

# HOME NEWS

## Hexagon

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Win a £50 shopping  
voucher: see page 2  
for details.



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## PHOTO COMPETITION

Would you like your photo to feature on Hexagon's website and the front cover of Home News and win a £50 shopping voucher?

The photo or photos (up to three) you enter could show local wildlife, your home, some of your favourite local waterways, or a local community farm. Use your imagination to broaden the theme!

As this competition is **ONLY** open to Hexagon residents, **ALL** entries must include the entrants full name and address – if you are our winner your name and borough (not full street address) will be shown in Home News. The winning entry will be used as the front cover of Home News summer edition 2023. Make sure you email your entry to [homenews@hexagon.org.uk](mailto:homenews@hexagon.org.uk) by no later than 31st May.

**GOOD LUCK!**

## HOW HAVE YOU FOUND OUR NEW REPAIRS SERVICE?

*Meet Gilmartins, find out more and share your feedback.*

July 2023 will mark the 1-year anniversary of Gilmartins being Hexagon's main repairs contractor. We want to hear from residents how it's been going for you – what's worked well and what hasn't? We'll provide updates and your feedback will help inform the annual contract review and how Gilmartins operate moving forward.

Please join us at an all-residents meeting on the evening of Thursday 13th July 2023 – full details are being confirmed. Please register your interest and we'll be in touch again nearer the time with more information.

To register, please get in touch with the Resident Engagement Team on **0203 892 4751** or email: [getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk](mailto:getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk) and include your name, address and contact details.

If you would prefer to receive this magazine digitally, simply send your name, address and email address to: [homenews@hexagon.org.uk](mailto: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!

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# MEASURES TO IMPROVE COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURES

SHERON CARTER, Chief Executive

In December 2022 the Housing Ombudsman published its third annual performance report. It was a wake-up call for me to find that Hexagon had one of the highest maladministration rates for the year ending 31st March 2022. The Housing Ombudsman had found service failure or maladministration in 78% of the reported matters.

Our rating was based on four cases reporting a total of nine issues. Maladministration was found in three of these cases involving seven issues. Areas for improvement included property condition, anti-social behaviour (ASB) case handling, moving into a property and complaints handling.

An underlying issue has been our slowness to respond to some complaints, and failure to keep residents informed during the complaint process. To remedy this, we are appointing a dedicated Complaint Investigation Team who are independent of housing management, property services, customer services and development teams but will work closely with them. This will enable them to take a fresh look at complaints and respond within our published timelines.

We have also recently installed a Customer Relationship Management system which is able to track queries and monitor how long it takes us to resolve each query. This will prevent issues from being lost in the system. In addition, we have appointed a second officer responsible for handling anti-social behaviour to strengthen our expertise in this area.

What I want to see is a robust approach to holding ourselves and our contractors to account when things go wrong, and faster resolution of the issues raised in the complaint.

**We are acutely aware that service performance dipped during the pandemic. We are working to turn things around and expect to see some improvements over the coming months.**



Sheron Carter,  
Chief Executive.

**"We are appointing a dedicated Complaint Investigation Team."**

Sheron Carter,  
Chief Executive.

# YOU SAID WE DID



By Housing Services Director Rebecca Outram.

## You said.....

- You'd like Hexagon to do more for their older residents.

- You'd like to know who your Neighbourhood Officer is.

- You were concerned that if a contractor cannot gain access to a home, sometimes the works get cancelled or overlooked.

- I can't move out for emergency works because the temporary accommodation that Hexagon offers is not always suitable.

- Why do empty homes take so long to relet?

## We did...

- Our Community Investment Team are working on a project with older residents who live in Southwark. This involves making telephone contact and helping them to apply for heating and other grants. We also held a fuel efficiency workshop at our offices for this age group.

- We have now restructured our Neighbourhoods Team (see page 20). We also have a Duty Neighbourhood Officer who can pick up urgent queries straight away or pass day to day queries to the right Neighbourhood Officer.

- We now have a No Access Policy to ensure every effort is made to gain access to complete the works.

- We have introduced a specialist contractor to work with us to source accommodation to widen options.

- We set up a taskforce to do a lean review of our lettings process as they are taking too long at 75 days. We have put in action measures to reduce this to 20 days. We were not making the most of the notice period that residents give us, to inspect the home before they leave and order repairs and checks, or to advertise the home. We have also made some changes to how service teams work together.



Sheena Starret, Community Investment Facilitator phoning Hexagon's older residents.

Rebecca Outram, Housing Services Director.



# 7% RENT INCREASE FOR THE 2023/24 YEAR

Hexagon is a non-profit organisation – if we make a surplus in any given year, we invest it back into the homes or the organisation.

The government determines how we set our general needs tenants rent levels each year they made a commitment to increase your rents at the rate of inflation plus an extra 1% each year over the next few years to give housing associations some long term business planning.

However, because inflation in September was running high, the government told housing organisations that we can only raise the rent from July this year by a maximum of 7%.

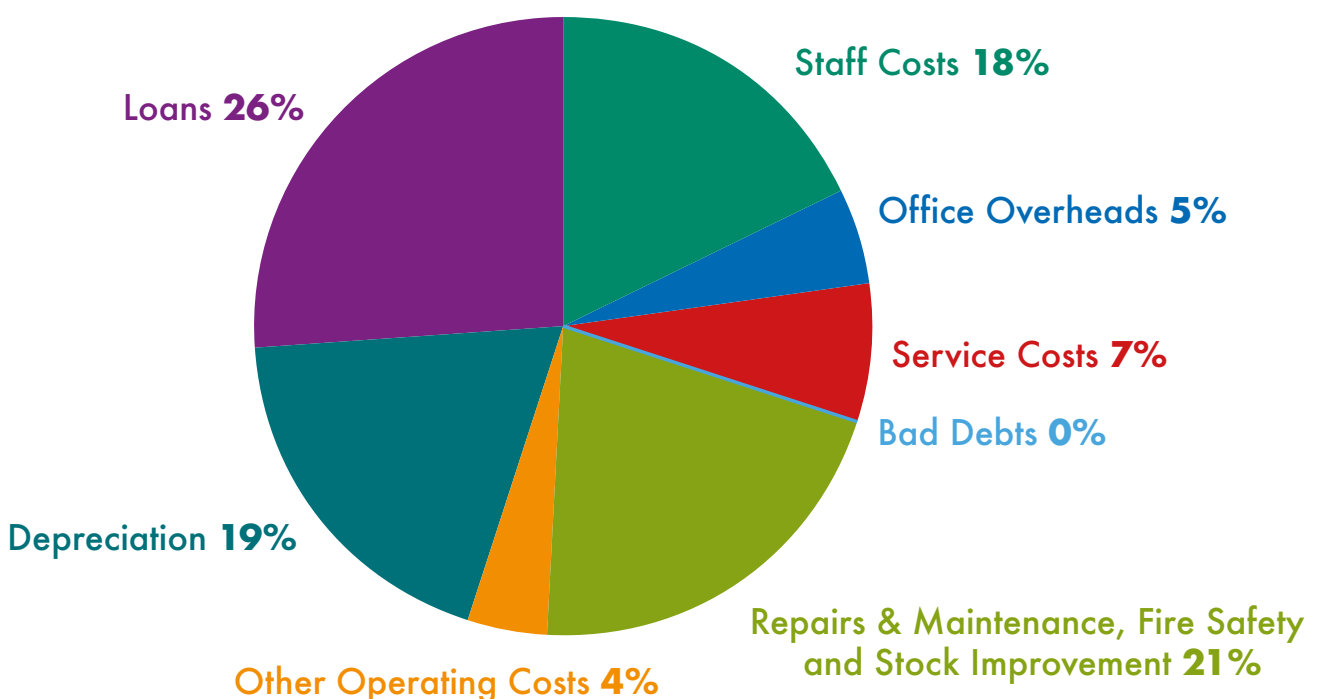
This is better news for you than the previous guidelines but we recognise that 7% is going to be difficult for many of you. If you need any help at all, please speak to the Customer Accounts Team and also to our Money Support Team.

Elsewhere in the magazine you will find some tips on saving money.

Disclaimer: This article has been revised to correct inaccuracies.



## What money goes on



# A THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

Nicole Garrett (Woolwich) of the Home News Panel is one of our valued volunteers who attended a Recognition Event at the end of last year. Below she shares her experience.

In December 2022 I was invited along with other Hexagon residents to attend an evening Recognition Event. This was set up by the Resident Voice & Engagement Team (RaVE) to say thank you to residents for volunteering in the different groups which give residents a voice and input.

Upon arrival at the Hexagon office, we received a warm welcome with drinks and snacks. We met other residents who are involved in the groups; it was a very pleasant and friendly evening.

Jane Eyles, the Resident Voice and Engagement Lead, welcomed us all with a presentation on how our volunteering had led to improving Hexagon's services to residents.

We then had a very nice buffet – the food was delicious! This also gave us more time to talk to everyone including Rebecca Outram, Director of Housing Services and Linda Bekkari, Repairs Manager.

Finally, we all got into groups for a quiz. We laughed such a lot and all worked together in our teams getting quite competitive – this also gave residents time to get to know each other. At the end of the quiz, we checked our answers and the winning team was awarded with chocolates and wine. The quiz was such a good idea and we all enjoyed it.

The Hexagon team went to a lot of effort to make the evening a great success. The staff were able to meet residents from other groups and the residents were able to find out what others do in their groups. There were residents from the Home News Panel, Performance Review Group, Repairs Group, Estate Champions, Disability and Inclusion Group and the Resident Advisory Group.



Our first Recognition Event for residents who volunteer on our groups and panels was well received.

At the end of the evening we were all thanked and given a Hexagon bag with zero-alcohol prosecco, mini cakes, biscuits, Christmas pudding plus other nice goodies. This was a very nice surprise and a thoughtful goodwill gesture which included a thank you card.

I would recommend any Hexagon resident thinking of getting involved in a resident group to do so, as it's very rewarding. You have a chance to have your voice heard and make a difference. The groups help Hexagon staff to be the best that they can for residents. I would like to thank the Resident Voice & Engagement Team who organised the event for a great evening. They put in a lot of effort to make the evening a success and I am looking forward to the next event already.



# ARE YOU A BUDDING JOURNALIST OR PHOTOGRAPHER?

Is there an area of Hexagon's work where you would like to get more involved as a volunteer? Perhaps you would like to join the Repairs Group to make an impact on our repairs service, or become an Estate Grader to help monitor and improve the conditions on estates? Or you are a budding journalist keen to write some features, do proof-reading or design? There exist many more ways you can get involved so for more information please email: **getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk**

Put your hand up to get attention and make a difference.



## READERS' PANEL

Thank you to our Readers' Panel, residents who meet quarterly to review the latest edition of Home News and help guide future editions. Hexagon resident Adrian Beckingham, Home News editor says, "Thank you for all the hard work which members of the Readers' Panel have put in over the years. Listening to you and being guided by your suggestions has helped the magazine move ahead in leaps and bounds, this is recognised by our readers many of whom have sent in emails of thanks."

Now, the Readers' Panel will meet jointly with Hexagon staff to create the new Home News Panel. This will allow for a more direct resident voice and more immediate communication between staff and residents. Members will now meet quarterly to further develop Home News to be the best it can be.

## WANTED

### Residents for our Disability Inclusion Group

Hexagon requires knowledge and understanding of residents' experiences who have a disability to input towards the improvement of Hexagon's services and policies.

If you are living with a disability then your experiences can help to inform us, and we want to hear your voice. If you are interested or want to find out more, please speak to our very friendly Resident Voice and Engagement Facilitator Valerie Oldfield or any staff from the RaVE team on **0203 892 4751**.

Please visit our website for the many ways residents can engage with Hexagon [hexagon.org.uk/residents/getting-involved/](https://hexagon.org.uk/residents/getting-involved/)



The Disability Inclusion Group needs some new members.

# ESTATE GRADING

One of the highlights of resident involvement in 2022 was the work of the Estate Graders who carry out spot-checks on several estates each year.

Estate Graders have training on Estate Service Standards and rate communal areas – looking at cleaning, grounds maintenance, communal repairs, signage and health and safety.

Across the 20 estates visited, Estate Graders ranked four estates a Gold standard, 12 estates a Silver standard and four estates a Bronze standard. Importantly, alongside the estate gradings, the team highlighted 160 recommendations for addressing issues on the estates such as: fly tipping, repairs, graffiti, abandoned cars, signs to replace, items in communal areas blocking fire escapes, gardening required and cleaning required. Hexagon raised orders for each of the recommendations and nearly all have been completed, with a small number of more complex cases still in progress.

This has resulted in better communal spaces for residents living in the estates visited and we'd like to express our gratitude to the Estate Grading Team for their time and commitment to this important activity.



The results of the 2022 Estate Grading are as follows:

## Gold Grade

- Malvern House
- Beulah Crescent
- Red Deer Court / Sanderstead Road
- Moffat Road

## Silver Grade

- Kimpton Road
- Brayards Road
- Foxgrove Apartments
- Vidler House
- Anthony Court
- 67 Overhill Road
- Henry Dent Close
- Clarence Road
- Furze Road
- Crofton Road
- 50 Mount Adon Park
- Purley Way

## Bronze Grade

- 235 Queens Road
- Windmill Court
- Reader House
- Furlong Close

Estate Graders are resident volunteers who carry out spot-checks on a number of different estates each year. In 2022 four estates received a Gold standard, 12 estates a Silver standard and four estates a Bronze standard. Thank you to our Estate Graders for their hard work!



# DIG

The Disability Inclusion Group (DIG) work in partnership with Hexagon to map out data around physical disability.

The Hexagon Resident Voice & Engagement Team (RaVE) love listening to residents and having discussions. One result from this has been that the Disability Inclusion Group (DIG) will be working with Hexagon to map out specific areas of properties relating to disability. Mr Griffiths of Lewisham, a member of DIG, says, "Disability affects peoples, housing on so many levels. It creates extra needs whether it is heating, bathing, using the toilet or moving around – in and out of – a flat or house. In the DIG we have lived experience of these and other issues which come up in day-to-day living."

The DIG brought to the attention of Hexagon the challenges that they face with regards to parking on their estate. As a result of this a new Parking Policy has been drafted and presented to the July DIG meeting. The group will be keeping an eye on the implementation of the policy.

## WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN?

**Membership to the group is presently open for new members to join.** The group is open to any Hexagon resident who have – or take care of a person with – a disability. Mr Griffiths added, "You can help us with your own experience by becoming a DIG member and bringing these issues directly to the people who manage your home."

Meetings are at Hexagon, but members have the option of attending via Zoom. Carers are welcome to join as a representative in place of the resident they care for.

If you would like to find out more about DIG please contact Val Oldfield via email: [getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk](mailto:getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk) or phone 0203 3892 4751.

By taking part in the Disability Inclusion Group you can help to ensure that Hexagon are aware of the specific needs of residents who suffer from disability.



# STAFF FOCUS

## CARLY FOLEY

### Q1 Job title and department?

Neighbourhoods & Estate Services Lead,  
Housing Services Department.

### Q2 When did you start working at Hexagon?

28th November 2022.

### Q3 Previous experience in similar roles?

My career in social housing started in 2008 as a Collections Officer, specialising in Housing Benefit support and advice. I moved over to Neighbourhoods as a Neighbourhood Officer in 2013, and then became an Area Manager in 2018.

### Q4 Responsibilities in this role?

To ensure the Neighbourhood Services Team deliver high quality services to Hexagon's customers. To ensure our homes are let quickly and efficiently. To manage the delivery of our Estate Services.

### Q5 What do you enjoy most about your job?

Identifying root causes and devising solutions to address the problems in the long term. Working collaboratively with other departments to find better ways of working. I also love helping people and making a real difference.

### Q6 What is important about your role?

My team are the face of Hexagon – we need to ensure all residents and customers receive a high level of service – that we stick to our promises and are accessible to our customers.

### Q7 What kind of working relationship do you seek with residents?

To work with residents to identify what we are doing well and not so well – so I can create better ways of working. To learn from mistakes. This ultimately improves the services our residents (customers) receive.

### Q8 What is the most important message you can give to residents (relevant to your role)?

To hold us to account when we don't get things right and to work with us to help shape our services.

### Q9 What main interests do you enjoy outside of Hexagon work?

I enjoy spending quality time with my children and long walks in the park with my dogs (when it isn't raining!)



Carly Foley, the new  
Neighbourhood  
Services Lead.

# TOP TIPS: GARDENERS – WAYS TO USE LESS WATER

## Why use less water?

**YOUR WALLET:** In the current economy, we need to keep our water bill as low as possible.

**OUR SHARED ENVIRONMENT:** Many agree that climate change is challenging the way we garden. With hotter and drier summers often coming our way, water can be a scarce resource and careful management of our water use becomes an important environmental and social factor.

## WATER SAVING TOP TIPS IN YOUR GARDEN

Here are a few ways us gardeners can help ourselves and the environment without compromising on great plants and crops.

### 1. Soil IS the place to start!

Add as much organic matter as possible (home made compost is excellent). This helps to retain water.

### 2. Mulch.

Cover soil in borders and pots with a thick layer of compost or similar to prevent evaporation and lessen competition for water/nutrients from weeds.

### 3. Water in cool of the evening.

Concentrating on the root areas allows the water to sink in deeper and helps to ensure it will be used by the plants rather than simply evaporate.

Water thoroughly when soil is dry, rather than little and often. This will encourage deeper root growth and enable plants to withstand short periods of drought.

Always soak plants well before planting. They will be less needy.

### 4. Choose drought-tolerant plants.

Grey-green or hairy leaves reflect the sun and trap moisture. Plants that thrive in sunny climes are also wise choices.

### 5. Plant smaller specimens that will acclimatise better and will thrive better in drier climes!

### 6. Recycle your grey water from washing up, baths etc. – detergents are fine but avoid water with strong chemical cleaners in it.

### 7. Collect rainwater by diverting water from downpipes – collecting through winter will provide what you need for summer.

So the above shows – small, simple, thoughtful choices can save water – which helps your pocket and your planet and you will still have fabulous plants and crops.



Water conservation will help your wallet and the environment.



Denny Senner is author of Denny's Dig and a Resident Member on Hexagon's Board.



*Resident Spotlight is a regular page in Home News where we seek to celebrate the diversity of our resident community, and to challenge any stigmas which society may hold towards social housing tenants.*



# WORKING AFTER RETIREMENT

At 82, Mr Joseph Johnson is one of our oldest residents – and is still working. He shares his experience of working in later life.

**We are very impressed that you are 82 years of age and still working! What do you do?**

I work part-time as a School Patrol Officer.

**Have you ever had a break from working?**

I worked all my life from the age of 13 until I retired at 65. I had not made any specific plans for retirement but once I stopped work, I had a desire to continue doing something. A friend told me about the School Patrol Officer role and advised me to inquire. I started this job when I was 68 and I've continued in this role for 14 years now.

**What are the benefits for you of working after retirement age?**

Work has provided an income as well as a purpose to each day – I thoroughly enjoy it. Over the years I have become a well-known face in the community and I've developed lasting relationships with parents and children.

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"I worked all my life from the age of 13 until I retired at 65. I had not made any specific plans for retirement but once I stopped work, I had a desire to continue doing something. Over the years I have become a well-known face in the community and I've developed lasting relationships with parents and children."

**What would make you consider stopping work?**

I am coming to the point where I will consider retirement due to health concerns but I will continue for as long as possible.

**Have you anything planned for when you retire?**

Relaxation and spending time with family and friends. I advise all to work and pay all your contributions towards a pension, so you can have a comfortable retirement.

**What would you say to others who are thinking about retiring?**

I would recommend working after retirement because I have made good friendships with colleagues, teachers, other workers and the general public.



# APPRENTICESHIPS

Our new gas safety contractor Smyth & Byford are recruiting along with Bell Group for some trade apprenticeships to begin in September 2023.

There are Plumbing and Heating (Gas) Apprentice roles, where successful applicants can achieve an NVQ Level 2 in Plumbing. Or become a fully qualified Electrical Operative in Installation whilst doing an Electrical Engineer Apprenticeship.

Most apprentices do the qualification element of their apprenticeship with NESCOL college but they also have some apprentices study with Carshalton and Croydon colleges.

The Apprenticeships are 4 years and the starting rate is £5.50 per hour for those under 20. Those over 20 start on £7.14 per hour.

To apply you need a minimum of three GCSEs (Grades A – C or 4 and above) – two of which must be in Maths & English – and an up-to-date CV.

Bell Group currently offer apprenticeships for 16–18-year-olds in

- Painting and Decorating
- Carpentry and Joinery
- Plumbing
- Plastering
- Ames Taping
- Electrical
- General Maintenance Operations
- Business Administration

Their apprenticeships range between 3 to 4 years depending on the course undertaken and its location.

You can find level 6 (degree apprenticeships) on [careersfinder.ucas.com/jobs/apprenticeship/](https://careersfinder.ucas.com/jobs/apprenticeship/) and on [www.findapprenticeships.co.uk/](https://www.findapprenticeships.co.uk/)



You have plenty to gain by taking your place in one of these apprenticeship opportunities, so contact us now!

## Interview Skills

Hexagon will be running interview skills workshops in partnership with contractors in May, June and September. Workshops are from 10.30am until 1.30pm: to be online in May and June; in-person at Hexagon's Sydenham Road HQ in September.

Residents that attend will learn how to prepare for interviews, how to use the very successful STAR method for answering interview questions, plus some tips on the best questions to ask at the end of an interview. Workshops include group activities and attendees will receive a certificate of completion.

Travel expenses will be covered and refreshments provided for residents that attend the workshops at our Sydenham Road HQ.

Please email:  
[employmentandtraining@hexagon.org.uk](mailto:employmentandtraining@hexagon.org.uk)  
or call customer services on 020 8778 6699  
for more information to register your interest  
in an apprenticeship or workshop.

# LIFELONG LEARNING

Lifelong learning is the ongoing pursuit of knowledge for personal or professional reasons.

It can enhance an individual's employability, competitiveness within the job market and personal development. Other benefits include:

## Helping your brain stay healthy

Continuing to learn does good things for your brain. Recent research has found that learning keeps brain cells working at optimum levels, which may slow cognitive and memory decline as we age.

## Feeling fulfilled

Participating in learning can be very enjoyable and fun. Research has shown that lifelong learning can increase our sense of self-fulfilment.

Hexagon is keen for residents to access as many free learning opportunities as possible. This will help you to progress your career and learn about things of interest to you. Our online learning platform gives residents access to over 690 courses until July 23, 2023. We can offer 69 more residents access to these courses.

Hexagon resident, Julie, shares her experience of continuing her learning on our online platform.

### Why have you decided to continue your learning?

To help with my progression, gain new skills and open new opportunities going forward.

### What courses have you completed?

Mental Health First Aid, Bipolar Awareness, Borderline Personality Disorder Awareness and Create an Online business. Many people in my life have mental health problems and it helps me better understand them. The skills I'm learning for creating my online business are invaluable and something I can use to get an income.

### How have you found our online learning platform?

It's easy to navigate, has a wide variety of courses, with online help and contact details if you need more help. I'm grateful to Hexagon for providing these courses.

### What's your advice for anyone considering doing a course?

I would recommend this learning opportunity. It's a journey worth taking and I wish you every success.





# COST OF LIVING PAYMENTS 2023

Over 6.5 million people who receive disability benefits will receive £150 this summer and over 8 million families on mean-tested benefits will receive cost of living payments in 2023.

For the most up-to-date information and the dates of these payments check here:  
[www.gov.uk/government/news/millions-of-low-income-households-to-get-new-cost-of-living-payments-from-spring-2023](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/millions-of-low-income-households-to-get-new-cost-of-living-payments-from-spring-2023)

## CHILD TRUST FUND

Children born between 1st of September 2002 and 2nd of January 2011 to parents being awarded Child Benefit were eligible to apply for a Child Trust Fund. Check here for more information and see how to claim savings from your account:

[www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/savings/types-of-savings/child-trust-funds](https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/savings/types-of-savings/child-trust-funds)

## SAVER ACCOUNTS

Do you have any money left at the end of each month? No matter how small, get the interest on it! Have a look around and find the best savers accounts for you. Some accounts have rates of 4.5%. It is also worth checking credit unions because they have flexible ways to save and also a Christmas savers account. You can search which credit union might be best for you – they are open to people who share a common trade, or live in the same area – for example here is one for people living in London (but we do advise you to do your own research):

[www.londonplusscu.co.uk/savings](https://www.londonplusscu.co.uk/savings).

For those eligible to Help to Save this can be another way to grow your money:  
[www.gov.uk/get-help-savings-low-income](https://www.gov.uk/get-help-savings-low-income).



A Child Trust Fund is a long-term tax-free savings account for children born between 1 September 2002 and 2 January 2011.

## SCAMS

Scammers often try to make the scams appear as legitimate schemes e.g. the Energy Bills Support Scheme, HMRC, or other well-known companies. Many scams will provide information almost identical to reputable companies. It is useful for you to know that most reputable companies will not ask you for your full access details to a payment card or bank account on a cold email or cold call. If you are ever unsure don't click any links, emails or texts. If someone you don't know contacts you unexpectedly, don't give out personal information instead ask for their company name, Google their customer services number and give them a call to ask if it is indeed them. More help is available online here:

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/scams/check-if-something-might-be-a-scam/](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/scams/check-if-something-might-be-a-scam/)

# DIGITAL SUPPORT

Our data shows us that 91% of residents are now online compared to 76% in 2020.

Hexagon's Digital Champions have supported over 150 residents to improve their digital skills and get online since 2020. We are now changing our digital support offer because demand for support has significantly decreased and the service is no longer financially viable.

If you would like to improve your digital skills, you can access courses through our range of online learning platforms.

Learn My Way offers a range of entry level courses including online basics, how to do online shopping, mobile and online banking and keeping safe online.

Skills Academy offers Excel from beginners to advanced, Outlook, Word, Teams, Zoom and mail merge courses.

Learning Curve provides a digital literacy course, to enable you to learn the key Microsoft Office packages.

If you prefer to access support in person, please go to our website where you'll find information on a wide range of digital sessions and courses available in your borough. [hexagon.org.uk/community-investment/all-things-digital/](https://hexagon.org.uk/community-investment/all-things-digital/)

We are still very keen for residents to continue developing digital skills so you are confidently able to use your smart phones, and online systems such as Home Swapper or Universal Credit.

We will continue to loan digital devices such as tablets and laptops to residents who are doing courses or actively seeking work. If one isn't available when you request it, you'll be put on our waiting list.

Useful links may be the Universal Credit YouTube videos and the Homeswapper guide links – these can be found on our website but are also listed below.

## YOUTUBE

Make a claim (Universal Credit full service)  
[youtu.be/4jVeWPsCzUI](https://youtu.be/4jVeWPsCzUI)

Your home page and statement (Universal Credit full service)  
[youtu.be/SGOVGQPmVIA](https://youtu.be/SGOVGQPmVIA)

Your journal (Universal Credit full service)  
[youtu.be/F8zJD7z-TSE](https://youtu.be/F8zJD7z-TSE)

Your home page and statement (Universal Credit full service)  
[youtu.be/SGOVGQPmVIA](https://youtu.be/SGOVGQPmVIA)

Working with your Work Coach  
[youtu.be/aa3s3DjJr1s](https://youtu.be/aa3s3DjJr1s)

## HOMESWAPPER

Guide to using Homeswapper  
[www.homeswapper.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/HomeSwapper-Welcome-Guide-1.pdf](https://www.homeswapper.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/HomeSwapper-Welcome-Guide-1.pdf)



# MOVING ONTO UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Did you know that if you're in receipt of a legacy benefit you will eventually have to go onto Universal Credit? This is called Managed Migration.

## What are legacy benefits?

- Housing Benefit
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Income Support
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit

The Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) will issue you with a Migration Notice letter to make you aware that your legacy benefits will be coming to an end and that you must claim Universal Credit. You must claim Universal Credit by the deadline date given in your letter. This is 3 months from the date the letter was sent out, which should give you enough time to gather any information and evidence that you need e.g. identity documents, to make your claim. For a step-by-step guide on claiming Universal Credit: [uc-helper.co.uk/hexagon-housing-association-11deasyv](https://uc-helper.co.uk/hexagon-housing-association-11deasyv)

The government aims to have most claimants move from legacy benefits onto Universal Credit by March 2025. Those in receipt of ESA and not getting any tax credits will be moved over later, around 2028. Legacy benefits will eventually be phased out entirely. Get more in-depth information on managed migrations from: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/completing-the-move-to-universal-credit/completing-the-move-to-universal-credit-2](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/completing-the-move-to-universal-credit/completing-the-move-to-universal-credit-2)

If you are struggling or unable to claim Universal Credit by the deadline date given on your letter, you should contact the Universal Credit Migration Notice helpline on **0800 169 0328** as soon as possible. Ask for extra time to make a claim if you have a good reason. You must request extra time to make an application before the deadline date on your letter.



The government aims to have most claimants move from legacy benefits onto Universal Credit by March 2025.



# PENSIONS – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

When you start working you may not think about a pension, but as you near retirement the amount of pension you will live on becomes very important.

Retirement age is now 66 for both men and women. The full level of State Pension is £185.15 per week in the 2022/2023 tax year, which produces an annual income of £9,627.80. But you could get more or less, depending on your National Insurance contributions. You need a minimum of ten years' contributions or credits to get any state pension, and at least 35 years of contributions to get the full state pension amount.

You need to remember that you don't get your state pension automatically – you need to claim it. Follow these links:

**[www.gov.uk/browse/working/state-pension](https://www.gov.uk/browse/working/state-pension)** or contact the Pension Service: **[www.gov.uk/contact-pension-service](https://www.gov.uk/contact-pension-service)**. Also review any private pensions you may have.

## Other financial help you could get:

If you are above state pension age and on a low income you can get Pension Credit. You might get extra help if you're a carer, severely disabled, or responsible for a child or young person. Pension Credit is separate from your State Pension. You can get it, even if you have other income, savings or own your home,

## There may be other support you're entitled to if you get Pension Credit:

- **[www.gov.uk/housing-benefit](https://www.gov.uk/housing-benefit)** if you rent the property you live in
- **[www.gov.uk/support-for-mortgage-interest](https://www.gov.uk/support-for-mortgage-interest)** if you're a homeowner
- **[www.gov.uk/apply-for-council-tax-discount](https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-council-tax-discount)** for a Council Tax discount
- **[www.gov.uk/free-discount-tv-licence](https://www.gov.uk/free-discount-tv-licence)** for a free TV Licence if you are aged 75 or above
- **[www.gov.uk/help-nhs-costs](https://www.gov.uk/help-nhs-costs)** for help with NHS costs
- **[www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme](https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme)** for help with heating costs

Contact: [moneysupport@hexagon.org.uk](mailto:moneysupport@hexagon.org.uk) or phone 020 8778 6699 for more information.



You may be eligible for Pension Credit.

# E-SCOOTERS AND E-BIKES

Hexagon Fire Safety Team attended over 70 fires involving e-scooters and e-bikes in 2021.

## Charging your e-bike or e-scooter

- The majority of fires related to e-bikes and e-scooters have happened in homes. These fires are often caused when charging batteries.
- Please pay special attention to bike conversion kits. Do not attempt to modify or tamper with the battery. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

## Reduce the risk of overheating

- Batteries can get warm during their use. Allow them to cool down before attempting to re-charge.
- Batteries should always be charged on hard flat surfaces where heat can dissipate.
- Batteries can also pose a risk if they have been damaged, so try to ensure they are not getting knocked around while in use or while being carried.
- Batteries should also never be exposed to extremes of temperature.

## Follow the instructions

- Always follow manufacturers' instructions when charging.
- Never leave it charging unattended or charge it while you are asleep.
- You should always make sure you unplug your charger once it's finished charging.
- Always use the correct charger for your batteries and buy any replacements from a reputable seller.

## Where to charge your batteries

- Never block your fire escape route with e-bikes or e-scooters.
- Store and charge them somewhere away from a main through route or exit.
- Make sure you and your family have an escape plan in place in the event of a fire. Always call 999, never try to fight the fire yourself.

## Using your e-bikes or e-scooters

In 2021 Transport for London (TfL) banned e-scooters from London's transport network. This is due to a number of fires on the network involving these vehicles. This means you're unable to take your electric personal vehicles on any TfL service. You can read TfL's full guidance on e-scooters on their site:

**[tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/e-scooter-safety](https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/e-scooter-safety)**

Not all personal electric vehicles, such as e-scooters and e-unicycles are road legal in the UK. This means you can be fined by the police for using them on the road in the UK. Always check to see if you can use your vehicle on public roads.



# NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES RESTRUCTURE

Following a recent review of our Neighbourhood Services structure, we have made some amendments, which took effect from 6 March 2023.

Part of the re-structure means you may be allocated a different Neighbourhood Officer to the one you are used to working with. We know change can sometimes be unsettling, but we want to re-assure you that there is a comprehensive handover phase in place, so you shouldn't notice this change. There is also a duty Neighbourhood Officer to take urgent queries so the service should improve.

## Estate Services

As you may be aware we are currently in the process of procuring a new Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance contractor(s). We received 14 submissions and have now completed the first two stages of shortlisting. We have some strong applicants and are excited for the next stage of the procurement process which will also involve residents interviewing the remaining candidates. We will continue to share updates on this as we progress.

The Neighbourhood  
Services Team.





# TEETHING PROBLEMS WITH THE NEW REPAIRS SERVICE

Gilmartins became our new repairs contractor in July 2022.

See on page 24 how you can join our meeting with Gilmartins to review their service so far.

PROBLEM	IMPROVEMENT MEASURE
Complaints and general feedback from residents identified an issue with the Gilmartins phone system. Residents had waited longer than expected and calls were prematurely terminated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gilmartins have changed their contact centre's phone system. This has improved the average wait time to 29 seconds, and prematurely abandoned calls are down to 1%. As a result, we have also seen a reduction in the number of complaints and negative feedback</li> </ul>
An issue with the appointment system whereby multiple text messages were being sent for the same repair order.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gilmartins now ensure that residents only receive one text message per appointment slot</li> </ul>
There have been a number of appointments rescheduled or cancelled at short notice, causing residents an avoidable inconvenience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gilmartins will now keep rescheduling to a minimum and always strive to advise the resident directly if an appointment is rescheduled. Hexagon and Gilmartins will continue to analyse the data on rescheduled or cancelled appointments to improve the repairs service to residents</li> <li>Gilmartins' market-leading system allows residents to track operatives on their way to complete a repair. When a repair appointment is booked, a text including a link is sent to the resident – with no need for the resident to download an app. On the day of the repair a text with a link to the tracker is sent to the resident, which includes the operative's name, photograph and estimated time of arrival</li> </ul>

## Additional Improvement Measures

- Gilmartins now have a full-time Resident Liaison Officer dedicated to Hexagon's residents, who will work to ensure that residents have a smooth experience during complex repairs or when residents have expressed dissatisfaction

- Some Gilmartins staff now work in Hexagon's headquarters several times a week

Please accept our apologies for any inconveniences as a result of the above-mentioned challenges. However, Hexagon and Gilmartins will continue to work on improving the repairs service to residents.

# WHAT SURVEY?

Hexagon commissioned Acuity, a market research company who specialise in the social housing sector, to carry out a series of telephone surveys with residents.

The survey is a general satisfaction survey asking residents what they think about their home and the services provided by Hexagon. The questions are based on the new resident Satisfaction Measures introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing from April next year.



Hexagon's  
new survey.

## When will they call our residents?

Acuity only make calls between the hours of 9:30am and 20:00 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 10.00am and 18:00pm on Saturday.

## What telephone number is displayed?

If a resident receives a call from Acuity the number displayed is **01273 093 939**. If the resident sees a missed call from this number and calls back, they will hear a recorded message informing them that someone from Acuity tried to call them to complete a survey for their landlord.

## Is the survey confidential and anonymous?

The survey is strictly confidential and if a resident requests, the results can be given back to Hexagon anonymously without their name attached.

## Is the survey in line with data protection and what about quality standards?

All the calls are recorded for training and quality purposes. Under the Data Protection Act Acuity is not permitted to release any information that would allow an individual to be identified without their prior active consent to do so.

## Who should I contact at Hexagon or Acuity if I have a query that is not addressed here?

If you have any queries about any of the survey, please contact Ryan Kenny, Business Analyst at Hexagon via: **CSC@hexagon.org.uk**

## SPRING Search

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

AZALEA	DANDELION	LILAC
CROCUS	DIANTHUS	ROSE
DAFFODIL	HYACINTH	TULIP
DAISY	IRIS	VIOLET



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, simply cut out and send to the address below by **31st May**.

Send or email your word search entry to:  
**Resident Voice & Engagement Team,**  
[getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk](mailto:getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk) or **Hexagon Housing Association, 130-136 Sydenham Road, London, SE26 5JY.**

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



## NO COOK MINI ROCKY ROAD BITES

Makes: **10 cakes**

- 1 mug** mini marshmallows
- 1 1/2 mugs** chocolate buttons
- 1 mug** broken digestive biscuits
- 1 mug** sultanas
- 35g** butter

### Method

Put the chocolate buttons and butter in a microwavable dish and heat in a microwave for 35 seconds (or until melted). Remove from the microwave and mix well.

Place the sultanas, biscuits and mini marshmallows in a bowl with the melted chocolate and butter and mix well, so that everything is coated.

All that's left to do, is to place the mixture in small 'blobs' onto a foil covered baking tray, ready to put into the fridge for about 20 mins (or until set).

### Serving suggestion

You can add cherries and mess around with the amount of each ingredient, to suit your own tastes. There is no right or wrong way to do it, just the way you like it.



## EGG – STRORDINARY JOKES

Q

Why shouldn't you tell an Easter egg a joke?

A

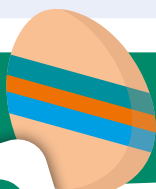
It might crack up!

Q

Why did the Easter egg hide?

A

He was a little chicken!





## IN THIS EDITION:

You Said We Did: page 4

Ways To Get Involved: pages 6 – 9

Enter into our photo competition and win a £50 voucher: see page 2

Rent Increase for 2023/2024: page 5

Meet Hexagon's new Neighbourhood Services Lead: page 10

Resident Spotlight: working after retirement: page 12

Cost of living Top Tips: page 15

## 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](mailto:customer_desk@hexagon.org.uk)  
for all general enquiries

[www.hexagon.org.uk](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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  
"ንክብርታዊናልኩም" ኩሉንዜ 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.

## JOIN OUR RESIDENT MEETING WITH GILMARTINS AND OUR REPAIRS TEAM

Meet Gilmartins, find out more and share your feedback!

July 2023 will mark the 1-year anniversary of Gilmartins being Hexagon's main repairs contractor. We want to hear from residents how it's been going for you – what's worked well and what hasn't? We'll provide updates and your feedback will help inform the annual contract review and how Gilmartins operate moving forward.

Please join us at an all-residents meeting on the evening of Thursday 13th July 2023 – full details are being confirmed. Please register your interest and we'll be in touch again nearer the time with more information.

## 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](mailto: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.