

HOME NEWS

WINTER
2017-18

FEATURED
WHO WON AT THE STAFF EXCELLENCE AWARDS? /03



Win
£20
Shopping Vouchers
to spend on the High-Steet.
(see back page for details)

PICTURED

How Hexagon helped Zoe launch her own business /20

Croydon Neighbourhood Event – find out what happened /04

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Happy New Year and Welcome...



to another edition of Home News.

We are constantly working hard to ensure that the services we provide to you improves on a daily basis. I was therefore grateful that many of you took the time out to nominate members of our staff for a Staff Excellence Award at our recent Staff Conference. We don't always get things right and when we don't, it is important that we have a proper complaints procedure to remedy things. It is equally important that we have some mechanism for congratulating our staff when we do get it right as this spurs them on to do better in the future – so thanks again for your nominations.

As the New Year begins, it is often a good time to kick start your career or refresh your job search. Our Employment & Skills team are here to give you a helping hand and you can read more about how they could assist you in this edition.

Many of you will be aware that the Government are rolling out something called Universal Credit. A small number of you will already be on Universal Credit, but if you are making a new benefits claim or your circumstances change, then you might find that you will be impacted by Universal Credit in the near future. You can read more about Universal Credit in this edition along with some information about how we might be able to help you get online to ensure the new system works to your advantage.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of Home News.

Tom McCormack
Chief Executive

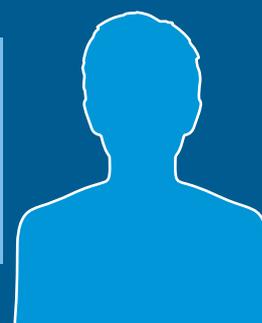
Want to try being a Guest Editor?

Do you have a flair for writing and editing? Do you have experience in writing for a magazine or publication? Could you give a succinct overview of the contents of Home News Magazine? If so, the editorial team at Hexagon want to hear from you.

In a move to increase resident input into the magazine, we are looking to recruit residents to periodically commit their time and use their skills as guest editors for Home News. It is an opportunity that requires a significant commitment to ensure Home News reflects the interests of residents and is published within a deadline environment.

Could this be you?

Please register your interest by emailing getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk with the subject 'Guest Editor'.



If you would prefer to receive this magazine by only email, simply send your name, address and email address to getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk

Staff Excellence Awards 2017

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 last November.

We had an excellent response to requests for nominations and received 35 nominations for 24 members of staff and 2 teams. After consideration by a panel, it was decided that 14 members of staff would receive Staff Excellence Awards. Below is what was said of our staff. Recipients included the following who were presented with their awards by Andrew Green (Housing Services Director). The full list of winners can be viewed on Hexagon's website.



Elspeth Brown
(Responsive Repairs Manager)

“Elspeth embodies Responsive Repairs – whenever we have had problems with repairs she takes personal ownership and gives us updates until the problem is resolved.”

Lisa Cole
(Housing Officer)

“Nothing is too much trouble for her, she is always there to help. She was so good when my Housing Benefit was messed up by the Council.”



Kim Parks
(Housing Officer)

“She is a very good listener and judges things fairly for everyone. She is always helpful – to me she is the best.”



Cynthia Douglas
(Supported Housing Officer)

“Cynthia shows genuine interest in the welfare of her residents. She is polite, professional and puts all efforts into her job.”

Bright Hehetro
(Team Leader)

“Bright has been really good to me – he has been someone I can talk to and has also visited me in hospital.”



Newstead Road Team

The Newstead Road Team received Awards with positive comments from residents about the team's dedication, helpfulness and understanding.



Customer Services

The Customer Service Team also received Awards with positive comments about their dedication, helpfulness and understanding.



Neighbourhood Events are Underway – Join us this Year!

Last autumn Hexagon came to Croydon for the first of its Neighbourhood Events staged in the local community. The event, which took place in Jackson’s Way, was an opportunity for Hexagon to hear from local residents and listen to their views on the service we deliver to them.

Chief Executive Tom McCormack attended, together with senior managers from:

- Repairs
- Estate (grounds) Management
- Resident Involvement

Others attending from the “Hexagon side” were a representative from the Hexagon Board and also from the repairs contractor.



Services

Up to 20 residents came along to give us their views on repairs, estate services, communication and customer services. We received some positive feedback and also key takeaways on how we’re doing.

We ran “temperature checks” on our services which captured positive feedback on how we can improve things for our residents going forward. The overall feedback from residents attending the event described the service areas as follows:

Service Area	Rating
Repairs	Average – Good
Estate Grading	Average
Customer Services	Average – Good

Whilst rating our service areas, residents also gave us examples of where and how we could do better, and we captured these on an action plan designed to deliver on the improvements suggested by the residents.



Communication channels

From the residents that attended, we asked them how they preferred to hear from Hexagon and how they want to communicate with us. Of those that took part in our interactive poll:



2 residents preferred post



3 residents preferred texts



3 residents preferred email



7 residents preferred phone call

So a traditional method of communication was a clear favourite for residents attending the event.

What’s next?

We have three more community events planned for this year. We’ll be coming to locations in Bexley, Greenwich and Southwark at different dates throughout the summer. Keep a look out for further information in the next edition of Home News.

Congratulations to Chloe, she won the Rodeo Bull challenge receiving a shopping voucher.

Thank you to all residents who came and made the Croydon neighbourhood event a success.

Paying Your Rent and Service Charges

As we kick off 2018, Hexagon would like to thank all those residents that diligently paid their rent on time. We would like to remind all residents that when you pay your rent and service charges on time you contribute to continuously improving the service for you and your neighbours.

Help Hexagon to help you

Unfortunately late rent payments mean that we have less to spend on repairing and improving your home and the area you live in.

Increasingly the housing sector has continued to diversify how customers can make payments for services they use, enhancing and easing the customer experience. We have also been taking steps to ease the ways that residents can make rent and service charge payments to us. These are explained here.



Ways to pay

You can set up a Direct Debit

This is the easiest way to pay your rent. The rent due is automatically deducted from your bank account on a weekly, four-weekly or monthly basis.

Call us on **020 8778 6699** or **0800 393 338** Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm and we can set this up securely for you.

Pay by Standing Order

Alternatively, you can set up a standing order which will automatically transfer your rent payment. You will be responsible for changing your standing order if your rent charge decreases or increases.

Our bank account number to set up a standing order is:

- Account Number: **00000000**
- Sort code: **57-47-36**

You will need to include your Tenancy Reference including a check digit. If you need assistance then please give us a call on **020 8778 6699** or **0800 393 338** Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, alternatively send us an email to customer_desk@hexagon.org.uk we are happy to help you.

Use Pay Point or Pay Zones

Do you have your All Pay payment card? You can use it at Post Offices or in any stores or shops that have Pay Point or Pay Zone facilities.

The easiest way to locate your nearest shop with a Pay Point or Pay Zone facility is by checking online through www.allpay.net/outlets www.paypoint.com or www.payzone.co.uk/consumers

Don't have an All Pay payment card? If you would like to order an All Pay payment card please call us on **020 8778 6699** or **0800 393 338** Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, alternatively send us an email to customer_desk@hexagon.org.uk we are happy to help you.

Go Digital – Pay Online

You can register and pay online through www.allpay.net

Simply click 'make a payment' at the top of the screen.

Pay on the Move – via an App

Download the All Pay App to your smart device.

This app is secure and free of charge to all Hexagon residents, allowing you to pay your rent using your smart phone, at any time and from anywhere at the touch of a button.

This tool will allow you to store your payment reference number and payment amount so you don't have to re-enter these each time you use the tool. As a user, you can create a 4 digit PIN number, and this allows you access the app without the need to go through a lengthy log on process.

Pay by Telephone

If you have a credit or debit card you can pay your rent with one phone call. You can call us at Hexagon on **020 8778 6699** or **0800 393 338** Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. Alternatively you can call the All Pay payment line 24 hours a day 365 days a year on **0844 557 8321** please note this number is chargeable per minute for usage.

If you require any further assistance please contact the customer services team.

Safe at Home:

A New Hexagon Policy on Domestic Abuse

Hexagon is here to help any resident who may be experiencing domestic abuse; remember – **you are not alone.**

Domestic Abuse – what is it?

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people in a relationship – straight or gay couples, or within a family. But it isn't just physical violence – domestic abuse can also be:

- Emotional
- Sexual
- Financial
- Psychological

What has it got to do with Hexagon?

Housing providers are in a unique position to identify domestic abuse and being able to access residents who need help: through their presence on estates and in individual properties. Housing staff can build relationships with their residents, and become trusted and accessible sources of information and support. Residents who have experienced domestic abuse often see housing staff as one of the most approachable sources of help and support.

New policy

With the support of experts from the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance, Hexagon agreed an updated policy in October 2017. It sets out our approach to identifying residents who may be experiencing domestic abuse, and how Hexagon will react to reports from residents who suspect domestic abuse might be happening.

We will use a nationally agreed risk assessment form (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour based risk identification checklist – DASH) to identify the risk to a resident. Depending on the outcome of this, we will refer the resident to the local authority Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) or agree an alternative safety action plan with them. We will work with suitable partners in the boroughs we work in. The emphasis is on keeping residents safe in their homes, with moving as a possible option, but not the only one.

Training

In autumn last year, Hexagon worked with Safe at Home (a European Union funded partnership) to provide domestic abuse training for frontline staff across the organisation. Other staff members will receive training in the near future.

The websites in the panel to the right includes information on how to remove your browsing history, so that no one else can see you have viewed these sites.

Where can you get help?

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, you can talk to your Housing Officer, and also use these contacts below:

In an emergency call the Police on **999**

For Advice and Support

Call the National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247 (Freephone) 24 hours a day, 365 days a year or visit these dedicated websites:

- www.refuge.org.uk



- www.womensaid.org.uk

women's aid
until women & children are safe

LGBT Domestic Advice:

- www.broken-rainbow.org.uk
- 0300 999 5428



Respect Men's Advice Line:

- www.mensadvice.org.uk
- 0808 801 0327



Improving our Community Care

Every year Hexagon undertakes a customer satisfaction survey to ensure we continuously improve our services for our residents living in supported housing at Kirkwood Road, Newstead Road and Woodcote Road schemes. In September last year Hexagon hosted a meeting at Woodcote Road where all residents from the three schemes were invited to hear about the survey and receive support and guidance on how to complete it. The questionnaires were also distributed to the residents across our schemes who couldn't attend the meeting.

In total 17 (out of a total 37) residents completed the forms and overall 12 people rated the service received as either very good or good. This is consistent with feedback we have received in previous years.

Results from the satisfaction survey identified three areas of high satisfaction, which were in relation to:

- Being supported to better understand and deal with health issues
- Knowing how to complain
- Feeling safe

However 3 residents were not entirely happy with their service and gave good feedback on how it could be improved.

Most residents also felt that they were listened to and their views are taken into account.

The survey identified areas that we need to improve on. These were:

- Involving people more in the development of their own support plans
- Being told about the records held about our residents
- Reiterating what is meant by safeguarding adults
- Communicating clearly on what is abuse

As a result of the individual feedback we received and the lower scoring areas within the survey, we will be undertaking the following action:

- Newstead Road will be consulting with residents and staff and implementing a visitor's policy that everyone is happy with
- Staff will ensure that the care and support plans used are person centred and incorporates our residents views
- We will ensure that the language we use is more person centred and will use the first person 'I feel' or 'I would like to be supported' in each person's care and support plans
- We will ensure that we tell our residents about the information we hold about them and how people can access the information in future residents meetings and care plan review meetings
- We will raise issues about safeguarding more regularly so that our residents are aware of what to do and how to get help as and when they need to. We will do this in future meetings with residents

We would like to thank all of the residents who participated in last year's survey. Your feedback is extremely valuable in helping us to improve the services we provide to you.

At a glance



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completed the survey



12 people
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Welcome to Hexagon's new ASB Officer

For our first issue of the year we interview Melonie Wheatle, our new Anti-Social Behaviour Officer who started with Hexagon last October. Here Melonie tells us about her previous experience, how residents can help her in her role and what she can do for residents.

What does your role involve?

"My role is very specific yet involves quite a few elements. I primarily manage any reports of nuisance and anti-social behaviour (ASB) that Hexagon might receive from our residents.

I also provide help to residents to enable them to live peaceably and enjoy their homes as much as possible. I also work to prevent and reduce incidents of antisocial behaviour; I do this by liaising with other agencies such as the police and social services. I work to ensure all ASB cases are treated in a fair, consistent and effective manner. Finally I support vulnerable residents to maintain their tenancy."

You started at Hexagon in October last year. Without compromising sensitive information can you tell us what you have been doing in your first three months in your role?

"Since autumn last year I've been quite busy. I've had the opportunity to really hit the ground running. My work to date has included:

- Simplifying and organising the ASB processes
- Reviewing Hexagon's policies for ASB
- Training staff on using the ASB case management system, 'ReAct'
- Supporting other teams with managing ASB cases
- Finding creative ways to improve areas that are prone to attract ASB, nuisances or criminality on Hexagon's estates
- Building partnerships with other agencies e.g. Police
- Managing an on-going ASB case between residents regarding a communal door entry and misuse of a garden"



With the breadth of previous experience you have, what is the most rewarding and challenging part of your role?

“One of the most rewarding parts of my role is assisting residents to resolve ASB. I believe as a society people have become less tolerant of each other and people often don’t realise how their lifestyle is impacting on another’s. Working with residents to try and understand each other and co-existing peacefully is truly satisfying for me. That said, the most challenging part of managing ASB is taking a decision to evict a resident. Eviction is the very last resort when managing ASB, it is not a decision that is taken lightly – it carries financial implications and may cause stress, anxiety and result in homelessness. Fundamentally though, Hexagon remains focused on the victim if managing ASB. I put the needs of the victim at the heart of what I do, and offer support to a vulnerable perpetrator if required. As a housing provider Hexagon cares about residents and wants them to stay in their properties.”

What experience do you bring and what do you hope to achieve at Hexagon?

“I have years of experience managing ASB/tenancy breaches. I previously worked as a Tenancy Enforcement Manager managing a team of 5 officers and a large caseload. I’m proud of being able to deliver value for money (VfM) in managing ASB as in my previous experience this is something I think that is important to residents. My role has afforded me the opportunity to build profitable, long term partnerships and gain experience in changing behaviour, and managing complex case loads. I also have a track record in improving customer satisfaction in ASB.

I recognise that ASB cases can be complex and time consuming so I hope to positively drive home the message to residents about how Hexagon manages ASB, and also support the Housing Services team in building knowledge, confidence and expertise in managing ASB. I also think it’s important to celebrate Hexagon’s ASB successes. Ultimately I hope to make Hexagon leaders in the field of ASB best practice...I want our name in lights!!!”

Is there anything Hexagon residents can do to assist you in your role?

“The main thing is for residents to understand the definition of ASB, the role of the organisation in managing ASB and what they can expect from us.”

Tell us one interesting thing about you – a unique skill or hobby that you have?

“I am a firm believer in ‘the first part of don’t is do’. No task is impossible and there is always, always a solution to any problem.”

Think you know the definition of ASB? See a definition here:

www.met.police.uk/anti_social_behaviour/



Be energy smart, take control of your energy

Smart Meter Installation

This issue of Home News reaches you in the middle of winter where energy usage might once again be at the forefront of our minds. Sadly the issue of fuel poverty does not go away and each winter many people may face anxiety on their ability to pay for the gas or electricity to warm their homes. Energy tariffs and the amount of money spent on energy can also cause confusion and make us as energy consumers feel we have little or no control.

The smart meter roll-out which began in 2013, is a national campaign, bringing an essential technology upgrade to improve the UK's energy infrastructure, help consumers manage their energy and address issues around climate change. The plan is to see all homes installed with a smart meter by 2020.

The smart meter is not compulsory, therefore the roll-out won't happen automatically. We are all encouraged to take an active role in ensuring we take up the offer. The UK is following other countries including Italy, United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Netherlands with the roll-out. According to Smart Energy GB, four in five people who have a smart meter say they would recommend one. No internet connection is required; readings are taken wirelessly through a secure network.

What are the benefits?

- Installation is free - You will not be charged separately for a smart meter or for the in-home display. Under current arrangements you pay for the cost of your meter and its maintenance through your energy bills, and this will be the same for smart meters.
- Accurate billing - You can budget more smartly, see and pay for what you use to the exact pound and pence. You don't have to look at your meter on a daily basis to check your usage, but you can do so if you want to keep a track on what you and your household are using.
- No more meter readings required.
- Easier ability to switch - Smoother and faster to switch suppliers to get the best deals.
- Traffic light indication where red, amber and green lights will show you the level of energy you use. Green represents low usage and so on.
- You do not have to see your display (data is shown when you press the 'home' screen button). You don't need to obsess over the screen display.

The campaign has widely shared the benefits of Smart Meters to pre-payment customers

- New flexibility in topping up, reducing your need to visit a shop.
- See your balance on the easy-to-access in home display, so you don't unknowingly run out of credit.
- The smart meter can be set to top up automatically, so that if you do run out of credit at night or when the shops are shut you won't be left without power.

How can you get a smart meter installed?

Contact your current energy supplier. For more information please see an information leaflet at

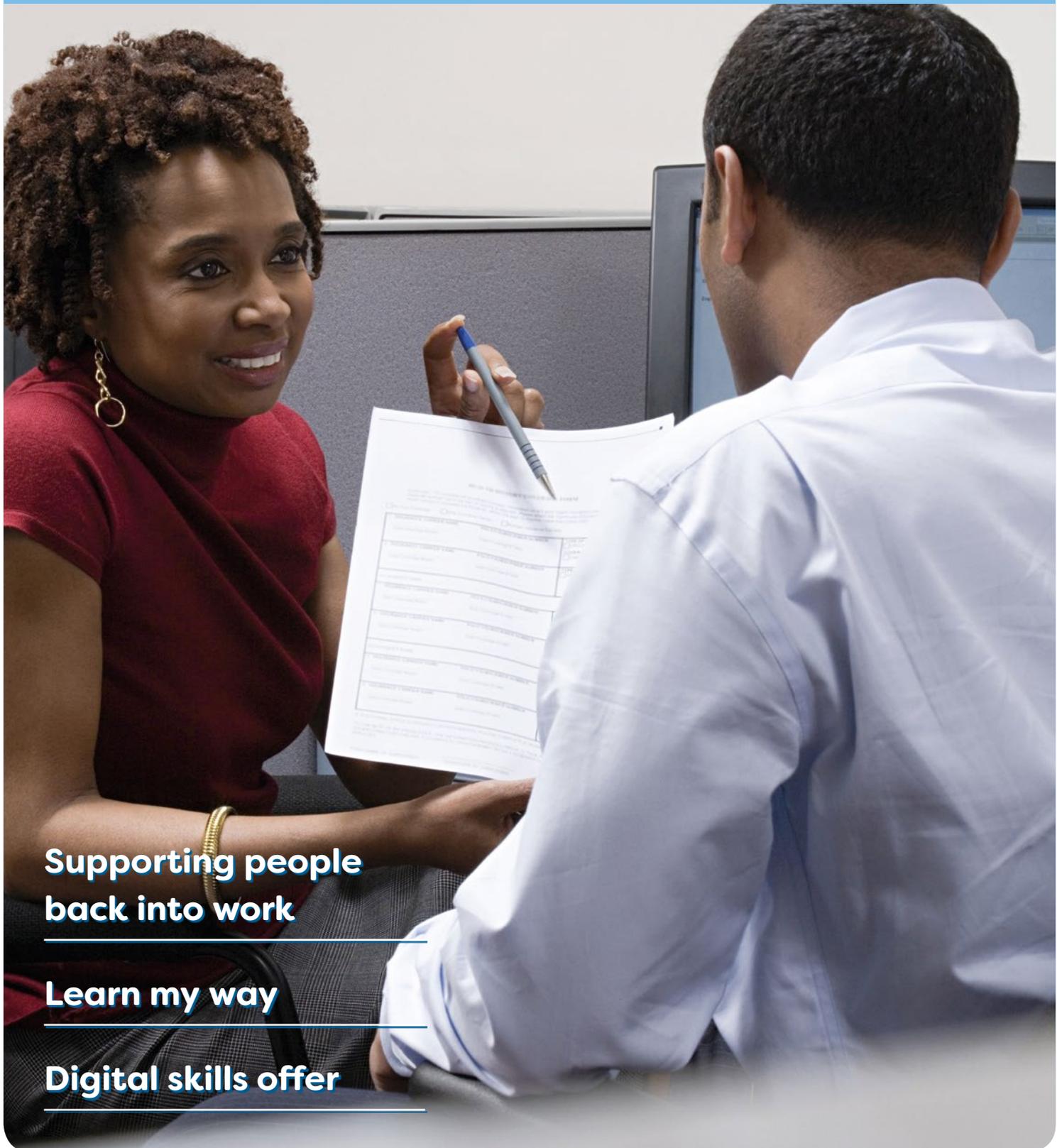
bit.ly/2znFSm7

Engage with us! Are you a smart meter user? Why not share how your experiences have been since switching on our Facebook page. Find us at [Facebook/HexagonHA](https://www.facebook.com/HexagonHA)



COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

CAREERS + OPPORTUNITIES + SUPPORT



**Supporting people
back into work**

Learn my way

Digital skills offer

GIVE YOUR JOB SEARCH A NEW YEAR KICK-START

Is your job search in a slump? Do you feel lost and unsure about how to go about finding your job? Are you feeling anxious or lacking confidence in joining the workforce? Is the cost of childcare fees putting you off getting into or looking for work?

As we begin a New Year, remember it's never a bad time to kick start your career or revitalise your job search, especially when you have the Employment and Skills team to give you a helping hand.

The New Year nearly always brings thoughts of finding a new job or taking up a new challenge or opportunity. This can often leave people feeling they could, or should, be achieving more. Don't see this as a sign of weakness, but more a sign that you could be realising your potential.

Why not make a few career-related New Year's resolutions and commit yourself to achieving them over the next 12 months.

Two of our participant's experiences from the Love London Working project (LLW) are shared below:



Margarita W is a Patient Officer for a hospital. This is her account of how the LLW project helped her achieve her career goals.

"When I was made redundant last year I thought I would never work again due to my age. I was very fortunate to come across Hexagon and their employment support project – LLW. I highly recommend joining the project as you will get an excellent one-to-one tailored programme. The service provides;

- Advice and support in your job search
- Mock interviews
- Professional assistance with writing a professional cover letter and CV

It also provides supervision and guidance from its remarkable careers adviser Lionne Whitfield, the driving force behind this program.

In each follow-up appointment, I was encouraged to apply for various vacancies and assisted with the cost of submitting job applications by post. On one occasion Lionne told me that she was going to help me to find the RIGHT job, one I felt comfortable with rather than just anything. This gave me a lot of reassurance and strength to continue my search. I was also assisted with travel expenses, but above all the moral support was just the key that helped me not give up."

At present, Margarita works within the Ophthalmology department at Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital, her job mainly involves:

- Scheduling outpatient appointments
- Admissions
- Clinical administration on patient waiting times
- General administration of departmental procedures relating to the Trust

Pauline has recently obtained employment as a Sales Assistant.

"I was referred to Lionne Whitfield by my advisor at Peckham Job Centre. I was very grateful for any help and support I could get to help me on the long road back to work; so I joined the Love London Working project to complement my job search.

Lionne carried out a mock interview with me and taught me useful and practical tips such as the STAR model, which helped me to 'sell myself' to employers. Using the key tips she told me regarding my CV layout, I used all the help she gave me to get myself back into employment. All the things she helped me with I put into practise and used."

Pauline also told Home News that the support she received from Lionne and the kind manner in which she was supported surpassed that which she received from the job centre. She says:

"Lionne demonstrated a real confidence in my ability to secure employment.

I would recommend Love London Working to anyone looking for assistance with gaining employment. I am so grateful for all the help I received from Lionne; who is a very special person. She has a kind manner and has the ability to make you believe in yourself, and show you she really wants to get you back on the road to working.

I've been working part-time for 6 months now. I am so happy and it means so much to me to be working. This has shown me anything is possible no matter how small a job you start off with.

Although the Love London Working project did not source my job directly, I credit Lionne with getting me this job."

If you're aiming to progress in your career, speak to us about kicking off your job search and seize the opportunity just like Margarita and Pauline did! Please contact the Employment and Skills team on **020 8768 7915/7984**.

Information on the 'STAR' technique referenced opposite can be found on Hexagon's website: bit.ly/2ymufX5

When you obtain employment through the Love London Working Project we can support you with the following;

- 1 Month Travel Expenses
- Up to £500 towards childcare
- Luncheon Vouchers
- Suitable attire to wear to work

Happy New Year and all the very best for 2018 from the Employment and Skills team!



DIGITAL LEARNING

FIND OUT WHAT YOU
CAN DO ONLINE

We have teamed up with Learn My Way to offer free online courses where you can learn things you'd like to know at a pace that works for you.

Discover more today by visiting
www.learnmyway.com

Register for free using
our Centre ID 8000669

Find out more

If you'd like to talk to us to find out more, please contact Nicky Hazelwood,
tel **020 8768 7913**,
email nhazelwood@hexagon.org.uk

DIGITAL LEARNING



Did you know that
February 22nd
is Digital Learning day?

Did you know
February 6th is Safer
Internet day? Visit
www.saferinternetday.org
to find out more.

It's a day that actively spreads innovative practices and ensures that all youth have access to high-quality digital learning opportunities no matter where they live. A day such as this is one of many that champions all things digital. The Community Investment Team don't want you to miss out on national events such as this and want to empower our residents to get online. For this and previous years we continue with our digital skills offer outlined below.



Resident Cathy who is one of our digitally active residents.

FREE DIGITAL SKILLS SESSIONS

If you are looking for work and need some help with online application forms, CVs or getting online – why not pop along to one of our free digital skills sessions. We will be on hand to provide advice, assistance and support to help you get online. If you require any one-to-one support during the session, we have separate rooms where you can talk to one of our advisers.

The sessions can help you;

- Search for jobs online – we can tell you where to search, how to search and the best websites to use
- Apply for jobs
- Fill out online application forms
- Get the most out of your CV

To book your place or to find out more, please contact Lorna Campbell tel **020 8768 7984** or email lcampbell@hexagon.org.uk

IT'S TIME TO GET ONLINE



Do you wish you could do more online? We can help you to develop your computer skills so you can use the internet to do the things you've always wanted to do!

It doesn't matter if you use a desktop computer, tablet (like an iPad) or your mobile phone - we can show you how to use the device you own to do what you want to do!

What sort of things can we help with?

We can show you how to:

- Set up an email account
- Find websites which may interest you
- Link with family and friends on Facebook or Twitter
- Do your shopping
- Book things like events and cinema tickets
- Access websites you might need e.g. new universal credit claims

If you're interested (or know someone else who is a Hexagon resident who'd like to get online), please let us know by calling Nicky Hazelwood on **020 8768 7913** or email nhazelwood@hexagon.org.uk

We will then discuss the options with you to sort something that works for you.

Find out more on Digital Learning day at www.digitallearningday.org

Universal Credit Update



Universal Credit continues its roll-out. Are you ready? **Jason Herbert**, our Financial Inclusion Adviser, tells you what you need to know.

The rollout of Universal Credit continues to gather pace, and this year is an important one in the life of the new benefit. By the end of 2018, the whole country will have moved to “full service” Universal Credit. Once this has happened, new claims for the benefits being replaced will stop for working age people (if you are of pension age, the changes do not affect you at all).

The benefits being replaced are:

- **Income based Jobseekers Allowance**
- **Income based Employment Support Allowance**
- **Income Support**
- **Child Tax Credit**
- **Working Tax Credit**
- **Housing Benefit**

If you have an existing claim for any of these benefits, your claim will not be affected at this stage unless your circumstances change. However, if you need to make a new claim for any of the benefits above, or your circumstances significantly change, you will move to Universal Credit if you live in a “Full Service” area. The Boroughs of Southwark and Croydon are already full service areas for Universal Credit, as are some parts of the SE14 postcode.

Other boroughs getting full service:

The rest of the areas with Hexagon properties getting “full service” Universal Credit later this year will be:

- **Lewisham – July**
- **Bexley – October**
- **Greenwich – October**

Remember that this change won't affect existing claims for now as long as your circumstances stay the same. But if you need to make a new benefits claim (or your circumstances change) then all of your claims for benefits listed above will end and be moved to your Universal Credit claim.

Universal Credit works quite differently to claims for other benefits. You get a single monthly payment covering all of your benefits, and you will need to claim online. Perhaps most importantly, your rent won't be paid direct to Hexagon as it is currently under Housing Benefit, meaning that you will need to make arrangements with us to pay your rent if you are on Universal Credit. Not doing this will cause rent arrears and could put your tenancy at risk.

With the continued roll-out of Universal Credit, it is becoming increasingly important to get online, particularly if you are a new claimant. Hexagon's Community Investment team can help you with this. The team offers training with digital skills for residents who might be complete beginners or who may want to improve their skills. Please see page 14 for more information on this.

If you need help making a Universal Credit claim, or are unsure about how the changes affect you, call me on **0208 768 7925**.



Local Conference on Mental Health



Pictured: Rahul Sen, Project Manager
with Rianna Herbert, Support Officer

Our Newstead Road scheme works with vulnerable residents who have complex needs and enduring mental health illnesses. One of our main focuses of work is to increase social inclusion for our residents. To help Hexagon achieve this, we work closely with other agencies, providers and individuals to enable our residents to access extra resources and utilise them to the maximum. This also helps residents to improve social networking and interaction.

One such networking group is Lewisham Mental Health Connection. They describe themselves as 'a group of people who are committed to improving mental health in Lewisham. We want to make Lewisham a better place for people with mental ill health, so we are collaborating to create recovery-friendly events and activities.

On October 10th last year Hexagon celebrated World Mental Health Day at the Lewisham Mental Health conference, staged by Lewisham Mental Health Connection. This organisation is something representatives from Hexagon have always been part of. The conference and global event also afforded us the opportunity to promote wellbeing to wider audiences.

The conference had a dedicated theme which was to raise awareness in mental health at work and in employability. Hexagon's supported housing team from Newstead Road promoted and encouraged attendees to use the '5 ways to wellbeing' steps. This resource is promoted by the mental health charity MIND (supported by evidence from The New Economics Foundation think tank. See bit.ly/2oYeapI for info).

There was a lot of positive feedback from participants around the wellbeing steps and also on Hexagon's approach towards promoting mental health awareness.

Five ways to well-being tools/steps that can be used by anyone



1

Connect

There is strong evidence that indicates that feeling close to, and valued by, other people is a fundamental human need and one that contributes to functioning well in the world. With this in mind, try to do something different today and make a connection.

- Talk to someone instead of sending an email
- Speak to someone new
- Ask how someone's weekend was and really listen when they tell you
- Put five minutes aside to find out how someone really is



2

Be active

Regular physical activity is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups. Exercise is essential for slowing age-related cognitive decline and for promoting well-being.

- Take the stairs not the lift
- Go for a walk at lunchtime
- Walk into work – perhaps with a colleague – so you can 'connect' as well
- Get off the bus one stop earlier than usual and walk the final part of your journey to work
- Organise a work sporting activity
- Have a kick-about in a local park
- Do some 'easy exercise', like stretching, before you leave for work in the morning



3

Take notice

Reminding yourself to 'take notice' can strengthen and broaden awareness. Studies have shown that being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances your well-being and savouring 'the moment' can help to reaffirm your life priorities. Take some time to enjoy the moment and the environment around you.

- Get a plant for your workspace
- Have a 'clear the clutter' day
- Take notice of how your colleagues are feeling or acting



4

Learn

Continued learning through life enhances self-esteem and encourages social interaction and a more active life.

- Find out something about your colleagues
- Sign up for a class
- Read the news or a book
- Research something you've always wondered about
- Learn a new word



5

Give

Participation in social and community life has attracted a lot of attention in the field of well-being research. Individuals who report a greater interest in helping others are more likely to rate themselves as happy.



See
www.mind.org.uk
 for more
 information

Housing Co-ops

Working with Hexagon

Ever wondered what a housing Co-op is and what relevance they have with Hexagon? Well read on...

Hexagon works with nine local organisations who manage Hexagon owned homes on our behalf. These organisations are collectively known as “managing agents”.

The residents managed by these agents remain Hexagon residents – the big difference being that they don’t receive the majority of Hexagon services. Instead, the housing services are provided by the managing agents themselves.

Housing Co-ops

Seven out of the nine managing agents are housing Co-operatives. These are tenant-led organisations.

Each housing Co-op has an elected committee of “officers” (Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) and are run either by an elected management committee or by monthly general meetings to help carry out the day-to-day business of the Co-op. Most of the Co-ops also contract-in or directly employ their own staff to perform management and maintenance

tasks under the Management Agreement with Hexagon. Co-ops undertake a wide variety of functions successfully, including:

- Collecting rent
- Arranging gas safety checks
- Contacting local authorities for nominating new tenants to properties available for renting.

Housing Co-ops have made many positive contributions. Initially, many took over and brought into use derelict properties and the original Housing Co-op tenants undertook substantial building and maintenance work either directly or through employing skilled local tradespeople. Co-ops provide a cost effective responsive repairs service, on-going Co-operative and management skills for new tenants and efficient financial management. They are also a significant source of affordable tenancies within a declining pool of affordable housing and aim to keep properties in social ownership to meet future housing need.

A place in history

Many Co-ops already existed, for example, Balfour St co-op came into being in 1975 when they lobbied Southwark Council to retain rather than demolish the properties they now occupy. For the past 5 years Co-ops have organised themselves into a federation called HECMAF who seeks to promote the work and contribution that co-ops make to Hexagon. In recent times HECMAF has contributed to the Residents Involvement Policy and is keen to do more of this type of work.



Pictured: Hexagon residents at a Co-op seminar last spring

Pictured: David and Celia
(Co-op members from Southwark)



So what does Hexagon do?

Hexagon's Resident Involvement team monitors how the managing agents perform and provides them with advice and support. Hexagon has a written management agreement with each managing agent which gives details of their responsibilities and Hexagon's. Hexagon also provides some services to the residents managed by these organisations groups. These are mainly the Stock Improvement programmes (e.g. replacing kitchens and bathrooms, renewing windows and cyclical maintenance).

Hexagon holds an annual seminar for tenants managed by managing agents and we consult the agents beforehand about the agenda for the seminar.

Community involvement

Each housing Co-op is founded on ethical and collective values. Each scheme is committed to their local community in a variety of innovative and empowering projects. For example, Balfour Street Co-op members played a major role in creating and maintaining Victory Community Park (SE17) and supported the successful campaign to keep Nursery Row Park (SE17) free from land developers. It also runs a Community Room used by a wide range of local groups. Many individuals have grown in confidence and enhanced their skills through the practical day-to-day running of a housing Co-operative.

Want to know more about Housing Co-ops?

For more information about the Co-ops working with Hexagon, please contact the Resident Involvement team at getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk If you would like to know more about housing co-ops in general please visit the Confederation of Co-operative Housing (CCH) at www.cch.coop

Cooking up a Recipe in Therapy with Zoe Rafah



This New Year perhaps you're thinking of starting your own business but need some inspiration. Home News sits down with Zoe Rafah who did just that, running her own company providing cake baking and decorating classes from her own home. As a resident, Zoe joined the Athena Project where Hexagon sought to recruit and train people with a lived experience of poor mental health to become trained as paid peer mentors who could deliver a paid peer mentor service for individuals experiencing poor mental health.

With a new round of classes starting later this month, Zoe's company – 'Heavenly Cakes by Zoe' is on the rise.

Tell us how you came to be involved with Hexagon and its Athena Project?

"I am a Hexagon tenant and received publicity about the Athena Project from Hexagon. Mental health has always been something that's close to my heart, there is still a lot of stigma around mental health and I wanted to be part of a movement to eliminate this. I wanted to be involved in the Athena Project as it was helping people with mental health issues, supporting them and being there. I soon found that the Athena Project wasn't quite right for me and thought about exploring other avenues."

How did you come about starting your own business and how long has it been running?

"I started baking cakes when I was 14 and I used to take the cakes to school at times, then I went on to decorating them after I baked and decorated a birthday cake for my brother. In 2003, when I started attending church I would initially give away cakes and then eventually I started selling them. Two years ago I then left my job and stated my business as a limited company. I studied and qualified with a cake decorating diploma from The Peggy Porschen Cake Academy in Belgravia. I also did a business course with Tree Shephard (an enterprise network organisation) who Lionne (Hexagon's Senior Employment Adviser) referred me to. I then started teaching cake baking and decorating classes. Hexagon then granted me permission to run cake baking classes from my home."



How did Hexagon or the Athena Project put you in a position to start your own business?

“It gave me the go ahead to teach classes from my home. I also learnt a lot from the Tree Shepherd referral.”

Did you specifically launch ‘Heavenly Cakes by Zoe’ to help clients with mental illness or for wider audiences?

“It’s targeted at anybody female (I run the classes from my home), but I also work with clients with mental health issues and offer them an environment which is user friendly for them. I also make bespoke cakes to order.”

What does being a business owner offer you personally?

“It gives me freedom. Some people say running a business is hard, but in my experience working for somebody else was harder. You’re walking to the beat of somebody else’s drum which I found really difficult. Somebody is telling you what to do, how to do it and when to do it. With your own business the main concern is making your own money and having enough to live on and drumming up your own business. I much prefer planning my own time schedule as I feel much more in control. I found the pressure of working for somebody so challenging, my own business eases the pressure on me. Being self-employed, if something is too much I can always take a step back. I would encourage anybody with mental health challenges to have their own business. It is possible and I would like to help people to take that step. There are ways of doing it with support that you can get.”



What do you think the art and process of baking and decorating can offer those living with mental health?

“The pride that you have in creating something is special; there is always a sense of accomplishment when you make and decorate a cake. The process of mixing the ingredients together and then knowing when to stop mixing, it’s a step-by-step process to learn along the way. Also the beautiful colours and creativity of decorating a cake is a great accomplishment. In the classes that I run you will learn to make fondant figures and roses. My clients tend to learn as they go along. It’s a therapeutic process. Classes are no larger than six and each person has their own individual baking equipment provided. I also provide one-to-one sessions.”

Once cakes are made, are these available for sale to customers?

“My clients are free to do what they like with their cakes, sell them or eat the cakes with their family. I personally don’t recommend cakes being eaten on their own – the love of cake should be a shared experience.”

What are your plans for the future and what help can you offer others? E.g. therapy through baking, business mentoring etc.

“In the future I plan to have my own academy. I’d like to continue to offer a range of cake making including flower sugars, sugar models and the creativity that it brings. There have been studies demonstrating that creativity is proven to be therapeutic e.g. art therapy. I believe my cake baking and decorating classes can help others make professional cakes in a therapeutic environment. From there they can teach others or family members the art of baking and decorating. They can be confident in that area of cooking.”

Do you have any closing thoughts?

“I’d say join one of my classes. It’s a high-end class, and all equipment is provided. I have had feedback from participants and they tell me I’m a wonderful teacher. Those that sign-up can learn new skills or enhance their basic baking and decorating skills. Who knows you could bake and decorate a friend’s wedding cake.”

Interested?

For queries and to sign up for classes beginning later this month email Zoe on: heavenlycakesbyzoe@mail.com

Still need convincing? Creativity can help with your well-being – see page 17.

Please note: Classes are offered to women only.



Unblocking

a Sink

Hexagon has seen a significant increase in the number of repairs relating to the unblocking of sinks, this is often due to items such as nappies and cooking fat being deposited of using sinks and toilet flushing systems.

In light of this, Hexagon wants to help empower and educate residents on blockage prevention and how to keep sinks clog free. Residents are reminded that under section 3.1 of the Tenancy Handbook there is information on the various minor repairs that residents are responsible for. Included within these resident responsibilities is the unblocking of sinks, washbasins and baths. We have provided information below on how to go about preventing and clearing blockages.

Prevention

Always use a sink strainer. This is a small grill which can be placed over your plughole. It is designed to stop most food waste from going down the sink and creating build-up and blockage. It can be purchased from any DIY or hardware store and is relatively cheap and very easy to use.

Make sure no oil or grease finds its way into pipework, as it will solidify into a strong, sticky substance when mixed with cold water. This causes large 'fatbergs' in the sewage systems, largely reported in the local news. See [bbc.in/2wUSxuJ](https://www.bbc.com/news/health-12345678) for more on this.

Boiling water works wonders on most sink blockages. It will help to erode any soap or dried liquids immediately; however, do not try this if your drain is not seeing any flowing movement. If it is completely backed up, a plunger or a chemical sink un-blocker might be required.



Using a plunger

To flush any blocked waste out, press a plunger firmly onto the plughole and pull upwards slowly. Keep doing this and you'll hear water gurgling as the blockage is released. If this doesn't work you may need to apply more pressure – do this by covering up the overflow holes with a damp cloth.

Rinse out the pipe

If plunging doesn't work, the problem may be a blocked pipe below the sink. Here are a few steps that may help solve the problem:

- Put the plug in the plughole
- Place a bucket under the sink pipe
- Unscrew the pipe carefully; ensuring the bucket is positioned below to catch any water
- Rinse the pipe out thoroughly, removing anything that's blocking it
- Try using a piece of stiff wire to poke out the blockage
- Re-connect the sink pipe before emptying any waste water from the bucket
- Pour boiling water and washing up liquid down the plughole to clear away any remaining debris
- Reassemble – put the system back together, firmly tightening all nuts. Squirt a little disinfectant down the plughole to finish the job off.

If this doesn't work then the blockage may be in the waste pipe connected to the sink pipe or further down the pipe, please contact Hexagon who may be able to assist you further.

See more at: bit.ly/2mN1GSe

Kids Corner

Find the words in the puzzle grid. Words may go forwards and backwards or across and down. If you think you have found all the correct words in the word search, please send in the details by **Friday 2nd February 2018**.

Send your word search entry to:
Resident Involvement team, Hexagon Housing Association, 130-136 Sydenham Road, London, SE26 5JY

Three correct entries will be drawn at random. Each will receive a £10 Love2Shop voucher.

Kids Corner Winners Congratulations to Tony Odukoya (SE1). He receives a £10 Love2Shop voucher for winning the last Kids Corner competition!

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

Winter Word Search

Chilly • Fireplace • Frost • Hibernate • Hot Chocolate • Migrate • Penguin • Polar Bear • Snowflake • Snowman • White • Winter



CHOCOLATE
MICROWAVE MUG CAKE

Ingredients (serves 1)

- 4 tbsp self-raising flour
- 4 tbsp caster sugar
- 2 tbsp cocoa powder
- 1 egg
- 3 tbsp milk
- 2 tbsp chocolate chips (optional)

You will need:

1 large mug (or 2 ordinary size mugs)

Method

Only half fill the mug with mixture to avoid it overflowing

1. Use a large mug to avoid making a mess or divide the mixture between a couple of mugs. Add the flour, sugar and cocoa powder to the mug and mix
2. Add the egg and mix
3. Add all the other ingredients (apart from the chocolate chips if you are planning to use them) and mix until smooth

4. Add any optional extras: chocolate chips/nuts/raisins/chopped banana/peanut butter and mix well
5. Centre your mug in the middle of the microwave oven and cook on high for 3-4 mins (depending how powerful your microwave is) or until it has stopped rising and is firm to the touch
6. Watch it rise and check it doesn't overflow
7. Allow to cool
8. Serve – you can eat it straight out of the mug or tip it onto a plate

Winter Jokes

- Q: How does an Eskimo stick his house together?
A: With igloo
- Q: Why don't mountains get cold in the winter?
A: They wear snowcaps
- Q: What's a snowman's favourite breakfast?
A: Frosted flakes

