. If they are qualified to do so, and have the right materials and tools, an operative can complete other repairs that a resident may not have previously reported during their visit.

We also have a new gas and electrical contractor, Smith & Byford. See back page for contact details.

Every time a repair is completed, the resident will be asked for feedback and if they are not satisfied with the completed repair, an officer from Gilmartins will contact the resident and agree the most suitable option to address the issue(s) raised by the resident.

Hexagon looks forward to establishing a successful long-term partnership with Gilmartins that will ensure residents' homes are always well maintained and repairs are carried out on time and to the residents' satisfaction.

COMPETITION

SUSTAINABLE CHOICES COMPETITION

Home News readers can look forward to seeing a 'List Of Promises' given by Gilmartins to add social value.

Using these photos as prompts, what are some ways you may change your lifestyle to help the environment? Send in your answers to **homenews@hexagon.org.uk** by Friday 27th May. One correct entry will win a £20 voucher.

GOING DIGITAL?

In the interests of overall sustainability as an organisation, here at Home News there is discussion regarding changing the way we produce and deliver the magazine to you, our readers.

- The paper magazine is printed on forest friendly paper and delivered in a biodegradable plastic sleeve BUT snailmail road miles = 4,100 copies in postal vans travelling across SE London
- Per edition: Printing is circa £2,000 and mail distribution is circa £5,000
- Reader Choice: Home News Readers' Survey found 48% of the 82 respondents prefer to receive the paper version of Home News, 30% opt to receive it by email, 4% choose to view it on our Hexagon website, 18% no preference given. Please email **homenews@hexagon.org.uk** to enter this debate and give us your preference

Rebecca Outram, our Housing Services Director, adds, "We will be developing a Hexagon communication strategy. We are always looking to make sure we all get value for money. It's important Hexagon and residents think about the impact on the environment of the continued use of a paper copy of Home News."

What is your view? Please email **homenews@hexagon.org.uk** to let us know your view on the paper vs digital debate.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MISSING COMPETITION VOUCHER?

WHERE IS MY MISSING PRIZE VOUCHER?

Entering Home News competitions is fun and can earn you shopping vouchers to redeem in a wide variety of stores... However, we regularly receive emails asking why the prize vouchers have not arrived – for example as below from resident Tony. Here is our response:

"I am sorry to hear that you did not seem to receive the prize voucher. The vouchers are emailed to you at this email address which is the one you used to submit the competition entry. It may be that it arrived in your junkmail. Please do a search for 'Giftpay' in your junk mail folder. Please let me know if you find the voucher in your junkmail."

Tony's response:

"Thanks for your well co-ordinated explanation. I have found my child's voucher. Well appreciated.

Kind regards."

Hexagon resident 'Tony' (name changed)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LOOKING BACK A YEAR AGO, HOW ARE WE DOING NOW?

Resident Renee wrote this LETTER TO THE EDITOR about the Spring 2021 edition of Home News.

Dear Editor

I wanted to commend you on another great edition of Home News. The magazine has really transformed over the past year and to my surprise I now find myself enjoying reading through it. There's a lot packed in so I can usually only read through the content in short bursts as time allows, however I enjoy the variety and am often nicely surprised at the useful snippets I take away. Overall presentation is clearer with a good combination of both text and pictures. And rather than being too 'shouty' about Hexagon or focussing on corporate matters, its sense of community spirit, life skills/tips, green values and unique people stories make for interesting and often inspiring reading.

From a Shared Owners' perspective, the articles on the New Property Safety Team under Michael Galt and re-launch of the Repairs Group in particular were useful. I'm sure many would have found the STAR interview technique piece beneficial, particularly those seeking re-employment following the very difficult Covid-19 period. From a general interest perspective I enjoyed the pages on 'Jump Start Yourself', 'Mark's Poetry Club' and 'Eco Friendly Homeworking' (I didn't realise bamboo pens existed and shall be looking to procure some). The 'Men In Sheds' article showcasing Dennis was particularly heart-warming – a wonderful idea and indeed topical at a time when many men across many communities often struggle to connect, having been traditionally conditioned not to talk or 'open up' about how they are feeling or coping in day-to-day life. This has tragically contributed to the increase in male suicide rate in esp. men aged 45-49. Thank you for shining a light on this important topic.

Well done on a great job and the noticeable difference you've made in your role – it is my sincere hope that other departments within Hexagon can take a leaf out of your book and drive much needed improvements in their own patches, the same way in which you've re-shaped Home News for the better.

Kind regards,
Renee
Southwark

Property safety

Poetry club

Mr Dennis Lowther, Men In Sheds

Photos from the pages Renee writes about in her review of the Spring 2021 edition of Home News.

That was a year ago – how are we doing now? Please email your comments to **homenews@hexagom.org.uk**

Published letters receive a £5 shopping voucher as a thank you!

PHOTO COMPETITION

COMPETITION WINNERS

GREEN ENVIRONMENTS IN LONDON LIFE

WE KNOW THERE IS A VAST VARIETY OF TALENT OUT THERE AMONG OUR HEXAGON COMMUNITY!

Home News were keen to celebrate your creativity by offering our residents the chance to shine in our Photo Competition. And wow, just take a look at our winners' wonderful landscape photographs!

The theme for this photo competition was:
Green Environments in London Life.

Our three winners' are published here, and each receive a £20 shopping voucher.

Julie Collins (SE18): "The ducks and lake were taken at Thamesmead. The flamingo photo was taken in London zoo."

Martina Lee of Croydon
"My pictures were taken in Morden Park, near to Phipps Bridge tram stop. It's a beautiful relaxing area."

NEW COMPETITION

SUMMER EDITION PHOTO COMPETITION

Send in your photos of natural beauty spots in London to **homenews@hexagon.org.uk** by Friday 27th May. If we publish your entry in Home News Summer 2022 a £20 shopping voucher will come to your email. Editor's decision is final.

Tereza O'Neill (SE5)
"The photo is of berries taken in my front garden, Camberwell, London."

KIDS' ZONE

COMPETITION

SPRING Search

Find the words in the puzzle grid below. Words may go forwards and backwards or across and down.

If you think you have found all the correct words in the word search, simply cut out and email to **homenews@hexagon.org.uk** by **Friday 27th May**.

Three correct entries will be drawn at random. Each will receive a £10 shopping voucher.

To ensure only children who are Hexagon residents enter this competition, all entries must include your full address including postcode, plus your full name and your age.

G	F	S	Q	O	I	I	S	L	S	U	R
E	D	U	R	Y	G	N	D	M	B	K	V
B	T	A	P	T	I	Q	E	K	D	I	F
S	K	N	F	A	G	H	E	H	P	B	C
P	T	D	R	F	B	W	S	Q	P	R	J
I	S	R	E	W	O	L	F	D	T	L	S
L	F	H	Z	F	G	D	S	A	N	U	M
U	X	U	U	F	R	R	I	D	J	T	Z
T	H	C	U	Z	A	J	A	L	U	T	V
U	M	B	R	E	L	L	A	S	S	B	M
B	N	S	M	G	N	I	R	P	S	M	K
R	A	I	N	B	O	W	D	J	A	C	P

BUDS
DAFFODILS
FLOWERS
GRASS
RAIN
RAINBOW
SEEDS
SPRING
TULIPS
UMBRELLA

WINNERS

Kids Page Winners

Congratulations to Millie Mochan age 9 (SE23), Edlyn Nash age 11 (SE8), and Natasha Marino age 10 (SE4) whose correct entries each won the Word Search in the last edition.

The winners of the Animal Survival Quiz (returning in Autumn 2022) were Wisdom Okonkwo age 8 (CR0), and Esma Okudan age 13 (SE18).

All winners receive a £10 shopping voucher.

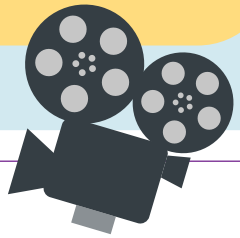
JOKE TIME

Q How do oceans say hello to each other?

A They wave

Q Where do cows go for entertainment?

A The moo-vies



Q Why do bees have sticky hair?

A Because they use honeycombs?

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

TOM'S FAREWELL

(Continued from page 3)

Resident involvement and community outreach has always been integral to our housing work. The people I have had the privilege of working with understand that Hexagon is more a people business than a housing business.

Nothing in my time has been more shocking to me than the sight of Grenfell Tower alight and the tragic loss of 72 people who died that night. I know Hexagon took that tragedy as a spur to double our resolve to go the extra mile to help keep our residents safe and to really listen to you.

Most people are experiencing financial hardship with rising utility bills, alongside a threat to our children's and grandchildren's futures via an unsustainable reliance on fossil fuels. Hexagon's latest 30-year business plan addresses these factors with forecasted spending of £50m between now and 2050 to ensure all our homes are net zero carbon. With devil in the detail and a major effort on the communications front, this move away from fossil fuels will prove a real challenge, but I am sure it is a challenge that Hexagon will meet.

When I arrived in the sector, what marked out housing associations as unique social enterprises was that we were almost all not-for-profit charities. As a sector, we reinvested all profits into the business of maintaining and building homes rather than paying dividends to shareholders. I leave the sector believing as strongly as ever that therein lies an undeniable strength that will see Hexagon go from strength to strength.

To all the many residents who I have met along this amazing journey, thanks for your appreciation when we got things right, for your patience when we did not, and for your valued feedback on our continuous improvement journey. We exist for your benefit, and it has always been about you.

COMPETITION TIME WINNERS

WINNERS

Congratulations to our last edition's winners:

Jayvaan Williams-Callam (SE19), Beatrice Githendu (SE1), and Nicole Garrett (SE18) who each receive a £20 voucher.

WAYS YOU CAN CONTACT US

Freephone **0800 393 338**

Landline **020 8778 6699**

Option 1 for all gas queries – your call will be automatically transferred to our Gas contractors

Option 2 for all repairs related queries

Option 3 for tenancy and rent queries

Option 4 for general enquires

customer_desk@hexagon.org.uk
for all general enquiries

repairs_reporting@hexagon.org.uk
to report a repair

www.hexagon.org.uk

Text **07537 400 527**

130-136 Sydenham Road, London SE26 5JY

Our new gas contractor Smith & Byford can be contacted on

Freephone: **0800 088 4433**.

To report any new repairs email:
hexagondomesticgas@smithandbyford.com

Follow us for regular updates, event invitations and news:
HexagonHousingAssociation
@HexagonHousing

TRANSLATE!

Always happy to translate!

Chinese
永遠樂於翻譯！

Eritrean
"ንሽኑተርጉመልኩም ኩሉግዜ ሕጉሳት ኢና!"

French
Toujours heureux de traduire!

Portuguese
Sempre feliz a traduzir!

Vietnamese
Luôn luôn vui lòng phiên dịch!

Urdu
ترجمے کے لیے ہردم تیار

LARGE PRINT

If you would like this edition of Home News in large print or braille, please contact Hexagon.