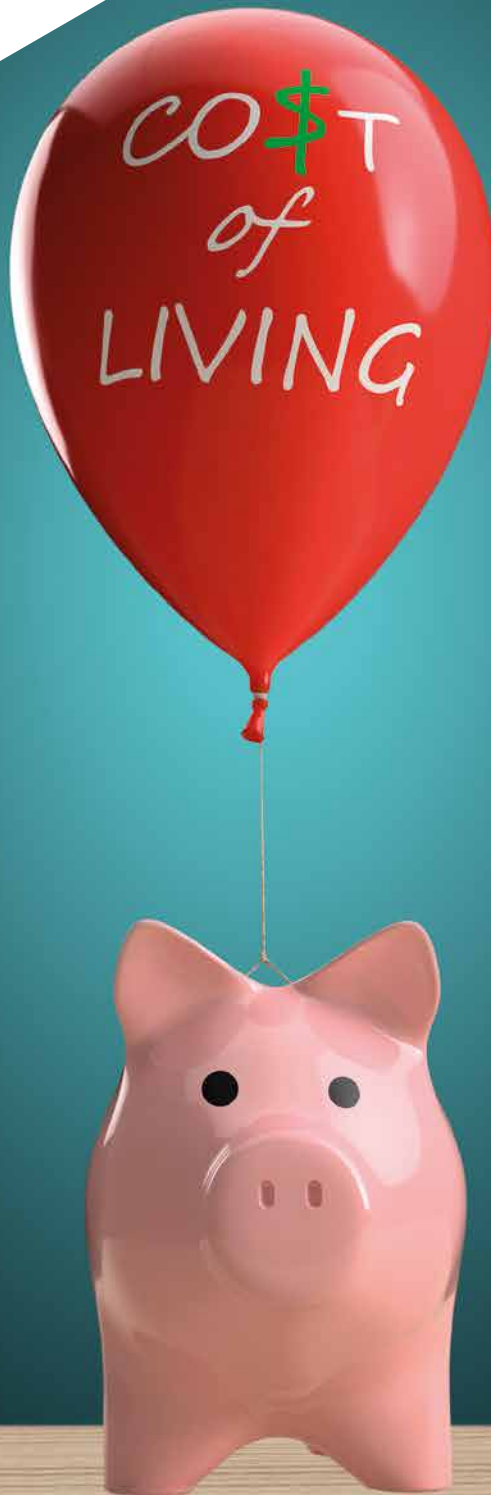


HOME NEWS

Hexagon



FINANCIALLY HARD TIMES

You are invited to find out our thoughts and share your views on how Hexagon can manage the financial hard times moving forward.

Sessions are on Wednesday 8th February from 10am – noon or from 6pm – 8pm.

Sessions are online or in person at our offices. To book a place, please telephone 0203 892 4751 or email getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk



10-12

See help with the cost of living on pages 10, 11 and 12

Hexagon wins Gold Shift Award (Sustainability)



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SHERON'S SAYINGS



The death of two year old Awaab Ishak in 2020 has put the spotlight on how we deal with condensation, damp and mould. Awaab died after prolonged exposure to mould in his housing association home in Rochdale.

Condensation occurs when humid air touches a cold surface. Fogged, streaming windows, black mould and musty smells are early signs. This can keep recurring and we can help by improving ventilation, doing a mould wash, and providing advice.

Our contractors will carry out a survey to see if there is an underlying problem which can be causing damp. Common signs of damp include:

- Water droplets, mould, mildew or discoloured patches.
- Excessive condensation on windows, all year round.
- Rotting woodwork.
- Peeling wallpaper
- A damp, musty smell

We will find and remedy the cause, assist in drying the home out, and repair any damage. This may need a damp and mould specialist or claim against any warranty. We will aim to do this as quickly as possible. In disrepair claims, we will seek to remedy the problem, without waiting for a legal judgment.

If you have any of these signs, please report them to us. More details are on our website.

If you would prefer to receive this magazine by post instead of digitally, 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. We offer a £5 voucher for any we publish!

Follow us online to receive regular updates, event invitations and news:

[f /HexagonHA](https://www.facebook.com/HexagonHA) [@HousingHexagon](https://www.twitter.com/HousingHexagon)

YOU SAID WE DID



Welcome to the latest 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.



Rebecca Outram,
Housing Services Director.
Photo supplied by Rebecca

You said.....

We did...

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● You'd like to be involved in the procurement of our new grounds maintenance & cleaning service. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● We've held a focus group with customers to help us review the specification. We will be involving a small group of customers in the selection stage of the new contract. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● You're concerned at our poor communication and that we don't get back to customers in a timely way. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● We've introduced the first phase of our Customer Relationship Management system from Tuesday 6th December. We're starting off in our Customer Services Centre and then we plan to roll this out across Hexagon. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● You're not satisfied that we don't have any nomination rights to our homes in Lewisham | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● We've set up a meeting with Lewisham to re-negotiate us holding a small proportion of the homes in Lewisham so that we can help people on our transfer register. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● A large number of customers in Peckham and South Bermondsey told us they were living with money and health worries, struggling to make ends meet | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● We've joined forces with local GPs, Citizens Advice Southwark & three other housing associations to provide extra support for people. You can request an appointment by going online at: getmebackontrack.org.uk |

We would love to hear your suggestions on how we can improve – please send them in and we can feature them here or explain why we are unable to?

STAY WARM THIS WINTER



Some Lewisham and Southwark residents who attended

Back row from left
Sheena Starrett (Hexagon),
Tristan Jackson

Middle row from left
Rosie Hewson (Hexagon),
Megan Morgan,
Maria Saavedra,
Steven Pinta (SELCE)

Front row from left
Shanty Murugaiah,
Rose Mustafa,
Samfred Kwarteng,
Bilqis Alam (SELCE)

On a torrentially wet November day, 13 residents came to an energy advice workshop at the Hexagon offices.

Advisers from South-East London Community Energy (SELCE) talked about different ways they can help residents such as calling energy providers on their behalf and ensuring people are getting discounts they may be entitled to. Residents took up the offer of 1-2-1 advice calls and home visits where energy saving measures like draught-excluders could be installed.

One resident, Maria Saavedra commented, "I am very excited to see that Hexagon and SELCE have so much support and advice on offer to help people through these difficult times, especially with a financial focus."

We would like to organise more events like this and to hear your views on what would be useful to you. Another suggestion has been to run a course like 'Low Energy Cooking' so we are running a free one in the Spring with Lewisham Adult Education (open to residents of all boroughs).

If you are interested in this or have any other ideas, call Sheena on 0208 778 6699 or email: sstarrett@hexagon.org.uk.

Help Is Out There

In every borough, there are organisations that provide advice and support with energy. It's worth speaking to one about how they can help you. **South London Healthy Homes** covers all our boroughs. Call on **0808 169 1779**.

These other organisations work in different boroughs:

Southwark

Groundwork Green Doctors
Tel 0300 365 3005

Lewisham and Bexley

South-East London Community Energy
Tel 020 4566 5764

Croydon

Croydon Healthy Homes
Tel 0800 292 2529

Greenwich

Live Well
Tel 0800 470 4831

South-East London Community Energy
Tel 020 4566 5764

If you would like us to refer you, email us at: MoneySupport@hexagon.org.uk or call **020 8778 6699** and ask for Money Support.

OLDER PEOPLE EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT AND WELL-BEING

In 2019, 61% of people aged 50 to 64 were in paid work. They comprised 31% (almost a third) of the UK workforce – compared to just 21% in 1992.

However, older workers were more likely to be made redundant during the pandemic and – once redundant – less likely to be re-employed than younger workers. Being sick, injured or disabled continues to be the main reason why people aged between 50 and 64 years are economically inactive in the labour market.

With nearly 760,000 of this age group now actively seeking work or inactive but willing to work, **Hexagon is offering targeted support**. A residents' working group has been setup, which suggests how we can better support older residents. They had the idea for the Stay Warm This Winter energy workshop we delivered for residents in partnership with SELCE on November 3rd (see opposite page).

More workshops will follow on staying fit, health and wellbeing, employment, and getting online – plus we'll be hosting monthly coffee mornings.

Our employment advisor, Rosie Hewson, also offers 1-1 employment support and careers advice to older residents.

Other support available

DWP 50PLUS Choices, will increase jobcentre support for over 50s through 37 50PLUS Champions offering one to one support and working with local employers to encourage them to recruit older people.

www.gov.uk/government/news/new-package-of-support-to-help-over-50s-jobseekers-back-into-work

Wise Age is a 50+ age and employment charity offering a wide range of resources to support over 50s looking for work:

www.wiseage.org.uk

Rest Less is a digital community for over 50s offering information and resources on employment, volunteering, health, money, learning and leisure: www.restless.co.uk

Start Up School for Seniors delivers an online course aimed at 50+ people looking to start their own business and be part of a community of older business owners.

www.startupschoolforseniors.com/

Older workers were more likely to be made redundant during the pandemic

If you'd like to join Hexagon's working group, come to an event, or access employment support then please contact us via email to:

employmentandtraining@hexagon.org.uk or call 020 8778 6699 and ask to speak to an employment advisor. More information will be available on our website in the New Year.

www.hexagon.org.uk/community-investment



RESIDENT SUCCESS STORIES

Sarah registered onto our **Love London Working** project in February 2021.

She accessed interview coaching, CV support, help to write a police caution declaration for employers and to improve supporting statements. One of her statements was used as a best practice example.

Sarah grew in confidence and got a part time Hub Support Coordinator role in July 2021. Her advisor ensured her two children's childcare costs were covered for her first month of employment.

Sarah registered onto our **In Work Progression Project** in January 2022.

We refreshed her interview skills and she found work as an administrator. Her advisor forwarded her for a higher paid finance assistant role and she was successful at interview. She then got a promotion in her administrator role, earning more money. She works part-time hours, in two jobs, around her childcare commitments.

Sarah says, **"I really felt listened to and felt like the support was tailored to suit me and my needs. Overall, I had an amazing experience and I highly recommend it to any Hexagon resident who may be struggling to find employment."**

Tyrone registered onto our **Love London Working** project in July 2022.

He'd worked in senior retail management but wanted to work in social housing.

Tyrone discussed his experience and career goals with his advisor and got advice on tailoring his CV for housing roles.

Tyrone regularly met his advisor; they agreed he would complete work experience. His advisor forwarded his CV to Hexagon's Neighbourhood Team Leaders, so they'd consider him for a placement or employment.

A Team Leader asked if Tyrone would be interested in a casual Neighbourhoods support role to gain experience. He was initially apprehensive about the entry level of the role, but after discussion and considering his options, he attended an interview and was successful. His advisor provided a character reference.

Tyrone has been working within our Neighbourhoods Team since August 2022.

Tyrone says: **"I have always wanted to take my expertise and experience and cross over to housing. Hexagon has been a great support as I continue my journey"**.



Carly Foley who is the new Neighbourhood & Estate Services Lead, overseeing Tyrone



MANAGING FINANCIAL CHANGES

CASE STUDY: Money Support Service

Financial life changes can happen to anyone, and the result could be that your income goes down. If this ever happens to you or you have any other money issues, Hexagon has a free Money Support Service (MSS).

One of our residents Hazel from Southwark, engaged with MSS when she went onto Universal Credit (UC) for the first time. A big concern for Hazel was with less money coming in, how was she going to pay her rent, bills and buy food. Hazel worked with Linda McMahon, one of our Money Support Advisors.

Through this process Hazel was able to explore and learn about the following:

- how to navigate her online UC account
- where the UC statement page was and when Hazel would receive her first UC payment
- how to communicate with UC, via Hazel's UC online journal
- how to request for UC to pay her rent directly to Hexagon
- complete an online budget of income and outgoings – from this Hazel was able to see where her money was going
- work out where she could cut back and save money
- compare different TV packages to find cheaper options, then negotiate a cheaper package
- check she was getting the correct benefits
- support with her application for PIP (Personal Independence Payment)
- encouraged to speak with her Hexagon Customer Accounts Officer, Hazel learnt she was no longer in rent arrears and was able to cancel her arrears payment

Additionally to the above services, when Hazel's microwave began to fall apart during this time, she expressed how her microwave was an essential part of her life due to not always being able to use her cooker. Hexagon were able to get her a grant to buy a new microwave.

Hazel said, "Working with the Hexagon Money Support Team helped to steer me in the right direction. I will be forever grateful to them."



Linda McMahon,
Hexagon Money
Support Advisor

If you ever need to make use of our free Money Support Service, you can email us at: moneysupport@hexagon.org.uk, or call our Customer Services on 0208 778 6699.

SKILLS ACADEMY COURSES AND LEARNING EVENT

Hexagon has a great free online training offer for residents.

There are a total of 690 free courses ranging from beginners to advanced. Some are CPD certified, meaning you gain a recognised Continuing Professional Development qualification.

Residents have unlimited access to the courses and can do as many as they want.

Hexagon and the Skills Academy will be holding an event in January to show residents the courses available, how to use the learning platform, and help them register for courses.

Refreshments will be provided, travel expenses covered and the first 15 people to complete a course will receive a £10 Amazon voucher.

The date of the event, venue and details on how to book your place will be available on our website in the New Year. Follow this link for more details: www.hexagon.org.uk/community-investment/

EMPLOYABILITY SESSIONS WITH BELL GROUP

This year we are relaunching our delivery of employability workshops in partnership with Bell Group.

Bell Group is currently one of the largest Property Services contractors in the UK and are one of Hexagon's contractors.

They assisted us in the delivery of our online employability workshops during lockdown, which received great feedback from residents who found having an employer's perspective useful.

Bell Group will assist us in the design and delivery of the following sessions in 2023:

- Interview Skills
- Teamwork
- Assertiveness
- Problem Solving
- Managing Time

Sessions will be available online and in-person, expenses will be covered for those that attend in person and refreshments will be provided.

Dates of sessions and booking instructions will be available on our website in the New Year. hexagon.org.uk/community-investment/

Contact us: employmentandtraining@hexagon.org.uk or call 020 8778 6699 and ask to speak to an employment advisor for more information.

FREE TRAINING PROVISION IN 2023

We're excited to announce a range of free online and in-person courses available to Hexagon residents this year.

Vocational

- Security Industry Association Door Supervisor training, including First Aid and SIA licence
- Level 1 Health and Safety in Construction including CSCS Card
- Nail Technician
- Business Administration
- Introduction to Working in Social Housing

Self-Employment/Business Start-Up

- Business Start-Up information sessions
- Business Start-Up Courses
- Business Masterclasses e.g. Perfect Your Pitch

Community

- Cooking on a Budget Taster Session and Course
- Sewing, Mending and Upcycling Clothes

Learning Curve also offer a range of free Level 2 and 3 courses including Leadership and Management and Counselling Skills.

Travel and childcare costs will be covered and refreshments provided for all in-person courses.

Dates of courses, venues and booking instructions will be available on our website: hexagon.org.uk/community-investment/



Contact us: employmentandtraining@hexagon.org.uk
or call 020 8778 6699 and ask to speak to an employment advisor for more information.

LET'S GET THROUGH THIS WINTER, LET'S GET TALKING

Rising costs of living is affecting many of us. Worrying about money can be extremely stressful. This can feel very debilitating and create the feeling of being stuck in a 'vicious cycle' because it doesn't feel like you can change the situation.

You are not alone: we are here to listen, understand and help you to take steps to stop the cycle and take steps forward.

Please take that first step today

Email moneysupport@hexagon.org.uk

Telephone **0208 778 6699** and ask for Money Support.

Text callback to **07900 227 554** and we will call you back.

Priority and non-priority debts

Some debts are more important than others and being aware which debts should take priority can help keep your home.

Priority debts

Some debts are called priority debts because they can cause you serious problems if you do not pay them.

These include:

- Rent; gas and electricity debts; council tax; certain payments ordered by the courts
- Child support and maintenance payments and payments for your TV licence.

The consequences of not paying a priority debt includes:

- Losing your home through rent arrears
- Your electricity or gas may be cut off or an expensive prepayment meter could be installed.
- Lose hire purchase goods such as a car or furniture
- If you do not pay your council tax, TV licence, taxes or magistrates court fines you could go to prison.

Non-priority debts

Credit card, bank overdraft, store cards, payday loans, benefit overpayment and unsecured personal loans etc are non-priority and failing to pay them would not lead to loss of your home, liberty or essential goods or services. However, it is important you deal with them because your credit may be affected if miss contractual monthly repayments. Also, you could be taken to court to secure a county court judgment against you if you do not deal with them.

Needs Versus Wants?

Needs are things such as food, water and shelter that are a necessity for survival and constant in our lives because we cannot live without them. On the other hand, wants are desires, things such as a new car, latest mobile telephones or new clothes, that we can live without.

You must take care of your needs financially before your wants.

How Universal Credit works?

You will normally receive one monthly payment to cover your living costs and if you claim as a couple, you and your partner will get one payment between the two of you.

The payment is made up of a basic 'standard allowance' and extra payments that might apply to you depending on your circumstances.

You might be able to get extra payments if you:

- Look after one or more children
- Work and pay for childcare
- Need help with housing costs
- Are disabled or have a health condition
- Are a carer for a disabled person or you have a disabled child

If you get help with rent

If your UC payment includes help with rent, you will have to pay Hexagon each month from your Universal Credit payment. However, if you are debt, have rent arrears or struggling to manage your money you can ask the DWP to pay directly to Hexagon.

If you are working

You can get Universal Credit if you are working but your benefit will reduce gradually as you earn more, and it will go up if your job ends or you earn less.

If you are self-employed, the DWP will expect you to earn a certain amount each month called 'minimum income floor'.

Claiming other benefits if you get Universal Credit

You should make a separate application for council tax support – if you get it, it will not affect the amount of Universal Credit you get.

Get Advance Payment

It will usually take 5 weeks after you apply to get your first payment, but you can ask for your first payment sooner if you do not have enough money to live on called an 'advance payment'. The advance payment is a loan which will be taken off directly from Universal Credit payments every month until you have paid it back.

Check if you are entitled to or better off on Universal Credit, use this helpful UC helper tool – uc-helper.co.uk/hexagon-housing-association-11deasyv/home

Some debts are more important than others and being aware which debts should take priority can help keep your home.



Useful Information

Check the government website – www.helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk

Check if you are on all the correct benefits, do a benefit calculator such as www.betteroffcalculator.co.uk/calculator/new/step1, Check whether you can lower any of your bills

Council Tax

Each council has a single person's discount and income-based council tax reductions apply with your local Council

Thames Water

WaterHelp – If you are living in a household where the household income is below **£20,111** you could be entitled to a **50%** discount on your whole bill.

www.thameswater.co.uk/help/account-and-billing/financial-support/waterhelp

Phone Telephone And Wifi

If you are paying high broadband or phone costs, you may be eligible for a social tariff. If you are on certain benefits, contact your provider and ask them if you're entitled and can you be moved on to one.

Please email moneysupport@hexagon.org.uk or call **020 8768 6699** and ask for a list of services in your area to be sent to you.

Lastly if you are without credit on your mobile, Hexagon have data sims, that we can issue to residents over the age of 18 and without data. Contact us for the following:

- O2 – unlimited UK calls and texts with 15GB of data
- Vodafone – unlimited UK calls and texts with 20GB of data
- Three – 24GB of data

Food

To reduce your food bill, shop in a social supermarket. Social Supermarkets offer discounted food parcels, typically about £35 worth of food for a cost of around £3.50 per shop. You can find one by typing in to your internet search engine – "social supermarket in my area". If you do not have internet access, call and ask us at Hexagon Money Support to find one near to you (contact details at the bottom of article)

Check out online shops that sell food that is past best before date store.approvedfood.co.uk/best_before.

Each borough council (Lewisham, Greenwich, Southwark, Croydon and Bexley) has an array of free support and advice services that you can contact. This includes housing advice, free specialist debt and benefit advice, food support in your area and Well-Being.

Email moneysupport@hexagon.org.uk

Telephone **0208 778 6699** and ask for Money Support.

Text callback to **0790 0227 554** and we will call you back.



We can help with free data

SUPPORTED CV AND JOB APPLICATION SESSIONS

With L&Q and Southwark Works

Hexagon are working with L&Q and Southwark Works to support residents with job search.

Residents can access support from experienced Employment Advisors to create or update their CV, apply for jobs online, draft cover letters and supporting statements.

L&Q is one of the largest housing associations in London. They and their contractors, such as AD Construction, have a wide range of vacancies available. Several residents have secured employment as Customer Service Advisors with L&Q.

Southwark Works offer a free employment support service for anyone living within the London borough of Southwark, including an offer for 16-24 year olds; referring them to interview for vacancies.

Sessions will be in-person. Travel expenses will be covered and refreshments provided.

Dates of sessions and booking instructions will be available on our website.

www.hexagon.org.uk/community-investment/

Email us on: employmentandtraining@hexagon.org.uk or call 020 8778 6699 to speak to an employment advisor for more information.




Refreshments
will be
provided

ESTATE INSPECTIONS AND RESIDENT INSPECTIONS

Our monitoring services returned to normal this year. Neighbourhood and Estates Contractor Monitoring Officers have been completing quarterly inspections.

iAuditor

Since November 2021, we have been using an updated inspection template called 'iAuditor' – a mobile app which offers a comprehensive inspection checklist including essential questions on fire, health and safety in our blocks. Between the Neighbourhood Officers, and the Estate Services Contractor Monitoring Officer visits, **100%** of estates were inspected this year.

Online and face-to-face meetings with the two main contractors, Cleanscapes and Cleangreen, continued throughout the year. Information on performance issues – including photos – are captured on iAuditor then transferred to the contractors as and when they arise. These are monitored via an Action Sheet and followed up on at the monthly meetings.

Estate Services Survey

A survey was completed in Autumn 2021 and the overall satisfaction rate for estate services is **49.3%**. Our overall resident satisfaction scores are poor across all categories of residents, and there are low scores for certain services from some groups. It is clear our service needs urgent improvement if we are to deliver the standards that our residents expect and deserve.

What are we doing to improve?

Based on information that we know about our estates, we are reviewing the level of estate inspections for each site. Some estates will be inspected every month or two, and others will receive 4 or 6 monthly visits. This will enable us to spot problems and poor performance by contractors. Importantly, when estate repairs or improvement is agreed, to check that it has actually happened.

We are currently reviewing the level of estate inspections for each site. We have assessed all our sites and used that information to decide which sites require a monthly, 3 monthly, or 6 monthly inspection.

Our current contracts with Cleanscapes and Cleangreen end in Summer 2023. We are starting the process of choosing new contractors and have asked residents what they think should be the priorities of the service and the new contractors.



Sarah Cully is one of our Resident Inspectors who give their time to help ensure that Hexagon owned estates are kept to the highest standard possible.

RESIDENTS REVIEW NEIGHBOURHOOD ESTATE INSPECTIONS

Each year the Resident Inspection Team carry out detailed independent investigation into one of Hexagon's service areas. This year, the Inspection Team chose to scrutinise the Neighbourhood Estate Inspection service to assess if it was working effectively from a resident perspective and to agreed standards.

The inspection was in-depth and included shadowing an Estate Inspection, a review of key documents, interviews with people involved and a survey to understand residents' experiences. We would like to thank everybody involved for their time and valuable contributions.

After reviewing the findings, the Resident Inspection Team made 10 formal recommendations to Neighbourhood Service Management and the Housing Services Director – all of which have been accepted. The recommendations highlighted three overarching areas for improvement, including:

- More robust quality assurance, and a resourcing review, to better monitor grounds maintenance and cleaning services to help ensure they are provided to standard
- Improved communications with residents, as well as better internal communications
- A review of the service standards and service agreement to provide clarity on the standards expected, for everyone involved

An Action Plan is now in place to take forward the 10 recommendations which will be monitored in the short, medium, and long term.

Residents Inspection plays a hugely important role, and we'd like to express our sincere appreciation to the Resident Inspection Team for their commitment in helping to ensure that Hexagon is continually improving its service to residents.

Joy Worrell,
Oresha Stewart, Sarah
Cully and Sharon Brown
contribute time as Resident
Inspectors to help improve
Hexagon services

Joy
Worrell



Oresha
Stewart



Sarah
Cully



Sharon
Brown



Thank you to the residents
who supplied the photos
used on this page

MEETING RESIDENTS OUT & ABOUT



In the last edition we wrote all about the Big Conversation

The project involved all members of Hexagon staff going out in pairs to knock on doors and speak to as many of you as they could. This was to say hello after the pandemic and ask how you were doing and get some feedback on what you all thought of Hexagon.

We managed to speak to over 500 people and this is what you told us:

As the first graph below shows, you scored us an average of 3.36 out of 5 as a landlord.

You identified **Repairs and Communication** as the reasons for the low overall score.

Making Changes to Improve

As a result, we are making changes to improve.

We have:

- Put in a new IT system called a customer relationship management system which tracks all queries and monitors our response to you.
- Procured a new responsive repairs contractor, Gilmartins who we hope will improve our repairs' performance
- Carried out over 200 repairs as a result of the exercise

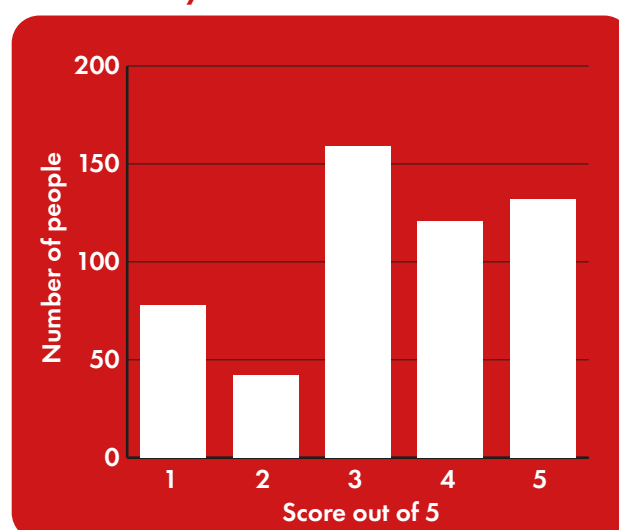
The vast majority of you did not know about the need to make all homes more energy efficient by 2030 and to reach carbon net zero by 2050. We spoke to you about it on the doorstep and have leaflets available.

We are drawing up a Sustainability engagement strategy so if you are interested in getting involved in green issues – do please email: getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk or telephone us on **0203 892 4751**.

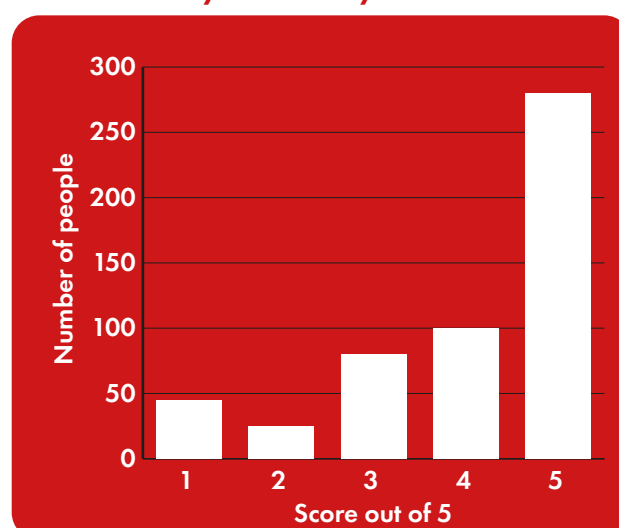
Most of you (see graph on right) told us you felt safe in your home – your queries were about front doors or door entry systems.

Lastly, many Hexagon staff members were really positive about getting out and speaking with residents. One manager of a back-office service said it was his favourite day at Hexagon after six years. Many others felt that they understood Hexagon much more as a result and could see things from your point of view!

How would you rate us as a landlord?



How safe do you feel in your home?



ESTATE GRADERS

Estate Graders are resident volunteers who carry out spot-checks on a number of different estates each year. The team assess the standard of communal areas looking at cleaning, grounds maintenance, communal repairs, signage and health and safety – identifying any issues that need addressing and giving each estate a grading of Bronze, Silver, or Gold. This summer, the team visited 20 estates and responses to issues identified have now been received. See the Spring 2023 edition of Home News for more information on their findings.



CASE STUDY: ONE EXAMPLE OF A RESIDENT PANEL

My name is Joy Worrell. I am a Hexagon resident living in Croydon. I recently sat on a residents' panel to assist Hexagon's Human Resources Team with recruiting the Neighbourhood and Estates Services Lead.



Joy Worrell,
Croydon

This new type of 'skill-based volunteering' is an excellent opportunity to get involved, whilst expanding your knowledge and talent for personal growth.

As a panel member, I took part in discussions facilitated by each candidate. I then provided feedback and suggestions to the selection panel, regarding further areas to concentrate on during the next phase, in order to further assist their decision making.

To sum up my experience of the day, I found it hugely beneficial, enjoyable, and extremely rewarding. It was a great chance to network with staff, and I was happy that I had contributed to helping Hexagon appoint the best candidate for the role. I welcome the chance to volunteer for more of these kinds of opportunities and would encourage others to do the same.

CHRISTINE'S COMMUNITY CRAFTS

Resident Christine Matthews is helping to coordinate crafts sessions at Sydenham Library.

She says, "My friend Ilse and I managed to get a grant from Lewisham Council to fund 12 craft sessions in Autumn 2022 and another 12 this coming spring and summer. The sessions are, if anything, over attended – which shows they are enjoyed and needed. Every week more people attend.

"I encourage my crafting friends, who give the lessons, to upcycle – like using the Pringle tubes we received from Hexagon staff or the left over wool when we used for weaving. Using left over stock from previous projects also keep costs down as our budget is not big."

Community Call Out: Are YOU a Hexagon resident with a community project you would like Home News readers to hear about? Then why not contact us to see if we can help by mentioning your venture in our pages? Contact our editor **Adrian Beckingham** by emailing: homenews@hexagon.org.uk

You can get in touch with Christine Matthews by sending an Email to: getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk to get involved or for more information.

Christine says, "Every week more people are attending our craft lessons. We try to include up & recycling in as many sessions as possible."



When Hexagon resident Christine Matthews asked Hexagon staff to collect Pringles packets to donate towards a community craft session at Sydenham Library, we were delighted with the result.



GOLD SHIFT AWARD

Hexagon are delighted to announce that we begin the new year having won our 5th consecutive gold SHIFT (Sustainable Homes Index for Tomorrow) accreditation.

SHIFT represent the sustainability standard for the housing sector, providing an independent assessment and accreditation scheme.

Organisations sign up to SHIFT for a variety of reasons.

Achieving A Good SHIFT Accreditation:

- Allows a social landlord to demonstrate their environmental credentials
- Can help with receiving better funding and improved partners
- Often demonstrates that residents are receiving Value For Money
- Often shows measures have been taken to help residents afford heating and manage money

What Does Shift Take Into Account?

The latest SHIFT report takes into account factors such as strategy and leadership, existing homes and offices, supply chains, operations and new builds. It spans energy and resource use, transport and travel, resident engagement, climate risk, biodiversity and responsible sourcing, thereby providing a comprehensive overview of our environmental footprint.

Owning and managing over 4000 rented homes, Hexagon are keen to understand the impacts of their current performance and to display their commitment to improving our sustainability and environmental performance.

Resident Engagement

Efforts made by the landlord to engage residents with more sustainable ways of living – for example to increase their household recycling or the responsible use of resources such as heating and water – also impact the SHIFT score. Engagement measures can include anything from leaflet drops to ensuring that gas servicing engineers have conversations with residents about efficient use of heating systems, stories about sustainability in Home News.

Hexagon residents have access to energy efficiency advice through our website. Please see here: www.hexagon.org.uk/about-us/sustainability-ed-vfm/how-residents-can-help-to-protect-the-environment/



Hexagon has achieved the SHIFT Gold standard, with a score of 58.7%. It ranks 7th out of the 40 most recent SHIFT assessments.

STAFF EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Here is a selection of staff who won 2022 Staff Excellence Awards, along with the reasons why...

Abiola Adams

Management Accountant

Abiola has only been at Hexagon for a short while but during this time he has shown real commitment and a willingness to drive his section forward

Georgia McCarthy

CX IT Module Lead

Georgia has been a champion of champions when it comes to CX Rent Lead Support. She has truly gone beyond the call of duty in making a success of the CX Rent Process

Martyne Callender

Senior Employment Advisor

Martyne has worked hard to transform the way we engage with residents. This approach has paid dividends with 93 residents accessing employment support

June Henry

Responsive Repairs Administrator

June deals with each customer calmly and professionally and ensures that they are listened to and feel that their issues are being taken seriously

Leanne Cairney

Money Support Adviser

Resident's comment – "I don't know what I would do without her. She really helped me sort out my money problems and I feel so much happier now".

Valerie Oldfield
receiving her award

Joanne Snell

Customer Services Adviser

Resident's comment – "Jo has excellent customer care skills which is a joy to the residents she serves. She is always pleasant and deals with each resident and their needs with professionalism, kindness and consideration"

Michelle Francis

Neighbourhood Team Leader

Michelle has organised and coordinated resolving the issues relating to Parkspring Court. She has liaised and worked with various colleagues ensuring the delivery of excellent customer service

Valerie Oldfield

Resident Voice and Engagement Officer

Resident's comment – "This lady is very, very good at her job"

Ryan Kenny

Business Analyst

Ryan uses his initiative, takes ownership and always, always goes above and beyond what is expected of him. He demonstrates the Hexagon values – we are very lucky to have Ryan!



IMPORTANCE OF PAYING RENT

Hexagon fully understands that all residents are experiencing tightening of the purse strings due to the cost of living crisis currently affecting the UK.

However, Hexagon has to ensure that our rental income is received from residents which then enables us to pay for services such as repairs, cyclical decorations and other areas that all residents will feel the benefit of.

Occasionally, residents will fall into difficulties with making payments to us and will unfortunately fall into rent arrears. Hexagon has a robust arrears escalation procedure and policy that is followed by the Customer Accounts Team. The team will use various different methods of attempting to contact residents that have fallen into arrears by Letter, Telephone Calls, Emails, SMS messaging and if all these fail, a home visit.

The purpose of the escalation procedure is designed to provide early intervention to gain contact with those residents struggling and discuss the issues faced with making payments. We can see if support can be provided from Hexagon's money support services and ultimately set an arrangement, that can be maintained. If this is achieved and the arrangement maintained, no further action is taken and halts the arrears procedure.

Where arrears increase and residents do not want to engage with us, we do sometimes have to move to a formal court hearing. This is where we seek possession orders to regain the property and then ultimately move to eviction stage. This is the last option for Hexagon.

Hexagon always looks to work with residents to prevent the above outcome from taking place. We are about tenancy sustainment and not evicting residents from their homes, but this can only happen if residents engage with us when they are facing difficulties so we can help them.

So far this year we have carried out four evictions with a total value of arrears of £33k.



Paying your rent is a priority

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK ON REPAIRS AND OFFER A £50 DRAW!

As you are aware Gilmartins became Hexagon's new partnering contractor for Responsive Repairs and Voids.

One of the improvements in our repairs system is that whenever Gilmartins completes a repair to a resident's home, the resident is sent a Responsive Repairs Customer Satisfaction survey. However, we are disappointed to see that currently response rates are quite low. Hopefully this means you are happy customers and therefore do not fill out the form – but to help us improve, feedback both positive and negative is very useful.

Hexagon will be piloting a monthly prize draw for the return of the Responsive Repairs Customer Satisfaction survey. The draw will be carried out randomly and the prize will be a £50 Love To Shop gift card which can be used in multiple outlets. The lucky winner will be notified shortly after the draw has taken place.



Gilmartins with Hexagon's Head of Property Services, Charles Mtakati

APOLOGY for duplicate repairs notifications

It has been brought to our attention that when raising an order, Gilmartins' repair system was generating multiple appointments and text messages to our customers. A glitch in the system meant that some residents were sent 5-6 appointments for one repair. We would like to apologise for any inconvenience that this glitch has caused you. We can confirm that Gilmartins and Hexagon are working to resolve the issues with the appointment system.

KIDS' ZONE

KIDS' ZONE



WINTER
Search

COMPETITION

ALL ENTRIES TO KIDS' ZONE COMPETITIONS MUST INCLUDE CHILD'S FULL NAME, AGE AND ADDRESS. Winner will receive a £10 shopping voucher.

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

FLANNEL
HOLIDAY
ICE
ICICLES
IGLOO
SLED
SLIDE
SOUP

Find the words in the puzzle grid above. Words may go forwards and backwards or across and down. If you think you have found all the correct words in the word search, please send in the details by **February 1st 2023** Send your word search entry to: **Resident Engagement team, Hexagon Housing Association, 130-136 Sydenham Road, London, SE26 5JY** One correct entry will be drawn at random to win a £10 voucher.



WINTER JOKES (Answers Below)

Q1

What do you call a snowman in the summer?

Q2

What do snowmen eat for breakfast?

Q3

What do you get when you cross a snowman and a vampire?

Q4

What do snowmen wear on their heads?

Q5

What does the snowman call his cow?

A 1. puddle, 2. Frosties, 3. Frostbite, 4. An ice cap 5. Eskimoo

SPOTLIGHT IN THIS EDITION:

You Said We Did: on page 3

Requested by the resident Readers' Panel, this page written by our Housing Services Director Rebecca Outram spotlights in brief some areas where residents have made requests and showing how Hexagon have responded.

Come and join us!

Hexagon is holding two sessions on Wednesday 7th February to share our thoughts and listen to you on the how the financial situation may affect Hexagon. To book a place on Zoom or to attend in person at our offices, please telephone To book a place, please telephone **0203 892 4751** or email getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk

Cost of Living Crisis

Read tips on how to get help and support through the cost of living crisis throughout this edition

Inspection crazy

See how our resident volunteers made a difference to your area in our two articles on Resident Inspecting (page 15) and Estate Grading (page 17). We always need more volunteers so if this interests you please contact us on telephone **0203 892 4751** or email getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk

See what we changed as a result of the Big Conversation on page 16

Important safety message from Hexagon -

Please be extremely careful where you buy e-scooters and e-bikes, as well as batteries and chargers for them. Please buy products like these from a reputable retailer you know and trust and always follow the manufacturer's guidance on using them, including safe charging. If you have any concerns please contact us.

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

Hexagon

customer_desk@hexagon.org.uk

for all general enquiries

www.hexagon.org.uk

Text **07537 400 527**

130-136 Sydenham Road, London SE26 5JY

Gilmartins

To report a repair call Gilmartins on **0808 178 6785** 24 hours a day 365 days of the year, or email:

hexagonrepairs@gilmartins.co.uk

Smith & Byford

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:

f HexagonHousingAssociation

@HexagonHousing

TRANSLATE!

Always happy to translate!

Chinese

永遠樂於翻譯！

Eritrean

"ንኽነተርተመልኩም ኩሉጊዜ ሕጉሳት ኢና!"

French

Toujours heureux de traduire!

Portuguese

Sempre feliz a traduzir!

Vietnamese

Luôn luôn vui lòng phiên dịch!

Urdu

ترجمے کے لیے ہر دم تیار

LARGE PRINT

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

SIGN UP FOR DIGITAL HOME NEWS

If you haven't done so already, send us your name, email address and phone number to homenews@hexagon.org.uk so we can add you to the mailing list for the digital copy of Home News, letting you get a copy earlier and reducing our carbon footprint, we ensure your data is secure to comply with GDPR.

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Email homenews@hexagon.org.uk to let us know you still prefer to receive a paper copy, and we will be happy to send you one. Alternatively, call us on **020 8778 6699**.