

HOME

NEWS

WINTER 2016/17

Hexagon

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WELCOME...

to another edition of Home News.

....and a Happy New Year to all our readers. Towards the end of last year we held our Staff Conference and I was very pleased to be able to provide a number of Staff Excellence Awards to staff who were nominated by both our residents and their peers. We actively encourage feedback of all types, both compliments and complaints, as we view these as a learning opportunity on our journey of continuous improvement. With that in mind, I would like to thank all of you who nominated our staff as it is very motivating for them to know that you value their hard work and their desire to provide you with a great service.

Hexagon continues to do a lot of good work to help residents who want to gain employment. Pages 9 to 14 contain a lot of information about possible opportunities, so I hope you find this helpful.

We are still on our journey to improve our repairs service.

Although it is still relatively early days, the residents' Repairs Group is working closely with us to ensure that this important area of our work is as good as it can be under their careful scrutiny. On page 8 residents give a report on the recent work that they've been doing. I would like to thank them for all the hard work they put into this and I am sure that Hexagon is a better organisation for their efforts.

Lastly, an important part of Hexagon's work is our Care & Support service and there are two articles, on pages 4 and 18, that highlight some of that great work which I know you will find interesting.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Home News.

Tom McCormark
Chief Executive



WOULD YOU PREFER TO RECEIVE THIS MAGAZINE BY EMAIL?

You can stop receiving Home News by post if you prefer and have the magazine emailed to you instead.

If you would like to take up this option, simply send your email address to getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk and we will arrange to email you the magazine every three months.



Cover image: Kian decorating plant pots at Culling Road.

Pictured: Natasha Williams (Customer Services Adviser) receives her award from David Collick (Property Services Director)

STAFF EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2016

Thank you very much to those of you who took the time to nominate members of staff for our Annual Staff Excellence Awards. Those selected were presented with their Award at our Staff Conference in November.

We had an excellent response to requests for nominations and received 44 nominations for 33 members of staff. After consideration by a panel, it was decided that 25 nominees would receive Staff Excellence Awards. Recipients included the following:

Kathy Richards (Resident Involvement Officer)

“Kathy has excellent organisational skills and listens and really hears what residents have to say.”

Cynthia Douglas (Supported Housing Officer)

“Cynthia has championed the cause of three non-verbal tenants with learning difficulties and is a credit to Hexagon.”

Patience Ohabuiro (Housing Officer)

“Patience was a great help to us when we were moving. She has a real understanding of people’s needs.”

Liane Powell (Housing Officer)

“She is dedicated and works very hard. She is the best person in the world!”

Rahul Sen (Project Manager)

“Rahul seems to make you feel welcome at Newstead and he helped me move into a nice flat.”

Lisa Cole (Housing Officer)

“Lisa really cares about her tenants. She is strict on the rules, but first she explains the rules fully so you know what’s expected of you and what Hexagon will do.”

Cherina Ramsay (Housing Officer)

“Cherina works closely with me as Estate Champion. She is always happy to listen to any suggestions and I feel she values my opinion.”

Brian Hayward (Surveyor)

“Brian really took our needs into account when our kitchen was being sorted. He also went out of his way to find out other information for us.”

Errol Grant (Surveyor)

“Mr Grant has been very supportive over the last year. He has taken a lot of negative response from me but he has always responded to my messages.”

The following Customer Services Advisers also received awards with positive comments from residents about their dedication, politeness and helpfulness: **Pam Cordle, Natasha Williams, Joanne Snell, Nathaniel Dias, Cecilia Cole and Najma Khan.** Congratulations to all.

NEWSTEAD ROAD

RECOVERY, INDEPENDENCE, WELLBEING, LIFE SKILLS...!

Rahul Sen, Project Manager at Newstead Road provides insight into the service Hexagon provides to residents living in our nursing homes.

I would like to introduce you to the Newstead Road service, which is a project for adults with mental health and complex needs based in the London Borough of Lewisham. We have friendly and experienced staff, who provide recovery and rehabilitation into the community to the residents that live here. Our aim is to work with residents and support them by enhancing their life skills to become more independent and integrate them into the

community. Our service prepares residents to move on to a lower support unit in the community or move on with floating support within a period of up to two years.

Floating support are types of services provided to residents living independently in flats. These are generally termed as

very low support and are ideal for people who are more able to live in the community without much support from the mental health workers.

Our belief is, 'There is a creative synthesis between recovery and social inclusion; recovery both allows and requires social inclusion and social inclusion promotes recovery.'

The service has an innovative and creative recovery team who work closely with the residents in enhancing their life skills and linking them with their choice of community activities. The

"The Newstead Road service has been awarded 5 out of 5 As following a recent independent review"



Left: Music Room at Newstead Rd
Bottom: Arts & Crafts activity



team consists of well-trained and committed Support Officers who deal with medication management and tenancy sustainment, one Recovery and one My-Time Team Leader who oversee the operational running of the service and a handyman who is responsible for the up-keep of the home.

We focus on a person centred approach at whatever we do, hence we have a team of specialist My-Time staff members who work with individuals to help them achieve their personal aspirations by involving them in structured activities; these could range from art therapy, music therapy, reflexology and photography, to services like befriending.

I would like to share the outcome of our recent review by The Prevention and Inclusion and Public Health Team (PIPHT) from Lewisham council. The PIPHT team grade services as either A, B and C on the following five areas:

- Client Involvement
- Assessment and Support Planning
- Security, Health and Safety
- Safeguarding and Protection from Abuse
- Fair Access, Diversity and Inclusion

We are very happy to share that we have been awarded five out of five As in the above areas. We feel this has been a great achievement for the team and the residents, which shows the excellent quality of service we provide.

I would like to thank everyone involved for helping us to shape Newstead Road, a service that delivers in line with the individual resident's hopes and aspirations.

RENT STATEMENT CONSULTATION

In the last edition of Home News we asked for your comments on our proposal to cease the practice of sending out rent statements with the magazine.

We proposed this because many residents tell us that by the time that they get their rent statement it is out of date. It is also costly for us in terms of staff time and printing costs. Subject to your comments, we suggested that we would cease sending quarterly statements from January.

We asked residents to let us have their comments on this proposal by 18th November. There were no objections received by that date which indicates that there is no strong opposition to the proposal not to send rent statements out every 3 months.

Therefore, you will have noticed that there was no rent statement provided in the envelope that came with this edition of Home News. This will remain the case from now on.

You can still check your up-to-date rent statement at any time by logging on to "Seemydata" from the Hexagon website at www.hexagon.org.uk Co-op residents please contact your co-op office directly.

Alternatively you can phone the Customer Services Team on **020 8778 6699** and request that a statement be sent out to you.



Check your rent statements any time online by logging into "Seemydata" at www.hexagon.org.uk



BRICKFIELD COTTAGES

Following the ground collapse in May 2016, our ground investigation work at our new development at Brickfield Cottages in Plumstead continues. As always, the safety of residents, staff and visitors is our top priority.

We have been working with a leading team of surveyors, engineers and ground investigation experts and we now need to carry out further intensive work across the site. Unfortunately, this has meant that we have taken the difficult decision to move everyone out of Brickfield Cottages as this will involve heavy equipment and a lot of disruption.

We have held two meetings with residents and have a dedicated team of case workers who have visited all households

to make sure we understand everyone's individual needs and can find the best alternative accommodation that we can. We are also sending regular newsletters to every resident of Brickfield Cottages to keep people fully up-to-date with progress.

Everyone at Hexagon would like to thank the residents of Brickfield Cottages for their patience, understanding and cooperation during this most challenging of times for all concerned.

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RESIDENTS FORUM UPDATE

The Residents Forum is an elected residents group that works with Hexagon's Board and its managers on developing Hexagon's strategies and policies which guide the work of Hexagon.

The last edition of Home News had an article inviting Hexagon residents to put forward their interest in being elected on to a new-look Residents Forum. In that article we suggested that all Hexagon residents would be asked to vote in January, from a list of interested candidates, to fill six places on the Residents Forum.



By the deadline of 28th November, a total of four interested candidates had put forward their nomination.

Thank you to those of you who have submitted your interest for being elected on to the Forum. The Residents Forum are currently considering the make-up of the new Forum and are hoping to have the new-look Forum in place in the coming months.

STAY IN TOUCH WITH HEXAGON

..... by sending us your current email address

A shortened version of each edition of Home News, with an option to view the whole edition online, is emailed to those residents whom we have email addresses for. This is known as an "eshot" and features three articles from the magazine. Because a large number of eshots are "bouncing back" (a result of being sent to invalid/out-of-date email addresses), we need to update our residents email list.

Aside from receiving the eshot, you can also opt to receive an electronic version of the whole magazine instead of receiving it by post. On the bottom of the inside cover there is a panel giving you details of how to do this.

Whether you receive an electronic version of Home News or a shortened version of the magazine by eshot, please send us your current email address to make sure that you can receive regular versions of the Home News magazine. Simply email your name and post code from your current email account to getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk and we'll do the rest!



REPAIRS GROUP UPDATE

Pam Daley and Chris Matthews are Chair and Vice Chair respectively of the residents Repairs Group. Here Pam and Chris report on the Repairs Group's recent work with one of Hexagon's contractors.

The purpose of the Repairs Group is to help improve the performance and value for money in Hexagon's Responsive Repairs department. Our recommendations are used to directly impact on the improvement of the service that is offered to residents.

The Repairs Group have scrutinised and monitored the performance of Hexagon's gas contractors BSW, in the following areas:

- Yearly gas boiler checks
- Access rates
- Breakdowns
- Complaints
- Satisfaction surveys

We check that performance is within target and we make suggestions on where improvements can be made.

Members of the group met with BSW in October 2016 and made a request that their operatives visiting your home should always show identification on arrival and always present their Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) to you at the end of the job. The PDA is a small device about the size

of a mobile phone, on which you will be asked to complete and sign a short satisfaction survey. This survey is one of the easiest ways you as a resident can feed back to Hexagon. However, only a small percentage of residents seem to do so.



The data residents put on the PDA goes directly to a Hexagon manager who can use this information to get a clearer picture of your satisfaction with the appointment.

To help both Hexagon and yourselves to get the best performance from contractors, we would urge you to complete these surveys.

Access rates for appointments were highlighted as an area for concern. BSW told us that they are not always able to gain access to properties even when appointments have been made. The Repairs Group would encourage residents to work with BSW in this area, to ensure that your boilers are serviced regularly.

Elsbeth Brown, Responsive Repairs Manager at Hexagon writes: "if you have had BSW carry out works in your home and you have not been given a PDA to complete a satisfaction survey, please contact BSW on 020 8763 5300 or email enquiries@bsw-heating.com who will arrange this for you".



COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

CAREERS + OPPORTUNITIES + SUPPORT

OPPORTUNITIES INSIDE

- + Job searching in the New Year
- + Apprenticeships
- + Community event
- + Benefits of working
- + Meet Lorna Campbell
- + Course and career opportunities

NEW YEAR, NEW JOB!

Happy New Year and welcome to the first Employment Support article for 2017. January is often the time of year when reflection on the previous year leads to planning how to improve our lives... go to the gym, learn a new language, get a new job. Unfortunately, the Employment & Skills Team can't help you with everything on your New Years' resolutions list, but we can definitely assist you with identifying the right job vacancies. In this article, we will focus on job search strategy and provide you with practical tips on how to secure that fab new job.

There are many methods of identifying vacancies and with less than 30% of jobs being openly advertised, it is important for job seekers to use a variety of methods when approaching their job search. We hope this guide will equip you with information about the conventional methods as well as the knowledge to access the hidden jobs market.

The most important tip about searching for your next opportunity is remembering it will take time and patience. Keep searching and applying for roles that fit with your long-term goals. If you have a setback remind yourself there is an opportunity to learn from the experience and you can use feedback to improve yourself. It is normal at times to become disheartened

when searching for jobs but keep positive and push ahead, there will always be another opportunity just around the corner.

There is no single 'right' way to look for a job, but together we'll help you decide on your own strategy based on what will give you the greatest chance of success. Most people find that a combination of some or all the approaches in the list (next page) leads to positive results.

Why don't you get in touch with Lionne today on **020 8768 7915**, who will assist you with kick starting your new year to a positive start.



DIFFERENT WAYS TO JOB SEARCH

Advertised Vacancies

Jobs can be advertised online on specialist job sites or on a company's own website. There are also other sources of advertised jobs such as local notice boards and local online forums. Most organisations will post jobs to their website first, so if there is a company you are interested in you could set a reminder to check their website every week. Many smaller employers advertise local jobs through local newspapers and magazines.

Recruitment Agencies/Job Portals

There are different recruitment agencies covering various occupational areas and sectors and each differ in their approach. There are fewer 'high street' agencies than there used to be, but more online agencies.

Sign up for job alerts with job portals (e.g. Indeed.com or Reed.co.uk). Find a wide variety of jobs and work placements in your local area, by checking out the Love London Working website www.lovelondonworking.com/jobs

Most large organisations use these job boards to post their vacancies. You can also set alerts so that when a role of interest is posted you will be informed via email.

Networking and Word of Mouth

People often assume that this term is associated with knowing influential people in high-flying jobs and that they themselves do not have the right contacts. Most jobseekers will know people who work in a variety of job roles and sectors. People working in your target field are great sources of information about job openings. Why not contact people you know, either through previous work or from elsewhere (e.g. the school gates, church) to gather information and find opportunities. Job fairs and other events may help you make an impression with a future employer or create connections which may help you in the future.

Hexagon's Employment and Skills Team

Contact Lionne, the Employment Support Adviser at Hexagon, who can offer you a free tailor-made service built around your needs to support you on your journey into employment. We can help you with writing a winning CV, cover letter or application forms and prepare you for interviews. We can also help with travel costs and childcare!

Online Networking

Have you thought about using your Facebook friends to enquire about job opportunities? Or create a solid LinkedIn profile and let recruiters find you. Many recruitment agencies and in-house recruitment teams use LinkedIn to "headhunt" for their next recruit.

Volunteering

Apart from committing time and energy to do a good deed to help others, volunteering can bring other benefits too. One being a great boost for your career.

Volunteering will help you develop new skills as well as apply current skills in new ways. If you have a good experience volunteering, your supervisor may serve as a reference when you're applying for jobs.

Read Simonette's story on page 17 to see why it pays to do voluntary work.

Speculative Approaches

A 'speculative approach' to job search is where a job seeker approaches organisations with a tailored CV and covering letter enquiring if there are any suitable opportunities available. Whilst many employers are open to receiving speculative applications, they want to be convinced that you have a genuine interest in their work and their company – this needs to be conveyed in the CV and the cover letter. There are many ways of doing this, by identifying and then compiling lists of organisations. Useful sources are www.yell.com and other business directories.



Pictured: Devonate Roberts

COMMUNITY EVENT WITH FREE PIZZA

Would you like to attend an event in your local community where you can meet other residents, find out about current projects, activities and events, over tasty pizza and other light refreshments?

You can also use this opportunity to report any outstanding issues with your home or estate.

Please contact André Peters on **020 8768 7910** to find out more information.

Current activities include:

- Tai Chi
- Basic I.T.
- Employment Academy
- Money Matters – (financial help)
- Volunteering

You will see through our Community Investment section of Home News all the brilliant things that we have done for our residents with the projects that we deliver. Get involved and pick up the phone today to register your interest.

Don't miss out on the opportunity!



APPRENTICESHIPS

We are NOW recruiting for a Heating Engineer Apprentice based in Lewisham

Interested? Call André Peters on **0208 768 7910** or email apeters@hexgon.org.uk

Following an advert in the last Home News and a publicity drive to all young people aged 16-21, two young men were able to complete the process to be selected for the position of Apprentice Plumber with our contractor P&R. Big congratulations to Devonate and Jack who started their apprenticeship in October. Their apprenticeship will last for 3 years and at the end they will be fully qualified plumbers.

Here is a short quote from Devonate:

“I received a letter regarding apprenticeships for construction. This was just what I was looking for.

I called a man called André Peters to discuss my interest in plumbing. He helped me through my Health and Safety revision for my CSCS card. André also helped me prepare for interview for my plumbing apprenticeship.

I have now been accepted as an apprentice for P&R, attending college once a week and working four days a week. I have also received help with my lunch meals and my travel expenses which I have Hexagon to thank for.”

BENEFITS OF WORKING

You have probably already realised that looking for work can be a hard task in itself. But once you've achieved your goal you will notice that there are many benefits to be gained by being in work, such as:

- Increased energy
- Better sleep patterns
- Improved structure and routine
- Sense of achievement and pride
- Reduced isolation
- Being a role model for your children
- Feeling part of a team/inclusion
- Increased sense of fulfilment
- Increased motivation
- Feeling more valued
- Increased skill set
- Increased self-esteem and confidence
- Improved sense of purpose and control over life
- Gives you more choices about your future
- Increased sense of personal identity
- Opportunity to meet new people/ increase social interaction
- Greater independence
- More money

Why not contact Lianne Whitfield our Employment Support Adviser today on **020 8768 7915**. Lianne will offer you support, encouragement and motivation; and will help you explore every opportunity to reach your employment goals and enjoy the benefits of working!



WELCOME LORNA CAMPBELL

In this edition we introduce a new member of Hexagon staff, Lorna Campbell. Lorna has recently started as the Love London Working Project Coordinator and we've taken the opportunity to find out about Lorna and the work that she will be doing to help our residents.

About me

I am the new Project Coordinator within the Community Investment Team at Hexagon. I work alongside Lianne, and I help with the running of the programme and assist residents with their enrolment on to our employability programme, Love London Working, and on to our free IT training courses.

Outside of work I love music, arts and crafts, upcycling, eating out and exploring the City. I am excited to join the team and help individuals to gain fulfilling, sustainable employment. We are a friendly and approachable bunch so you are in good hands!

If you have any queries please get in touch and I will be happy to assist you.

I can help you with:

- Registering you on to the Love London Working Programme
- Providing you with information on upcoming courses such as Business Start-Up and our free I.T. courses
- Sourcing external training courses

For more information, please feel free to contact me on **020 8768 7984** or via email at lcampbell@hexagon.org.uk



Hexagon residents with Lorna Campbell at the Hexagon IT course:
Back row (l-r): Keisha, Gloria and Lorna
Front row (l-r): Allison, William and Michelle

CASUAL CUSTOMER SERVICE ADVISERS (BANK STAFF)

£13.30 per hour

Working as part of our Customers Services team, you will provide the first point of contact for Hexagon’s customers. You will be able to use your interpersonal skills to the full, dealing promptly and efficiently with queries on a wide range of issues. You must be able to use your own initiative and effective thinking when solving problems. You will also be required to process information through our database systems.

You will be reliable, able to work under pressure and have a “can do” attitude. You must have excellent customer service skills (some experience working in a customer service environment is desirable) and also good I.T. skills.

These posts are for casual cover during peak periods and we will try to give you as much notice as possible when we require you to work. However, you should be prepared to be available for work at short notice. Our working hours can range from 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, although specific hours and days are agreed with individuals.

Contact Lionne Whitfield
 Phone: **020 8768 7915** Email: **LWhitfield@hexagon.org.uk**

FREE COURSES

Have you ever wanted to learn something new?

Hexagon is providing FREE courses for residents. Courses include:

- Creative sewing
- Creative crafts
- Basic I.T.

Call to register your interest or to find out more.



VOLUNTEERING

Have you ever thought of volunteering or have done before but not anymore?

As well as providing benefits to the community, volunteering can give you a range of personal benefits. By volunteering you can:

- Gain confidence - volunteering can help you gain confidence by giving you the chance to try something new and build a real sense of achievement.
- Make a difference - volunteering can have a real and valuable positive affect on people, communities and society in general.
- Meet people - volunteering can help you meet different kinds of people and make new friends.
- Be part of a community - volunteering can help you feel part of something outside your friends and family.
- Have fun! Most volunteers have a great time, regardless of why they do it.

- Learn new skills - volunteering can help you learn new skills, gain experience and sometimes even qualifications.
- Take on a challenge - through volunteering you can challenge yourself to try something different, achieve personal goals, practice using your skills and discover hidden talents.

I have a variety of roles available at Hexagon as well as working in partnership with external organisations to provide these opportunities.

To find out more, contact Lionne Whitfield.
020 8768 7915
LWhitfield@hexagon.org.uk



CULLING ROAD STREET CLEANING

On a sunny Saturday at the end of September the Community Investment Team did a street clean up with a difference.

Nearly all the residents of Culling Road in Belvedere and a few households from Lower Road got together to make their street a better place to live. By coming together as a community they were able to transform their street. Even the children had a great time.

Once the street had been swept and rubbish cleared we got down to making the street prettier. Hexagon provided every household with hanging baskets, which they could make up themselves with beautiful colourful flowers, plant pots for the children to decorate and plant seeds and flowers. Once we had done this we had a competition for the best decorated plant pot, with the winner receiving Love2shop vouchers. Once all the hard work was done the residents tucked into some tasty pizza.

Residents were also able to report any repair issues to the Senior Housing Officer and discuss any other problems that needed to be rectified. Also an Estate Champion was recruited whose role will be to report communal repairs and estate cleaning issues.

The Community Investment Team took the opportunity to promote the projects that we were currently offering and had a number of residents signing up for them. As an example, one of the residents has now secured a plumbing apprenticeship with P&R, one of our contractors.

It really was a great day with a great big benefit for all those who attended. A big thank you to all that took part, especially the two residents that hung all the baskets for the residents.



LOVE LONDON WORKING

Love London Working is an exciting new programme designed to support unemployed people to get into work. Hexagon is part of this three-year London wide programme in partnership with 15 Housing Associations, which is made possible with funding from the European Social Fund.

No matter how long you've been out of work or what barriers into work you may be facing, such as health, disability or single parenthood, this new programme can assist you. As part of Love London Working, Hexagon will support you all the way, from voluntary and paid work opportunities to financial support, through to developing key skills like I.T. and work related training. We also offer individual support with job applications, CV writing and interview practice.

Success

Julie is a Customer Service Assistant at Accessorize. Here she shares her account of the support she received from Hexagon.

"I was a student and volunteering at the Baytree Centre, where I was referred to Lionne. From then on it was the start of my success. Lionne helped me from improving my CV through to interview skills. She was very helpful and supportive throughout the programme. As a result of her hard work and my cooperation, I found the job

that I wanted and was suitable for me. I am now a Sales Assistant at a retail shop where I am doing customer service, cashier duties, replenishing and dealing with deliveries. Love London Working is the key to my success!"

Here Margaret Browne, an ESOL/Literacy Tutor at the Baytree Centre where Julie attended, shares her experience of the partnership they have with Hexagon.

"Lionne Whitfield has been working with my Literacy ESOL/Literacy students over the past two academic years. The range of ability was vast, from pre-entry level (unable to read or write) to level 2 (equivalent to a good GCSE). Lionne first introduced herself to each group and then gave every student the opportunity to have an initial face to face interview. During this interview she invited the student to meet her again at her office. If the student engaged positively with the service, she fixed an appointment immediately and exchanged contact details. The women found this approach very helpful, as they already had their 'next step' interview.

These interviews took place during class time and it was edifying to see the delight on the students' faces when they came back into the classroom. It was clear that Lionne had dealt with them with profound respect, delicacy and tact. In short, she treated them

as professionals. They felt encouraged and hopeful. Even those who did not feel ready to take the next step into work, such as those with young children or those undergoing medical treatment, felt better for having met Lionne, as they realised that there would be opportunities for them in the future.

Celebrations followed the success of the first student to gain a qualification in Food Hygiene and get a job. This was a pre-entry student with a limited command of English. Lionne arranged everything for her, including extra help with the course, CV writing, interview arrangements and so on. The student is happily working and serves as an example to all the other students, especially those with poor literacy skills."





The Love London Working Project has made a huge impact to the lives of our participants and we would like to share a couple of examples of how the service has contributed to the success of two women who are now in employment thanks to Love London Working.



If you're inspired by Julie and Simonette's experience and you would like help securing employment; please feel free to contact Lionne Whitfield (Employment Support Adviser) on **020 8768 7915**.

In order to be eligible for Love London Working, we need to make sure you reach the following criteria, otherwise we will not be able to take you on the programme;

- You need to be over the age of 16
- You are not currently in any form of work
- You need to be living in one of the 33 London boroughs
- You must have the right to work in the UK and provide us evidence of this

These are the only four things you need to be able to join the programme. We can now help you get into work!

Stories

Our second example features Hexagon resident Simonette Davies who is an Executive Assistant for a social action centre working locally and nationally to tackle poverty and social injustice. Here she shares her account of how volunteering helped her develop her career as well as the support she received from Hexagon.

"I am currently working as an Interim Executive Assistant and work 35 hours a week over 5 days. Hexagon funded my ECDL Extra Level 2 IT Course, which is accredited by the British Computer Society. Having completed courses in Microsoft Word processing, spreadsheets and presentation packages I decided to volunteer with Hexagon for 6½ years where I carried out various administrative roles. Working at Hexagon enabled me to gain administrative experience and helped me to get into the routine of working. During my course of duties, I gained invaluable working knowledge of how to use Microsoft Office. Volunteering for Hexagon has been a great experience and a pleasure, and I have enjoyed it.

I later joined the Love London Working project through Hexagon and met with Lionne, the Employment Support Adviser. Her interview coaching made me feel better prepared for employment when I went to interviews. During my sessions with Lionne she showed me how I could better improve every time.

My interview preparation work enabled me to gain a role at Kings Church as an Admin Trainee, which then helped me to progress to my current role as an Interim Executive Assistant. When I gained the role of Interim Executive Assistant I received training and an induction. My opinion of my employment is that it is a very inclusive and diverse workforce.

Hexagon and the Love London Working project has helped me back to work by giving me opportunities in training, interview practice and further improving my interpersonal and communication skills. As a result, I can now participate in an increasingly competitive job market. Go on, give Love London Working a try! What have you got to lose?"

The Responsive Repairs Team at Hexagon would like to thank Simonette for her hard work and dedication.

"Simonette joined our team as a volunteer and we are very proud of her and grateful for her contribution to the work of the Responsive Repairs team."



JUST ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF A HOUSING OFFICER

My name is Cynthia Douglas and I am a Housing Officer with Hexagon. I work with clients who require supported housing.

My residents are from the following groups: ex-rough sleepers, those with mental health needs and clients with learning disabilities. In this line of work no two days are the same and this is one of the reasons that I sought this career path. The work can be challenging but on the other hand very rewarding at times. Let us look at a day in the life of a housing officer in supported housing.

I arrived at work at 8.30am prepared to complete the arrears actions for the week, but as I

work in housing management nothing ever goes to plan. No one else from the team is in yet, so great, I thought, I will get a head start. I turn on the computer and wait for the monitor to go through its prompts. Oh no! There is something wrong... nothing is showing on the monitor. I phone the IT team desperately praying someone picks up the call and yes, there is a knight in shining armour who resolves the problem and I am good to go.

Firstly I check the emails, all of which require some form

of action from me. The issues raised range from repairs to a bathroom wall, to a request for external paving. I email responses and telephone the respective Hexagon departments and contractors to have the issues dealt with. In between this I am taking telephone queries and speaking to colleagues on associated matters and it is only 9.30 in the morning!

The ex-rough sleepers have spent a period of their lives living rough on the streets of London. This means that the social skills that we take for granted have been lost for those in this situation and many individuals can feel that they have lost their self-worth. External support agencies, for example St Mungo's, have outreach teams who assist this client group to reconnect with society and after a period of assessment the clients are referred for housing. Hexagon has its own assessment procedure and if the resident is successful a tenancy on a fixed term contract is offered.



The clients will move on with assistance once the tenancy comes to an end.

Later in the morning I have an appointment to visit a resident, who was an ex-rough sleeper, at his home. This client has had problems with maintaining rent payments and also has had difficulties keeping to appointments arranged to discuss this at the Hexagon office. I have arranged to meet the Support Officer who is an external agent at the resident's home. Visits are often conducted jointly which helps ensure that we agree on the plan put in place to assist the resident. Together we discuss the rent arrears and come to an arrangement that will enable the resident to keep his home. The resident is also happy with the outcome of the meeting. We do all we can to assist residents who are having difficulties with rent payments. If you have an issue with maintaining rental payments please make contact with your Housing Officer first who is there to help you.

The lunch break is me stuffing a sandwich in my mouth whilst trying to compose responses to emails received whilst I was out. There are also letters and telephone queries to deal with. If an immediate response is required, I race up and down the stairs to departments to obtain the information needed. Needless to say by the end of the day I also feel I have completed the London marathon. So I bid you goodnight and I will hopefully recharge my batteries for another day in work.

NEW YEAR RESOLUTION!

By the time Home News lands on your mat (or in your inbox) you may have already made a New Year's resolution. The tradition of making a promise to start or to stop doing something at the beginning of the year is usually broken before the first month is finished.

The promise is often linked to self-development, for example joining a gym or giving up smoking. If your goal includes becoming an expert in something or volunteering your time you may want to consider contacting the Resident Involvement team. We welcome residents who can bring skills and are keen to develop new ones that help us to improve the service that is provided to Hexagon residents.

By contacting us you are taking the first steps to a realistic and achievable New Year's resolution. Call us on **020 8768 7991** or **020 8768 7962** for information on how to become an involved resident. We can match your skills or the time you can spare to a range of activities and opportunities.

Visit www.hexagon.org.uk/residents/getting-involved or e-mail getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk for more details.



START SAVING TO BE MONEY FIT IN 2017

If it seems like Christmas has left you with a financial hangover, it might be time to start thinking about how you ensure you're in the best possible financial health this year. Whatever your goals for this year, saving regularly can be a great way to help you get there. Whether it's a milestone birthday, a summer holiday or even getting your planning for Christmas 2017 in early, saving a little bit regularly in advance can help you to get where you need to be.

Sometimes it feels like there just isn't enough money to go round to cover savings, but a small amount can make a big difference. £5 a week builds up to over £250 in a year and that can be a big step towards the things that you want to do. If you have an amount that you want to save, the savings calculator provided by the Money Advice Service (www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/tools/savings-calculator) can help you plan how to achieve your goal. Saving is nearly always better than borrowing, as it avoids the interest charges that usually go with borrowing money.

There are lots of ways to set up a savings account. Most banks and building societies offer accounts and any credit union that you are eligible to join will be happy to help you open a savings account.

As a Hexagon resident, one option open to you is to join London Plus Credit Union. London Plus can help you find a way to save that is right for you and saving regularly with them may also help you if you need to access a loan at any point (although loan decisions are always made based on London Plus' assessment of individual circumstances so cannot be guaranteed). Of course you need to be sure that any account you open is right for you, and it's advisable to take independent advice if in doubt.

If you would like to join the London Plus Credit Union, contact them directly on 0207 471 2620, or at www.londonpluscu.co.uk

4 ENERGY SAVING TOP TIPS

With some small changes you can save energy and save money



SAVE
£85 - £90
PER YEAR

Turning down the room thermostat by 2 degrees could save you £85-£90 per year on fuel costs



SAVE
£25 - £35
PER YEAR

Draught Proofing windows and doors can save you up to £25-£35 per year on fuel bills



SAVE
UP TO £120
PER YEAR

Switching to LED lightbulbs and turning off lights even for a short time while not in use can save you up to £120 per year on electricity costs



SAVE
£50 - £90
PER YEAR

Switching off plugs and appliances while not in use can save you up to £50-£90 per year on electricity bills

FREE COURSE

FREE

FREE COMPUTER COURSE

Contact us today to secure your place on one of our courses.

By attending three 5 hour sessions you will learn:

- Computing basics
- Getting online
- Using email

Everyone who attends and completes the course in full will receive a refurbished laptop, with a wireless dongle with 12gb of data usage (by plugging this in your laptop you will be able to access the internet for free for 12 months).

Plus, using the internet to:

- Save money
- Look for work
- Access services

Courses start on Tuesday 31 January 2017 from 10am-3pm with the remaining sessions taking place on Friday 10 February and Friday 17 February.

The courses take place at the Hexagon head office.

Interested? Want to book your place or find out more?

Then contact Lorna Campbell on 0208 768 7984 or lcampbell@hexagon.org.uk

PREVENT HEAT LOSS IN YOUR HOME

Heat loss is an issue for many homes – even the most modern ones. When you are stuck in the grips of winter your energy company will be rubbing their hands together greedily as they know that most people will be paying out a large amount of money to keep their houses warm. Then of course, there's the issue of energy conservation. If your home experiences heat loss, it is also wasted energy. There are plenty of ways to prevent heat loss in your home to save energy and money which are common sense steps and easy to implement. Some may need a small cash outlay but you'll see payback in a short time as you start benefiting from reduced energy bills. Here are 6 ways to prevent heat loss in your home to save energy and money:

1. KEEP THE DOOR SHUT

One of the easiest ways to save money on energy bills is to shut all your doors to prevent the warm air from getting out. This doesn't take any effort on your part as all you have to remember is to shut the door. You should also notice that the reduced heat loss makes your house warmer meaning you can turn down the thermostat a notch or two, thereby saving even more energy and money.

2. DRESS TO SAVE

One of the best ways to prevent heat loss is to make sure your water tank is covered in a heat-retentive jacket. This jacket doesn't cost a large amount of money and in the long run the savings you make will far outweigh the cost of the jacket itself. This does save money on energy bills as it's estimated that it can reduce them by a minimum of 30%. If there's enough space fit a double jacket.

3. EXCLUDE THE DRAFT

To help your house not lose heat you not only have to keep the warm air in, but the cold air out. Drafts can appear from anything as major as a hole in the roof to a simple gap under the door. Draft excluders are very simple cost-effective measures to reduce energy loss and shave more money off your utility bills.



4. REFLECTIVE RADIATORS

You can reduce wasted energy after you have turned your radiators off by preventing heat leaving via the walls. To do this your radiators should have heat reflectors attached to their reverse which will reflect the heat back into the room and away from the walls. This can save money on energy bills as now you don't have to keep your heating on for as long as you had to previously.



5. CURTAINS

Heavy curtains can be a great way to keep the heat inside your room because they successfully absorb any sunlight while blocking out any wind which may seep through the cracks of your windows. This is a relatively low-cost option to insulate your home.

6. BACKGROUND HEAT

You can also save heat by having your heating on constantly on a low temperature setting 24/7. By doing this you will keep your home at a nice constant temperature and this will also help reduce condensation.

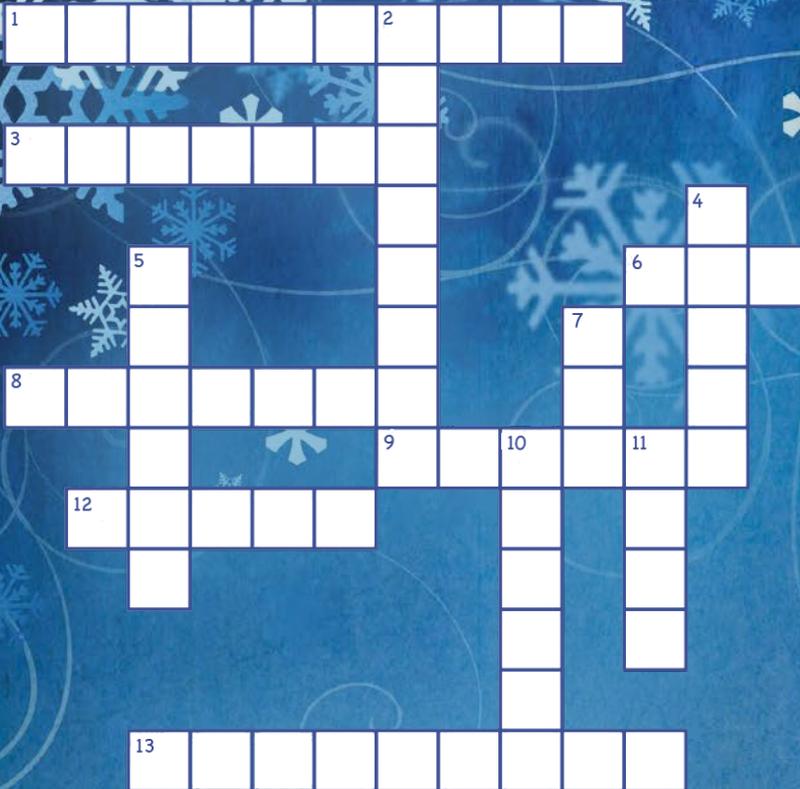
These ways to prevent heat loss in your home to save energy and money are especially effective when used in conjunction with each other. However, when used on their own they are still useful in order to save money on energy bills.

KIDS CORNER

WINTER WARMER

Q: Where does a snowman keep his money?

A: In a snowbank



MINI PIZZA QUICHES

You will need:

- 2 Tortilla wraps
- 4 eggs
- Chopped vegetables (optional)
- 6 slices salami
- 3 cherry tomatoes, halved
- Vegetable sticks, to serve

How to make

1. Heat oven to 180C/160C fan/gas 4. Using a 12cm cutter (or a small plate) cut circles from the large tortilla wraps – you should get 6. Use the circles to line 6 holes of a muffin tin, pushing them into the holes to make cases.
2. Beat the eggs and pour into the tortilla cases (you can add some chopped vegetables too, if you like). Top each case with a slice of salami and 1/2 a cherry tomato. Bake for 15 mins until the egg has set. Top with a few basil leaves, if you like, and serve with extra tomatoes and vegetable sticks.

ANIMAL CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Across

1. Big animal that has one horn
3. This animal has a very long neck
6. Man's best friend
8. Lives in the cold and waddles
9. Slow moving and has a shell
12. Striped animal that looks like a horse
13. Can swim under water and walk on land and has a big bite

Down

2. This animal has a long trunk
4. This animal likes to eat carrots and sugar cubes
5. This animal loves bananas
7. Some say this animal has nine lives
10. Has big ears and likes to hop
11. King of the Jungle

Solve the crossword puzzle above and once completed send in your entry by **Friday 3rd February** to: **Resident Involvement Admin, Hexagon Housing Association, 130-136 Sydenham Road, London SE26 5JY** or email a photograph of your completed crossword to getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk Three correct entries will be drawn at random. Each will receive a **£10 Love2Shop voucher**.

Kids Corner Winners Congratulations to Susan Horton (DA14) and Holly Githendu (SE1) who each won the last Kids Corner competition.

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

Gas Central Heating Contractor

☎ 0800 206 1367 (open 24 hours 365 days a week)

Emergency Out-of-hours Repairs

☎ 020 3701 3518

Other ways to contact us

@ Customer_desk@hexagon.org.uk
for all general enquiries

🔧 Repairs_reporting@hexagon.org.uk
to report a repair

🖱 www.hexagon.org.uk

📱 Text: 07537 400 527

✉ 130-136 Sydenham Road,
London SE26 5JY, United Kingdom

TRANSLATIONS

Always happy to translate!

Chinese

永遠樂於翻譯！

Eritrean

"ንኽነተርጉመልኩዎ ኩሉጊዜ ሕጉሳት ኢና!"

French

Toujours heureux de traduire!

Portuguese

Sempre feliz a traduzir!

Vietnamese

Luôn luôn vui lòng phiên dịch!

Urdu

ترجمے کے لیے ہر دم تیار

LARGE PRINT OR BRAILLE

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

COMPETITION TIME

Congratulations to Dorcas Mills (SE23), Miles Muwanga-Blizzard (SE13) and Susan C Coston (DA8) who each receive a £20 voucher for their correct entries.

The answers to the last Competition Time were:

1. £1.2 million
2. Southwark or Croydon
3. Love London Working
4. Customer Services
5. 18th November

To enter this edition's Competition Time, simply answer the following:

1. What client group do St Mungo's work with?
2. How many A's were awarded to Newstead Road by the Prevention & Inclusion & Public Health Team?
3. Where do you send your email address to so that we can keep in touch with you?
4. What is PDA an acronym for?
5. Two Hexagon residents were successful in getting an Apprentice Plumber position with which contractor?

Please send your entries, by post, to: Resident Involvement Admin, Hexagon Housing Association, 130-136 Sydenham Road, London, SE26 5JY

Or by email to: getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk

Three correct entries received by **Friday 3rd February** will be drawn at random and will each receive a £20 shopping voucher.

The competition is open to all Hexagon residents. The editor's decision is final.

WIN £20