

Setting the Standards

Annual Review to Residents 2009/10

Find out how we measure up on:

**Tenant involvement
& empowerment**

Home

Tenancy

**Neighbourhood
& Local Community**

Value for Money



A new style of report for the new TSA framework

Hexagon has made great progress in many key areas this year. In the following pages, we've reported where we're doing well, and where we're not doing so well. As you'll see, the report is quite different in style this year, as we've followed the Tenant Services Authority's new reporting guidelines.

You may be aware that the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) has developed a regulatory framework together with tenants, local authorities and housing associations. It's designed to improve the services that people living in social housing receive and we welcome it as a formal structure to work to.

There are six standards in the framework and each social housing provider, such as Hexagon, must aim to meet these from April 2010.

The TSA has asked all registered housing providers to report on how they're performing against the specific outcomes expected for five out of the six standards, and that's what we've provided for you in this report. The exception is the standard for governance and viability, which the TSA monitors separately.

To ensure we created a report that's useful and meaningful for residents, as well as following the TSA's guidelines, we consulted with residents in developing the style and content for this document.

We formed a Local Offers and Annual Report Group in June to be at the centre of the consultation, and this group approved the report's contents and the self-assessments that it includes. The text was also scrutinised carefully by our Readers' Panel.

If you have suggestions for next year's annual report for residents, or would like to be involved in the consultation process about it, please fill in the feedback questionnaire or contact the resident involvement team on 020 8768 7970.



Tenant involvement and empowerment standard

The TSA requires the following outcomes for the tenant involvement & empowerment standard:

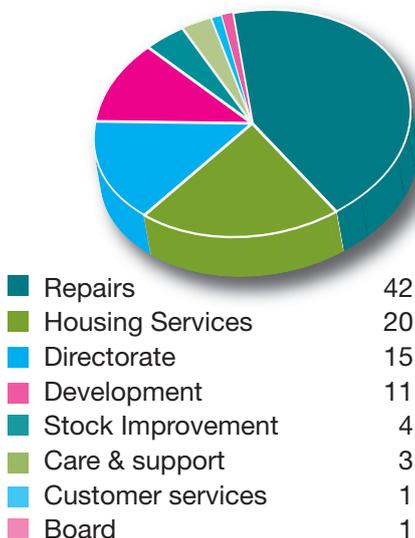
1. Customer service, choice and complaints

Registered providers shall:

- provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants in the delivery of all standards
- have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly



Complaints by Service Department



Customer service, choice and complaints

We aim to ensure you all have equal access to our services and that we meet the diverse needs of our residents. There are a range of ways you can contact us; these are published in section 1.2 of the residents' handbook, issued to all new tenants and on the inside back cover of *Home News*.

Our policy is to translate documents or put them into another format such as large print, Braille or audio on request. Once you've told us your needs, we'll also make sure key documents (eg those relating to your tenancy agreement, legal action or important changes to the way we work) are automatically sent to you in this format.

We constantly strive to improve our services, but we realise there will be times when things go wrong. If you believe Hexagon has done something wrong and we've failed to sort it out when you notified us initially, you can make a complaint. We'll investigate your complaint and try to settle it as quickly as possible. There is a range of ways that you can complain – the details are on www.hexagon.org.uk and in section 1.7 of the residents' handbook.

There are three stages in our complaints system. In 2009/10, 56 (77%) of the 73 complaints we received were resolved at the first stage. This was below our target of 85%. 15 (21%) went to Stage 2 and three people took their complaint to stage 3, where it's considered by a panel of board members one of whom is a Tenant Board Member. One resident referred their complaint to the Independent Housing Ombudsman, but it was not upheld.

29 complaints (40%) were resolved in favour of the resident, 31 complaints (43%) were not upheld and 13 complaints (17%) were partially upheld.

Of the residents who made a complaint in 2009/10, 16 responded to our satisfaction survey. 51% said they were satisfied with the outcome and 44% said they were dissatisfied with the outcome.

We responded to 65 complaints (88%) within the target time of 15 days and two out of three within 10 days. When asked about how they felt with the time taken to deal with the complaint, 33% of respondents said they were satisfied, but 47% said they were dissatisfied. The Residents Forum is due to scrutinise these results and suggest how performance should be improved.

Tenant involvement and empowerment standard

2. Involvement and empowerment

Registered providers shall support co-regulation with their tenants by:

- offering all tenants a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing, including the ability to influence strategic priorities, the formulation of housing related policies and the delivery of housing related services
- consulting with their tenants and acting reasonably in providing them with opportunities to agree local offers for service delivery
- providing tenants with a range of opportunities to influence how providers meet all the TSA's standards, and to scrutinise their performance against all standards and in the development of the annual report
- providing support to tenants to build their capacity to be more effectively involved

Involvement and empowerment

We're committed to work in partnership with you, our residents and service users, to improve the services we provide and the quality of life in your neighbourhoods. One third of the members of Hexagon's top decision-making body, our Board, are directly-elected residents.

During 2009/10 we offered a variety of ways for you to get involved with Hexagon. These were advertised in each edition of Home News and on www.hexagon.org.uk

They included:

- Readers' Panel
- Estate Grading Panel
- Surveys – both over the phone and by post
- Residents' Forum
- Area meetings
- Focus groups
- Performance Review Group
- Residents' Design Group
- Contractor Selection Panel
- Residents' day
- Mystery shopping
- Tenants' and residents' Associations

We consulted with the Residents Forum, the Performance Review Group and residents at area meetings in Catford and Thamesmead regarding the Tenant Services Authority draft standards. Residents' comments and viewpoints were then fed back direct to the Tenants Services Authority.

By April 2011, Hexagon will publish a set of local offers on:

- (i) Hexagon Help – services to provide some extra help when residents need it
- (ii) Building communities
- (iii) Anti-social behaviour
- (iv) Responsive repairs
- (v) Home improvement
- (vi) When I want to move

These local offers which build on our existing service standards will be drawn up and approved in consultation with residents. We'll then report on how we provided services relating to these local offers in our annual report published in September 2011. We'll consult with residents on whether we've performed to target against them and publish residents' recommendations in *Home News*.



During 2009/10 there was a clear link between resident involvement and service improvement in several areas. Some examples include:

- Following the Estate Grading Panel's recommendation, we've installed estate signage at Park Court.
- Following feedback from those who've reported anti-social behaviour (ASB), we've changed our procedure to ensure housing officers keeping in touch with complainants, even when there are no developments.
- Following consultation at a residents' focus group, we amended and published service standards for both responsive repairs and gas servicing.
- Following suggestions made at the residents' day, we put extra resources into combating illegal subletting, and as a result we were able to recover 11 properties for allocating to people with recognised housing needs.
- The findings from the mystery shopping exercise helped us to ensure more consistency in the information we provide, and helped us focus on the need to adhere to our Customer Service Standards.
- 63% of our residents were satisfied that Hexagon took their views into account. This compares with an average of 52% for all housing associations based in London (2008 data).

For the 2010/11 year, Hexagon will promote three key opportunities for residents to get involved with our work. These are:

- (i) Scrutinising Hexagon's performance.** Residents will assess our performance in delivering housing services and give recommendations as to how we can improve our services further.
- (ii) Involvement in the decision-making process.** Residents will help to make decisions with our staff and will have a direct bearing on how our services are provided.
- (iii) Influencing the decision making process.** So we can make better-informed decisions, Hexagon will seek residents' views before making a decision relating to a service.

The table below shows the activities that enable residents to be involved with these opportunities:

Activity	Scrutiny	Involvement in decision-making	Influencing decision-making
Performance Review Group	✓		✓
Tenant board member	✓	✓	
Surveys			✓
Local offer & annual report group	✓		✓
Residents Forum	✓	✓	
Repairs satisfaction surveys			✓
Estate inspections			✓
Estates Grading Panel	✓		✓
Systems review project team	✓	✓	✓
Focus groups			✓
Mystery shopping	✓		✓
Contractor selection panel		✓	
Area meetings			✓
Tenant & resident associations			✓
Residents' day			✓
Residents' Design Group		✓	
Housing co-ops			✓
Complaints and suggestions			✓

Where Hexagon has consulted with residents, we gave them feedback on the consultation. If the consultation was carried out at a meeting, we provided minutes to all those who attended within seven days of the meeting. For residents as a whole, we included a summary of the consultation in the next Home News.

Tenant involvement and empowerment standard

Getting involved...

The standards you can expect from Hexagon if you're involved in shaping or scrutinising our housing services are set out in Resident Involvement Service Standards (Number 4) available in the residents' section of www.hexagon.org.uk or from the customer services team at our head office.



If you want to get involved, Hexagon will provide training and support so you have the information, knowledge and confidence to do so.

In 2009/10, we provided training on mystery shopping, Computers for Beginners, DIY – Tips & Techniques and contract tendering, all of which has helped develop the skills and confidence of residents.

We also ran information sessions on what's involved in becoming a tenant board member (one third of Hexagon's board members are residents, elected by Hexagon residents). We also increased the training opportunities for residents by funding 2 Resident Forum members to go on an all-day training session delivered by a training organisation.

Plus, we ran two training sessions for 10 residents on becoming a mystery shopper. These sessions led to the residents carrying out mystery shopping of our services over a three-week period. We'll consult with the Residents' Forum annually on residents' satisfaction with our training sessions and on proposals for the year ahead's training programme.

Key Contact Details:

Brian Hughes · Resident Involvement Manager

Tel: 020 8768 7964 · email: getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk



3. Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

Registered providers shall:

- treat all tenants with fairness and respect
- demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the seven equality strands and tenants with additional support needs



Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

We have a good understanding of the tenant population from our profile data, which has a high level of coverage for its general needs residents. We have used the profile information to mould our services to meet individual needs. For example, we asked our residents whom we know have a hearing disability if they would like us to bring our portable loop to home visits.

Again, using the profile information, we have contacted residents with known mobility problems or who are over 65 to see if they need any aids and adaptations to their home.

Hexagon is committed to communicating effectively with all residents and ensuring all residents have equal opportunity to make the most of our services. For example, we know that just less than 1% of residents need key documents to be made available in a language other than English. Therefore, when we sent out rent change notice letters, we ensured they were translated into the languages spoken by our residents who don't understand English.

Another example is where we know that a tenant has mobility issues, we inform our contractors so they allow extra time for the tenant to answer the door. If any resident is in need of this sort of tailored service, let Customer Services know.



Home standard

The TSA requires the following outcomes for the home standard:

1. Quality of accommodation

Registered providers shall:

- ensure that tenants' homes meet the standard set out in section 5 of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance by 31 December 2010 and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard after this date
- meet the standards of design and quality that applied when the home was built, and were required as a condition of publicly funded financial assistance, if these standards are higher than the Decent Homes Standard
- in agreeing a local offer, ensure that it is set at a level not less than these standards and have regard to section 6 of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance



Quality of accommodation

By the end of 2009/10, only 29 of Hexagon's homes failed to meet the government's Decent Homes standard. This is just 0.8% of all our homes, down from nearly 20% five years ago, and five of the Hexagon properties that don't meet the standard were occupied by residents who declined the offer of improvement works. This puts Hexagon among the best 25% of housing providers for complying with the Decent Home's standard. We will improve our remaining 29 homes that don't comply in time for the government's deadline of December 2010.

Hexagon's good performance against the Decent Homes standard is the result of heavy investment in our home improvement programme.

In 2009/10 we:

- Installed 50 new kitchens and bathrooms.
- Replaced the windows in 55 homes.
- Renewed the roofs in 26 homes.
- Replaced 143 boilers with AA rated boilers, which use less fuel and are kinder to the environment, and carried out energy efficiency improvements to 85 homes.
- Upgraded 15 empty homes to higher standards.
- Carried out 8 estate improvement schemes developed with local residents.
- Installed extra fire protection measures in 40 blocks of flats.

We aim for the Decent Homes Plus standard, which is at a higher level and was developed in consultation with our residents. As part of going beyond the minimum requirements, we carry out environmental and safety improvements such as security and lighting upgrades, and also take measures to help people with mobility problems.

We consult residents on the choice of additional facilities to their homes or neighbourhoods. To see what you can expect when improvements are made to your home, please visit www.hexagon.org.uk or ask Customer Services and look up service standards 15 and 16.





Major review of home improvement service

We are now applying what we learnt during the review of our responsive repairs service to a review of our home improvement service, previously referred to as stock improvement. Towards the end of 2009/10, at the start of the review, we set up meetings with residents to discuss their

priorities. Some of these residents are now on the project team steering the home improvement review, which should be completed in 2010. It will involve us developing a local offer (please see page 24 for explanation), outlining the way we carry out home improvements.

Aids and adaptations for people with disabilities

In 2009/10, we carried out 23 adaptations to residents' homes at a cost of £45,000. We work with local authorities who provide grants, in some cases, for major adaptations. We aim to complete adaptation work costing under £1000 without having to wait for a grant approval.



Home standard

The TSA requires the following outcomes for the home standard:

1. Repairs and maintenance

Registered providers shall:

- provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas that responds to the needs of, and offers choices to, tenants and has the objective of completing repairs and improvements 'right first time'
- meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes

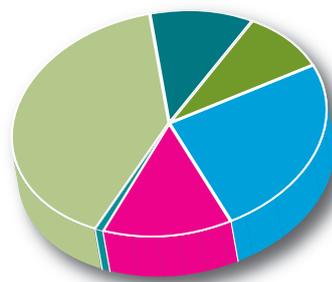


The Hexagon service standards that cover how we do repairs (number 11) and the minimum standards we work to when we repair empty properties (number 13) are available on www.hexagon.org.uk

Repairs and maintenance

We aim to balance what we spend on responsive repairs, cyclical and planned maintenance, work to empty homes, improving homes and carrying out adaptations. What we spent in each area is shown in the following chart:

Repairs Expenditure



Repairs to empty homes	£615,647
Gas servicing and repairs	£527,806
Responsive repairs	£1,423,875
Cyclical maintenance	£760,304
Aids and adaptations	£45,284
Home improvements	£2,251,835

Hexagon measures the cost effectiveness of its responsive repairs service against 50 other landlords in London. The last time we did this, based on 2008/09 figures, Hexagon was spending less but achieving satisfaction rates which are above average.

We offer a choice of appointments for all repairs, except emergencies. Telephone surveys completed after repairs show 94% of residents were satisfied with the appointment arrangements and 95% were satisfied with the way the repair was done (up from 92% last year). As a result of resident suggestions at the Performance Review Group, we are now proposing to introduce some Saturday morning appointments. You also get a choice in finishes and, where possible, layouts when we carry out home improvement work.

We aim to get it right first time and, in 2009/10, 91% of residents who had a repair done said it was completed in the first visit (up from 85% in the previous year), and 95% were satisfied with the quality of the work (up from 88% last year).

We also measure how well we meet the response times for completing repairs in different priority categories. Over 96% of our repairs were done on time in 2009/10, which is better than the target we set. We reduced the average length of time taken to do a repair from 12.2 days in 2008/09 to 11.6 days in 2009/10. In 2010/11, we aim to complete 97% of general repairs and 100% of emergency repairs on time. Our 2010/11 target is an average of 8 days from request to completion.

To meet Hexagon's obligations regarding the health and safety of our properties, we:

- Ensure that every home has an annual gas safety check. In 2009/10, 99.5% of our homes had a current gas safety certificate. Our target is 100% coverage. Our service standard for gas safety is number 12. *Available online at www.hexagon.org.uk*
- Carried out fire risk assessments on all properties needing one. We are now working through the actions raised by the assessments, including spending £420,000 on additional safety measures. **You can also play your part in ensuring your home is as safe as possible by ensuring that communal areas are kept free of anything that could be a fire risk or could obstruct people getting out in a fire.**
- Have identified properties where we believe asbestos is present and have complied with the law to manage it. All surveying staff have had asbestos awareness training. Our service standard for managing asbestos is number 18. *Available online at www.hexagon.org.uk*

Last year, we finished our major systems review of Hexagon's repairs service and have implemented many changes suggested by residents. Feedback shows that residents are now much more satisfied with all aspects of our repairs service.

Satisfaction with the repairs service in 2009/10 increased dramatically to 82.1%, up from 69.6% in the previous year. We know that even with these improvements, we could still do better and so are working on a local offer with residents this year.

Local offers

We are developing two local offers with groups of residents:

1. **The way we plan and carry out our home improvement work.**
2. **Our responsive repairs service.**

We expect to have the draft local offers in place by Autumn 2010, ready to pilot over the winter so we can make any necessary changes before they come into force by April 2011. There is more information about the development of these local offers on page 24.



Tenancy standard

The TSA requires the following outcomes for the tenancy standard:

1. Allocations

Registered providers shall let their homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way. They shall take into account the housing needs and aspirations of tenants and potential tenants. They shall demonstrate how they:

- make the best use of available housing
- are compatible with the purpose of the housing
- contribute to local authorities' strategic housing function and sustainable communities

There should be clear application, decision-making and appeals processes.



Allocations

To help meet housing need, we co-operate with the local authorities where our homes are located by:

- Building the type of new housing that our partner local authorities tell us they need.
- Supporting local authorities in regenerating run-down areas and estates. In 2009/10, for example, we offered Southwark Council more homes on our new Lynton Road development than we usually would so the council could use them to re-house families from the Aylesbury estate.
- Housing people that local councils nominate to us from the housing register, including homeless households. This is one of the main obligations on us as a housing association using public funds to provide subsidised housing. In 2009/10, 84% of the homes we had available for letting were given to people nominated by local councils. We had an exceptionally large number of new homes to let in this period – 57% of all lets were new homes. Hexagon has access to 25% of the new homes we build for allocating to Hexagon residents.

Who we let our general needs properties to in 2009/10*

	Number	%
Transfers (i.e. existing Hexagon tenants)	32	15.7
Local authority nominations – homeless	37	18.1
Local authority nominations – not homeless	134	65.7
Referred from a voluntary agency	1	0.6
Total lettings	204	100

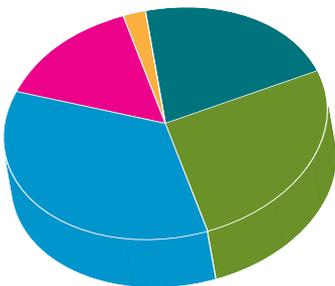
*based on interim CORE data

We are tackling overcrowding and under-occupation in our area by being active partners in the South East London Housing Partnership schemes called Perfect Fit and Just Right. In 2009/10, we helped 5 Hexagon families and 5 families of other housing associations to move through these schemes.

We are also carrying out a small programme of loft conversions with funding from the Greater London Authority to provide homes with more bedrooms to meet the needs of overcrowded families. We did three of these conversions in 2009/10, and are expecting another three in 2010/11.

If you register for a transfer to a different home, you'll be given clear information on all the options available when we visit you in your existing home. This includes details regarding mutual exchange schemes. In 2009/10, 102 of our residents moved (see the chart below for more details). We had a higher number of new homes than we usually do and so were able to transfer more of our tenants than we have done in previous years. At the end of the year, there were 412 households on our transfer list. See *Service Standard 14* online at www.hexagon.org.uk

How Hexagon tenants moved



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What is a mutual exchange?

A mutual exchange is where a tenant swaps their home with another tenant.

Miss E moved from Rotherhithe to Erith by doing a mutual exchange with the tenant of another housing association. She wanted to move out of London, but because her house in Rotherhithe was big enough for her and her family, she wasn't listed as a priority case for a transfer.

It's very unlikely that Miss E would have been offered a transfer as her existing home suited her family's primary needs. That's why we encourage you to register with Homeswapper and House Exchange if you want to move. These mutual exchange services are absolutely free and have helped thousands of tenants to find a new home.

"The process of doing the mutual exchange was very easy," says Miss E. "I love the area and I am very happy in my new home."

Empty Properties

We keep the time a property is empty between lettings to a minimum by ensuring our repairs and lettings staff work closely together so that, as far as possible, we have a new tenant ready to move in as soon as any repair work is done.

Last year, it took an average of 34 days to re-let a general needs home, including doing

the repairs and letting. It takes longer, on average, to re-let our supported housing properties – 65 days last year. This is because of the longer referral and assessment processes for people with support needs. We have an action plan to improve our re-letting time this year in Supported Housing.

We operate our own choice-based lettings scheme for transfers, but most of our homes are let through each borough's own choice-based lettings scheme. You can see our allocations policy by visiting www.hexagon.org.uk or requesting a copy from our customer services team. If you need help using a choice-based letting scheme, we can support you.



Tenancy standard

The TSA requires the following outcomes for the tenancy standard:

1. Rents

Registered providers shall charge rents in accordance with the objectives and framework set out in the Government's Direction to the TSA of November 2009.

2. Tenure

Registered providers shall offer and issue the most secure form of tenure compatible with the purpose of the housing and the sustainability of the community. They shall meet all applicable statutory and legal requirements in relation to the form and use of tenancy agreements. Registered providers shall set out in an annual report for tenants how they are meeting these obligations and how they intend to meet them in the future. The provider shall then meet the commitments it has made to its tenants.

Rent Collection

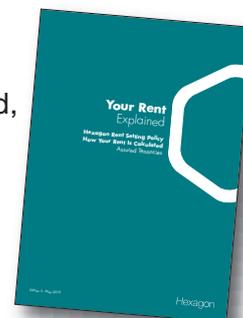
Hexagon has a better record on collecting the rent due than many other landlords and has improved every year for many years;

	Hexagon 2009/10	London Housing Associations 2009/10	Hexagon 2008/09	London Housing Associations 2008/09
% arrears	4.5%	Not available	4.9%	6.7%
% of rent due collected	100%	Not collected	99.7%	Not collected

Rents

We set our rents in accordance with Government guidelines on rent restructuring. We have been moving towards target rents for the last eight years. (See Your Rent Explained leaflet.) As Hexagon's rents are lower than average in our boroughs, new tenants' rents

are now set at 5% above the target, as allowed, but our rents are still mostly lower than other social housing providers.



Average rents (including service charges) £ per week as at March 2009

	1 beds		3 beds	
	Hexagon	All housing associations	Hexagon	All housing associations
Bexley	88.34*	76.37	91.34	106.18
Croydon	76.27	83.31	101.11	106.44
Greenwich	79.20	82.47	93.51	105.10
Lewisham	73.45	77.50	92.12	91.60
Southwark	77.67	86.38	101.85	106.74

Most of Hexagon's 1 bedroom flats in Bexley are new and in blocks with service charges, whereas the "all housing associations" figure includes the former council housing which is much older

In 2009/10, the Government guideline for rent increases was 5.5%, which we applied. For 2010/11, the guideline was for rents to be reduced by 0.9%, which we have implemented.

At the end of 2009/10, 80% of our tenancies were at the target rent – these residents will have had a small rent reduction. If your rent has not reached the target, your rent will have increased a little towards the target. Tenants who have not reached the target rent, (mostly secure or fair rent tenants), will reach it over the next few years.

We aim to provide you with clear information about how our rent and service charge levels are set and changed via information leaflets, which are sent out every year with the rent change notice.

Tenure

We offer assured periodic tenancies (the normal form of tenancy for housing associations) to all our weekly tenants, except where:

- We only hold the property on a short lease.
- The tenant is in a supported housing scheme and they're expected to move on within two years.
- The resident is living in a hostel where a licence is granted.
- The tenant already had a secure fair rent housing association tenancy and is transferring to another home.

You can find our policies on tenancy management in the residents' handbook, which is given to every new tenant and is published on www.hexagon.org.uk

We carry out regular checks of samples of our homes to ensure they continue to be lived in by the people that we allocated to them. We also take part in the National Fraud Initiative to identify potentially fraudulent residents.

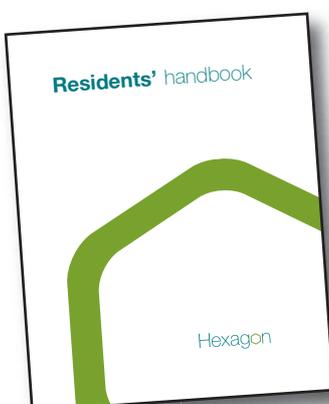
We are also taking part in a South East London Housing Partnership drive to combat unauthorised occupation. This is where tenants sublet their home to make money. Last year, we took action against several occupants for suspected unauthorised occupation and brought 11 homes back into legitimate use as a result.

Local offers

With residents, we are developing a local offer this year covering the service available when residents want to move. There is more detail about the development of local offers on page 24. These local offers will be in place by April 2011.

In the meantime we have a service standard number 5 covering how we deal with allocations and transfers.

We also have a service standard for income recovery (number 8). All our service standards are published on www.hexagon.org.uk and are available to residents in our reception area.



Neighbourhood and Community standard

The TSA requires the following outcomes for the neighbourhood and community standard:

1. Neighbourhood management

Registered providers shall keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes that they own clean and safe. They shall work in partnership with their tenants and other providers and public bodies where it is effective to do so.

2. Local area co-operation

Registered providers shall co-operate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental and economic well being in the areas where they own properties where they are able to assist them in achieving their objectives.

3. Anti-social behaviour

Registered providers shall work in partnership with other public agencies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhoods where they own homes.

Neighbourhood management

Hexagon aims to improve the places where you live by:

- **Getting the basics right** – keeping the communal areas in estates clean, safe and in good repair through monthly inspections and involving residents in the inspection once every three months. We carried out 94% of the inspections due during 2009/10. The standards we aim for are displayed on estate notice boards.
- **Involving residents** in specifying the terms of the estate services contract and selecting the contractor.
- **Improving, and fostering pride**, in the appearance of our estates by working with residents on our pilot estate grading scheme. This is a new scheme where resident volunteers will inspect estates and award a grading. This will lead to recommendations about how Hexagon and the residents of the estate can work together to improve the grade. In 2010/11, we hope to extend this scheme to include 10 more estates.
- **Working with residents** and other local landlords and service providers on wider neighbourhood issues, such as building a new play area on the Redriff estate in Bermondsey, which was organised with local landlords and part-funded by LB Southwark.



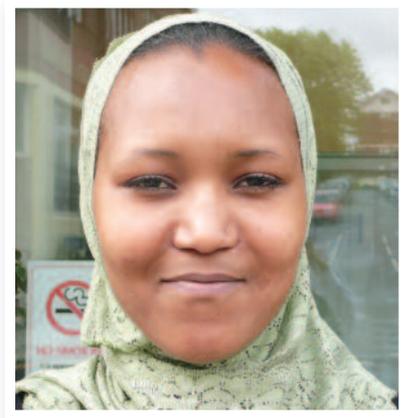
Hexagon also provides a range of services that benefit all our residents and clients, wherever they live, as well as other members of the wider South East London community.

This includes:

The Hexagon Academy

Based around volunteer work placements and shorter work tasters, this gives people valuable experience and helps to build their confidence so they can get back to work. In 2009/10, working with Affinity Sutton (another housing association) and South London Learning Consortium, we secured funding from Lewisham's Working Neighbourhoods Fund.

From November 2009 to April 2011, we are providing 75 placements and tasters for Lewisham residents alongside places for residents in other areas. Five people who have been through the Hexagon Academy programme have already secured jobs. We also offered three six-month job opportunities working on projects to benefit the community to unemployed young people. These were funded by the Future Jobs Fund and, in 2010, we have sixteen more young people going through the programme.



Najah, our first member of staff under the Future Jobs Fund programme said as she neared the end of her time with us, *"When I look back, I think I have made huge progress. I feel much more confident within the office environment. Everyone was very supportive in helping me to understand my role and learn new skills. For example, telephone skills...I feel I am ready to face new challenges and I am not scared to move on... I am positive about my future."*

My Time Your Time

Our local time bank, My Time Your Time, helps to develop a sense of community among members.

Following a re-launch in 2009/10, My Time Your Time is focusing on three neighbourhoods in Sydenham, East Dulwich and Forest Hill. My Time Your Time is to be merged in the Autumn of 2010 with another time bank in the local area it serves.



This will enable its members and local residents to continue time banking. It also places the time bank in the best possible position to grow and prosper as a community project, led by its members and residents.



Hexagon has put a lot of time and resources into time banking and will continue to support it by providing a website, a grant and technical support. Hexagon residents will still be able to join the time bank in the neighbourhoods it serves; it will just no longer be hosted as a project by Hexagon itself.

Neighbourhood and Community standard

Local Co-operation

Hexagon plays a leading role in several partnerships in the local authority areas where we work. Through the South East London Housing Partnership, we work with other housing associations on a number of initiatives operating across South East London.

Some examples of how we do this are:

Lewisham Local Strategic Partnership

Hexagon has represented housing providers on this partnership chaired by Mayor Steve Bullock for nine years and one of our directors is currently vice-chair of the partnership. The partnership identified that it was really important for local employers to offer more apprenticeships and Hexagon now offers two apprenticeships for residents – one in customer services and one with our repairs team. One of our building contractors is also offering an apprenticeship in building/engineering and we

hope to build on this initiative in future years. Charley Rooney, the apprentice in our repairs team, was 16 years old and living in one of our hostels when he got the job.

Paul Grant, Charlie's manager, comments, *"Charlie's really keen to learn. He asks lots of questions, picks things up quickly and his workmanship is excellent. He's also very polite and always on time. If we're able to, we'd love to give him a job at the end of his apprenticeship."*



Charlie says, *"What I've achieved wouldn't have been possible without Wayne [his mentor] and Paul's help. Next year I'll carry on doing day release at college and take my NVQ level 2 in painting and decorating. After that, I'd like to do level 3 – that covers more of the business side."*

Greenwich Violent and Organised Crime Unit

Along with several other local landlords, Hexagon contributed financially to a special drive by the local police to tackle gang-related violence in the borough over a two-year period. Results showed knife crime down by 20% and gun crime cut by 44%.

Bexley

We have been working closely with local landlords and the North End and Erith Safer Neighbourhood police teams to deal with anti-social behaviour amongst young people.

Southwark joint landlord agreement on anti-social behaviour

We have agreed minimum standards for tackling anti-social behaviour with other Southwark landlords, which should make it easier for us to take effective action against perpetrators living in another landlord's property.

Croydon

Hexagon made a leading contribution to making sure new homes in Croydon's town centre are built to the standards we know will make them places where people want to live.

Across South East London,

we are working with the boroughs and other landlords in a housing partnership on several projects, including:

- a)** A tenancy audit project to tackle unauthorised use of our properties. We are expecting to reclaim around 15 homes to let to households that are on the housing register legitimately and need a home.
- b)** Overcrowding and under-occupation initiatives such as the Perfect Fit scheme, which is designed to help households no longer needing a large family home to find a smaller, but still desirable, home.

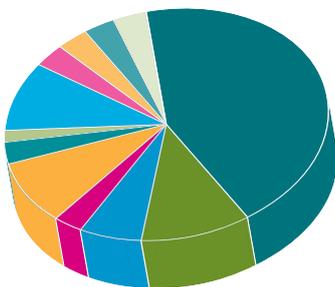
Anti-Social Behaviour

We have a policy and a service standard (no. 6) for tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) and a service standard for supporting witnesses of ASB (no 10). Our policies and service standards regarding anti-social behaviour are all available www.hexagon.org.uk and through Hexagon customer services.

Hexagon is a signatory to the Government's Respect standard, has signed the South East London Partnership protocol on dealing with domestic violence, and has signed up to a new Safer Lewisham Partnership on tackling ASB and similar protocols in other boroughs. We also work closely with the police, local authorities and other agencies.

During 2009/10, Hexagon housing officers dealt with approximately 60 reports of anti-social behaviour. Around 30 of these were new issues being reported for the first time. The majority were to do with noise, and the complaints were spread fairly evenly across our homes in line with the number of properties we have in each borough.

ASB - Types of complaints



Noise	28
Verbal abuse/intimidation	7
Hate related	4
Vandalism/damage to property	2
Pet/animal nuisance	6
Drug misuse/dealing	2
Alcohol related nuisance	1
Domestic abuse	6
Litter/rubbish/fly-tipping	2
Garden disputes	2
Misuse of communal areas	2
Criminal behaviour/crime	2

We respond to reports of anti-social behaviour in many different ways, depending on the type of incident and the people involved.

Our responses include:

- One-off action where we contact the person causing the nuisance about their behaviour and the effect it's having on others. This is sometimes all that's needed.
- Mediation, where we encourage neighbours in dispute to talk to each other with the help of a trained mediator. We referred ten cases for mediation during 2009/10.
- Legal action – there are many legal action options available to us, including injunctions, ASBOs and eviction. We only ever consider legal action as a last resort however, and took only two people to court for anti-social behaviour during 2009/10.

We use a variety of other measures to deal with anti-social behaviour, especially when it's not clear if anyone is actually at fault.

During 2009/10, as in previous years, we have helped tenants to pay for carpeting where noise between flats is a problem, and we have supplied lockable letter boxes where there have been complaints about post going missing.

Where necessary, we help people to move to get away from anti-social behaviour perpetrators, usually in cases of domestic abuse or harassment. During 2009/10, we re-housed four families.

We measure the satisfaction rate of those residents who have reported anti-social behaviour to us and this year, this dropped to 41%. We have therefore prioritised this as an area for improvement in 2010/11 and this is reflected in the local offer.

Local offers

We are currently developing two local offers, which were agreed by residents as the priority areas for 2010/11.

- **How Hexagon will deal with ASB in the future.**
- **How Hexagon can contribute to building communities and neighbourliness.**

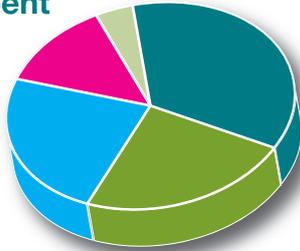
Two groups of residents will meet Hexagon managers by the end of October to agree what these offers should contain and how, in the future, residents will assess whether the service level has been met. See page 24 for the plan on how all our local offers are to be developed and how to get involved.

Value for money standard

The TSA requires the following outcomes for the value for money standard:

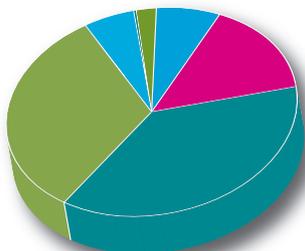
Registered providers shall have a comprehensive approach to managing their resources to provide cost-effective, efficient, quality services and homes to meet tenants' and potential tenants' needs.

How every £1 of rent was spent



	%
Planned maintenance and home improvement programme	36
Responsive repairs	24
Interest on loans	24
Housing management	13
Community development and tenant participation	4

SAP Rating - How energy efficient our homes are



SAP Rating	No. properties
Up to 30	11
31-40	65
41-50	208
51-60	436
61-70	1062
71-80	924
81-90	157

What we mean by value for money

One of our corporate objectives is 'to be cost effective, efficient and competitive' – i.e. to offer good value for money in the way we provide our services. Operating as efficiently as possible has been one of Hexagon's key objectives for a long time.

How we aim to provide value for money for you

We have a three-year value for money strategy that focuses on where we spend the most money and where we think we could be more efficient.

In particular, it looks at the following areas:

- Building new homes.
- Responsive repairs.
- Planned maintenance and our home improvement programme.
- Managing supported housing properties.
- Interest costs on the money we have to borrow to build new homes.

By the end of the three-year strategy in 2011, you should see:

- All of Hexagon's new homes built to the Code for Sustainable Homes level 3, a high standard of energy efficiency that will save occupants money in their fuel bills.
- A responsive repairs service that achieves high satisfaction levels but costs around 2% less than in 2009/10.

- A home improvement programme that increases the average energy efficiency of Hexagon properties from 65 towards our target of 67 on the "SAP" energy efficiency rating scale. The SAP Ratings chart shows that some of Hexagon's properties have very low ratings, below 40 and we want to tackle those first.
- Hexagon providing better quality support services, while still meeting cost targets.
- Low interest costs, not just for now but for the long-term. In 2009/10, our average interest costs were 3.75%.

Hexagon's board reviews our progress against the value for money strategy once a year and all Hexagon departments have to report to the board annually showing what that department has done to improve value for money.

What we have done this year (April 2009-March 2010)

Here are a few examples of the actions we took in the last year to improve value for money:

- We have amended our design specification for new homes to reduce build costs without compromising energy efficiency, future maintenance or the qualities that residents value (as expressed by our Residents' Design Group and residents of new homes).
- The Residents' Design Group now comments on the design of all new schemes.
- By sharing our buying power with other associations, the new energy efficient boilers installed in 2009/10 cost 12% less in real terms than those installed in 2008/09.

Similarly, the kitchens and bathrooms installed during 2009/10 cost 20% less overall for the same quality.

- The systems review of the way we deliver our responsive repairs service has improved levels of customer satisfaction with the service from 67% before the review to 82% now, whilst releasing £19,000 per annum in staff time on repairs administration.
- We have involved residents in the tendering of our main responsive repairs contract and expect to make savings of about 2% on the 2009/10 costs.



- Energy costs for our offices and nursing homes have been tendered, leading to a saving of around £25,000 a year.
- The housing services department now uses an online court action system, saving £50 per case (annual savings of £5,900).



Value for money standard

How do we compare

Hexagon's rents are generally lower than those for other housing associations who work in the same areas – see the table on page 14 for more details.

We subscribe to several benchmarking services, so we can compare our costs, services and resident satisfaction rates with those of other housing providers in London and across England. This enables us to report to you on how we compare to others and focus attention on services where we need to improve. The resident satisfaction data is based on a 2008 survey; since then, our resident satisfaction rates have improved greatly (see pages 10 and 11).

The latest benchmarking results (March 09) are below:

-  Hexagon's results were better than 75% of other landlords in the sample.
-  Hexagon results were better than 50% of other landlords in the sample, but not in the top quarter.
-  Hexagon's results were worse than 50% of other landlords in the sample, but not in the bottom quarter.
-  Hexagon's results were worse than 75% of other landlords in the sample.

Hexagon performs well compared to other social landlords in London, achieving low costs and high quality, but didn't compare as well in some service areas with social landlords across

England. London associations generally have lower resident satisfaction rates than England as a whole, but Hexagon is still aiming to be amongst the top quarter of associations in the whole country.

Cost comparison	London	England	Quality comparisons	London	England
Responsive repairs			% of respondents satisfied with the way landlord deals with repairs & maintenance		
Major works and cyclical maintenance			% residents satisfied with the general condition of their home		
Housing management			% of rent collected		
			% residents satisfied that their views are being taken into account		
			Average time to re-let empty properties (days)		
			Tenancy turnover		
Estate services			% residents satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live		
Overhead cost per property			Percentage of staff turnover in the year		

How you can influence your service charge

The service charge is money that Hexagon collects to pay for specific services that we provide to, or immediately around, your home. Most of the charges we make as part of a service charge are designed to meet the cost of providing an essential service. For example, a lift is an integral part of some blocks and so its maintenance isn't an optional cost.

Where we can offer a choice on whether a service is provided by a contractor or the residents themselves, such as the maintenance of communal gardens in small blocks, we do so.

This allows residents to opt to do the task themselves rather than have to pay for the service. In recent years, however, more tenants in small blocks have opted to pay for such services.

In some blocks, residents have also influenced the decision to increase the frequency of cleaning from fortnightly to weekly. In 2010/11, we will retender some of our estate cleaning and gardening services work and will involve residents in drawing up the specification and selecting the contractor.

Hexagon's service charges are mostly fixed, which means that once the level of charge has been set, even if the service actually costs a different amount, the charge is not varied so you can be sure in advance of what you'll have to pay.



Hexagon's local offers

Local offers designed with residents for residents

We are currently developing a set of local offers in consultation with residents as required by the TSA. They will be jointly agreed statements of how we will offer a particular service, what you can expect when receiving that service and how residents will measure whether or not we have kept our promises.

The local offers will cover six aspects of our work, which have been chosen by groups of residents, including the Residents' Forum and the Local Offers and Annual Report Group, alongside Hexagon staff.

Hexagon's six local offers will be centred on:

1. Hexagon Help – providing support to meet residents' extra needs
2. Services to build the community and neighbourliness
3. Services to deal with anti-social behaviour
4. Planning and carrying out home improvements to residents' homes
5. Responsive repairs
6. Services available when a resident wants to move

They should be fully operational by the next financial year (2011/12), starting in April 2011.

Building on our existing service standards

Hexagon already has 20 service standards and many of them have been developed with ideas suggested by residents. Each one sets out, on a single side of paper, what residents can expect from that particular service.

The intention of developing local offers is not to throw all this good work away, but to build on it, focusing on the parts of our services where residents have not already detailed their priorities.

We also want to ensure we have a robust way of measuring whether we are achieving the standards set, and that residents are the people who decide just how well we are doing.



My Feedback...

Hexagon

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Sydenham
LONDON
SE26 5ZY



RESPONSE LICENCE NO.
LON29766

Involving residents

There are six groups of residents working with Hexagon's managers on our local offers. The results of their work will be presented to a wider set of residents at the Residents' day on 25th September in the Civic Suite in Catford, London. This will give those who've not been involved in the detail a chance to say what you think of the proposed local offers. This additional feedback will then be taken into account when finalising the offers and how they're measured.

Measuring and testing

After the Residents' day, the Local Offers and Annual Report Group may need to change the proposed offers to ensure they reflect the wider views of residents. They'll also ensure there's an agreed method for measuring whether or not Hexagon meets the expectations set out in each offer.

Residents will be involved in measuring how well we do, both directly by giving feedback in specific surveys and indirectly, as part of ongoing scrutiny of our performance. We already have a residents' scrutiny group, the Performance Review Group, which will be involved in this.

Timetable for Local Offers

We plan to have the measures agreed by the Autumn, so we can do a trial of each offer for three months from November 2010 to February 2011.

After this trial period, the local offers will be published and become fully operational in April 2011. We will then measure them during the year and the results will be published on our website – www.hexagon.org.uk

The timetable for developing local offers is:

Date	Local offers
8th June	Local Offer & Annual Report Group meeting - decided on the focus of the sixth local offer - allocated volunteer residents to each offer group.
10th June to mid September	Six local offer groups are convened and each meets twice.
25 September	Residents' day – the proposed local offers are discussed in workshops.
October/Nov	Local Offer & Annual Report Group meets again to amend the offers, if needed, in light of comments made at the Residents' day. Measurements and how to report Hexagon's performance will also be agreed.
Nov 2010 – Feb 2011	A trial run of Hexagon's local offers.
February 2011	Local Offer and Annual Report Group evaluates local offer trial run and the process of developing offers.
April 2011	Local offers are launched.



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