

HEXAGON'S QUARTERLY RESIDENTS MAGAZINE

HOME

NEWS

SUMMER 2016

Hexagon

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WELCOME...

...to another edition of Home News.

Hexagon has a unique relationship with its residents. We do work hard to provide excellent levels of customer care to all of our residents, but at the same time we recognise that our residents are not all exercising choice in an open market place in the same way that customers of traditional businesses might.

That is why we have to work particularly hard at getting your feedback and working with you in partnership to make sure that the services are as good as they can be. We have established a series of scrutiny groups across the organisation where we hand power over to you, the resident, to put our services under the microscope. We encourage residents to push us to be better, particularly where our services are not up to scratch. I am particularly grateful to members of the Performance Review Group and their sister group, the Repairs Group, for pushing us to improve our repairs service. We recognise that it is the most important service to you and that is why we are putting a lot of energy into this area.

If you are interested in working with us in partnership to improve our repairs service, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Regular readers will be aware that Hexagon does a lot of work to assist our residents into employment. We have several apprenticeships available to young people (16-21) within The Next Generation pages. Hexagon is committed to helping young people into getting a good job.

Readers will also be aware that the Government is in the process of a fairly comprehensive programme of welfare reform. You can read about the new Welfare Cap on Page 15. If you occupy a home with three bedrooms or more, and have three or more children, we encourage you to contact us to see if you might be affected by the Welfare Cap and to see how we might be able to help you respond to this emerging challenge.

Lastly, one of the ways that people are responding to the Welfare Cap is to get into employment at which point the cap does not apply. On pages 18 and 19, our Employment Support Adviser, Lionne Whitfield, reaches out to many of the mums out there who have transferrable skills that can assist them into employment.



WOULD YOU PREFER TO RECEIVE THIS MAGAZINE BY EMAIL?



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.





When

**SATURDAY 17th
SEPTEMBER**

Time

1pm – 5pm

Where

**ST DUNSTANS
JUBILEE GROUND,
CANADIAN
AVENUE, SE6**

Booking

**Call or email
(details shown
right) by Friday
19th August**

RESIDENTS DAY IS CHANGING

**Join us for a fun and informative afternoon
of workshops, food and stalls!**

Crèche and children's activities will be provided.

Our annual Residents Day has plenty for everyone. Drop in for as little or as long as you wish. Details of what's happening on the day will be sent once you've booked your place – **BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL TO ATTEND THIS EVENT AND IS FOR HEXAGON RESIDENTS ONLY.**

To book your place for this exciting event call **0208 768 7970** or email getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk by **Friday 19th August**

LOVE LONDON WORKING

Hexagon has been successful in securing funding which will effectively double the Employment and Skills support that we offer.

We are really excited about Love London Working. It will involve us working with other housing associations and will enable us to increase the opportunities available to our residents. A new dedicated worker will be recruited to our Employment Team. Over the next 3 years it is our aim to support more residents than ever into employment and to support them in sustaining employment.

Love London Working is a partnership of housing associations led by Affinity Sutton and funded by the European Social and Innovation Fund (ESIF). Its purpose is to deliver an employment support programme to individuals who are not in employment.

We offer a package of support unique to you, your needs and your circumstances.

This may include:

- Support getting back to work if you are unemployed
- 1:1 support from a qualified and experienced Employment Support Adviser
- Becoming self-employed or starting your own business
- Job searching, CV writing, interview techniques
- Work experience placements to help refresh your skills
- Help with childcare
- Looking for work if you have a disability
- IT skills training
- Confidence building
- Apprenticeships, training and qualifications

INTERESTED?

Contact:

Lionne Whitfield,
Employment Support
Adviser,
tel **020 8768 7915** email
lwhitfield@hexagon.org.uk

We may be able to offer a solution straight away or we will spend some time finding out more details about your situation.

You will agree how we can work together to achieve your goals. Depending on your individual situation this could involve emails, phone contact or face-to-face meetings.



SINK HOLE DISRUPTS NEW HOUSING SCHEME

On 2nd May there was a ground collapse on the driveway to one of the houses at our newly built scheme at Brickfield Cottages in Plumstead. Thankfully, no-one was hurt.

The hole which opened up on the driveway of one of the houses was very deep and posed a real danger. As a result, the residents were evacuated by the police overnight. Working closely with Greenwich Council, residents from the affected households were found overnight accommodation and then most families were able to return the following day, on the advice of engineers.

The hole was filled with concrete and 'made safe' by the end of day on 3rd May.

Unfortunately three households remain re-housed in temporary accommodation. We recognise that this is a major disruption to their daily lives.

Hexagon has met with residents to answer their questions and explain what we are doing to establish the cause of the collapse. The best experts in the country have been appointed and

initial investigative works commenced on 16th May, to try and establish the likely cause of the ground collapse.

Despite rumours and speculation about the cause, we really don't know at this point how or why this happened, and consequently what further action might be required. As soon as we establish the facts we will be better placed to plan the further action required to assure residents of their safety.

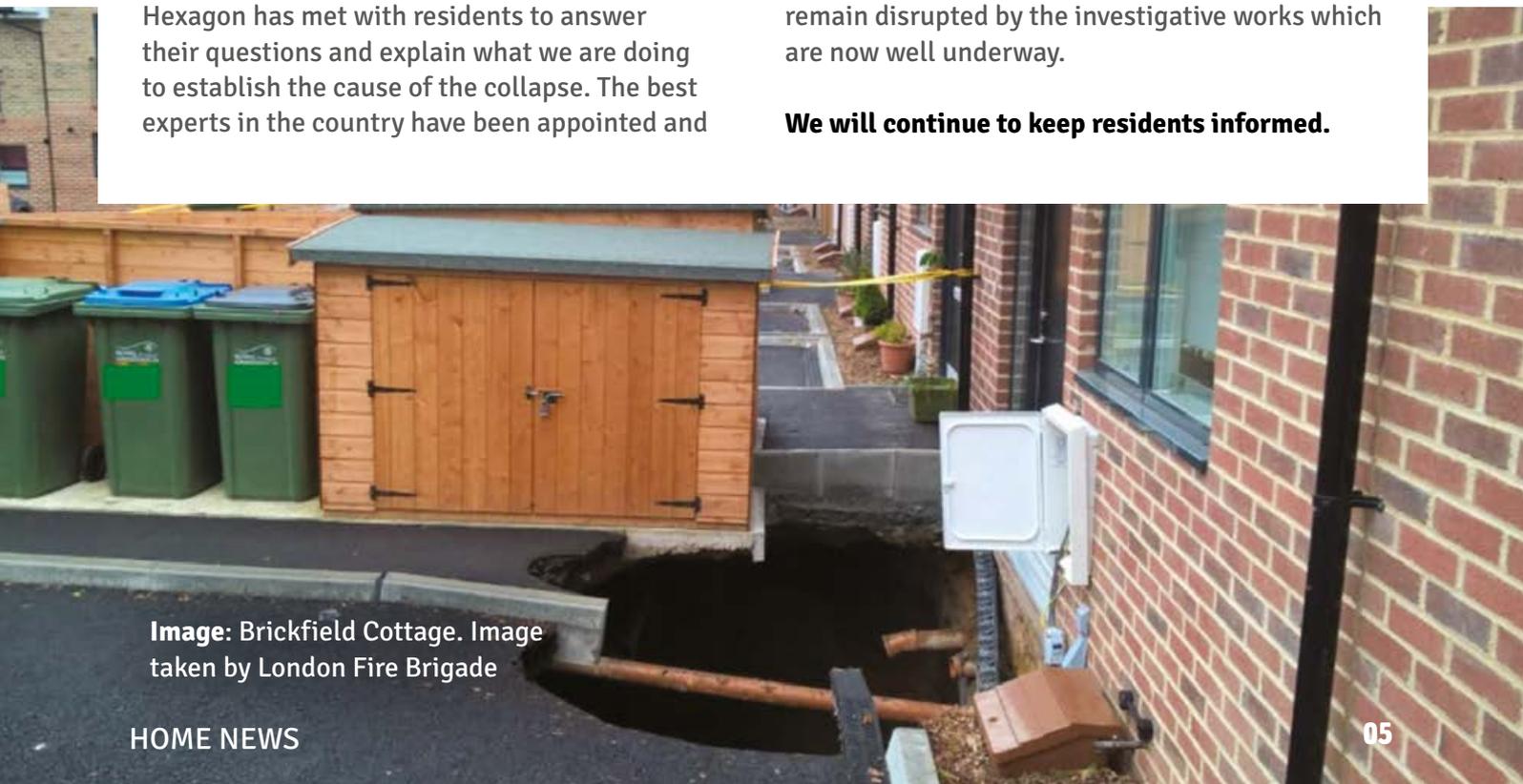
Hexagon would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to the residents of the estate for their patience and co-operation on the day of

the incident, and since then, because their lives remain disrupted by the investigative works which are now well underway.

We will continue to keep residents informed.

“Hexagon would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to the residents of the estate for their patience and co-operation on the day of the incident”

Image: Brickfield Cottage. Image taken by London Fire Brigade



CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

Carbon monoxide is a highly poisonous substance produced by fuels such as gas not burning fully. This happens when a gas appliance has been incorrectly fitted, badly repaired or poorly maintained. Carbon monoxide poisoning can kill very quickly. You cannot taste, see or smell it, but the symptoms include:

- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Breathlessness
- Collapse
- Loss of consciousness

Hexagon carries out an annual gas safety check at all our properties to ensure that all gas boilers, fire and carbon monoxide alarms meet the correct standards. Make sure you allow access to have this safety check carried out because failure to do so is in breach of your tenancy agreement.

Hexagon will fit a Carbon Monoxide alarm in your home if you live in a directly managed (gas) property

Please request it from the Customer Services team on **0208 778 6699** or contact our Gas Services Co-ordinator Duncan Jarvis at djarvis@hexagon.org.uk

NEW GAS CONTRACTORS

A family-run business with an excellent track record in customer service has won the contract to carry out gas maintenance and repairs for Hexagon.

BSW Heating, who are based in Kenley, near Croydon, has provided a highly effective service across Hexagon's 3,300 (gas) properties for the last four years, earning a customer satisfaction rating of 99%.

Established in 1962, the firm prides itself on its quick response times and the quality of its work, and on average carries out around 200 gas installations, responds to 3,500 breakdown calls and attends more than 4,000 service appointments at Hexagon properties each year.

BSW won the gas contract with Hexagon after bidding against other companies, as European regulations mean that past performance cannot be considered in the process.

Hexagon expects high standards of work from its contractors and is confident that BSW will continue to deliver the first class service that our residents deserve. A tenant from the Performance Review Group (our residents scrutiny panel) worked with us throughout the selection process for the new contract, as did the South East Consortium (SEC). The SEC is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to ensuring that organisations like Hexagon get value for money.

BSW employs a team of locally-based engineers, which means

that no engineer is ever more than 20 minutes away from a Hexagon property and the firm aims to ensure that each visit counts by finding the right solution first time. We are delighted to continue working with BSW Heating who have ensured that gas repairs and servicing have been effective and efficient for our tenants. The firm have a dedicated team of engineers ready to respond just to the needs of Hexagon tenants and is committed to maintaining the high levels of customer satisfaction that it has enjoyed over the last four years.

Marilyn Henry, a resident from Croydon, contacted us following a repair by BSW to say "I am very happy with the work and the conduct of the team from BSW who were professional in every way. They consulted me on every aspect of the work to be done and tidied up as they worked."

Residents can call BSW directly about their boiler breakdowns on **020 8763 5333** or Freephone from a landline **0800 012 6992**.

For full information on the company, please visit their website www.bsw-heating.com If you select the 'contact' tab at the top of the homepage they have a 'live chat' service where they can also give basic technical advice or answer queries live.

HEXAGON AWARDS GROUNDS MAINTENANCE AND CLEANING CONTRACTS

We are pleased to confirm that on 1st June Hexagon awarded two new grounds maintenance and cleaning contracts.

Two residents, Carol Brown and Rachael Moloney, were involved in the tendering process and attended interviews and site visits. We would like to express our appreciation to them both for their very valuable involvement.

The two successful contractors are 'Clean Green' and 'Cleanscapes' and they will carry out the majority of the grounds maintenance and cleaning on our estates.

The contracts will run for an initial three year period with the option to extend them to then seven years.

We are confident that these new arrangements will ensure

residents receive an excellent service.

Our Housing Officers and Contracts Monitoring Officer will continue to monitor the standards on our estates to ensure that our contractors deliver an excellent service. On some of the estates there are residents who act as Estate Champions, and in these cases the Estate Champions will also regularly monitor the standards of communal cleaning and grounds maintenance.

Resident feedback is invaluable in helping us improve standards on our sites. Consequently, if you have any concerns or comments please contact your Housing Officer.



CLEAN GREEN

are now responsible for maintaining our sites in Croydon and Southwark, except for a few sites in Rotherhithe which are still maintained by Southwark Council.



CLEANSCAPES

are responsible for maintaining our sites in Bexley, Greenwich and Lewisham except for the Mountacre Estate which is still maintained by Mark McGowan. You may recognise the name 'Cleanscapes' because they were one of our previous contractors.

ATHENA PROJECT UPDATE

The Athena Project is an original project run by Hexagon that trains people who have experience of mental health issues and have been volunteering in the community to become paid mentors; mentors help people who are facing their own mental health difficulties.

Since the project started we have trained three groups of mentors which includes Hexagon residents. We are currently evaluating the project, both the training programme and the actual mentoring being delivered. We will use this feedback to further improve the project and will share the results in a future edition of Home News.

This project supports people with mental health issues, and it also offers the mentors the chance for further career development. For example, we ran a course called 'Train the Trainer', which enabled some of our mentors to gain skills for training courses. This was also offered to Hexagon staff and the picture to the below shows some of the people who completed the course being

presented with their training certificates. The aim of this is for mentors who work in the project to co-deliver the training programme alongside tutors to future recruits. Congratulations to all on gaining this certificated training!

We also plan to train more mentors later in the year and in 2017 so if after you read this you would like to find out more, please contact me by calling **07961 108588**, or emailing **jlake@hexagon.org.uk**

John Lake,
Peer Mentor
Project
Coordinator



The third group of mentors finished their training in May. Here are some of them, and also people who did the Train the Trainer course, pictured with Hexagon's CEO, Tom McCormack.

Left to right: Heather (tutor), Kaylaa, John, Dionne, Tom, Nicola, Janet (tutor) and Rahul (Hexagon)



RESIDENT BOARD MEMBER ELECTIONS

We are currently in the process of filling two Resident Board Member vacancies. In order to ensure that we put the best possible candidates forward for election, we have adopted the same initial recruitment process that we use for other Board Members.

Interested candidates were asked to complete an Application Form addressing the key skills which we have identified as being important for our Board Members. We received over 20 completed Application Forms, which were then shortlisted by a panel comprising a Vice Chair, Board Member, Resident Board Member and our HR Manager. Following the short-listing, seven applicants were invited to an interview with the panel, and four were progressed to the election stage. The candidates put forward for election are Mark Allan, Julian Lukwago, Ranna McArdel and Kristel Van Der Meijden.

We were very impressed with the quality of the applications, and would like to thank those of you that expressed an interest in the vacancies. If you were not successful this time, we do hope that you will remain interested in becoming involved in Hexagon.

By the time you are reading this the election will have been completed and we would like to thank in advance all of you who have taken the time over recent weeks to cast your vote(s). Look out for the next edition of Home News to see who the two successful candidates are who have been elected on to the Board.

APPLY FOR OUR EXCITING JOB VACANCY!

Housing Services Trainee - £17,255 p.a. plus vehicle allowance (2 year fixed-term contract)

We are looking for a Trainee to join our enthusiastic Housing Services Team based in Sydenham, SE26. This is an ideal first step into housing management and a comprehensive training and support programme will be provided. In return, we expect you to have the drive and commitment to develop your existing skills and begin your career in housing.

You will already have excellent communication skills and the right personality to deliver a high quality service to our residents.

You will be supported to undertake a day release college course, and so must be able to demonstrate that you can handle course based study as well as on the job learning. Basic IT skills (Word and Excel) are important, as is your willingness to work as part of a team.

For an application pack contact The Community Investment Team, email cit@hexagon.org.uk or telephone us on **020 8768 7915**.

**Closing date for receipt of application forms:
Sunday 7th August 2016**

Hexagon

CO-OP AND MANAGING AGENTS SEMINAR 2016

Shelter, the housing and homelessness charity says that “housing co-ops are groups of people who live in and collectively manage their accommodation. This involves taking responsibility for arranging repairs, and making decisions about who joins and leaves the co-op.”

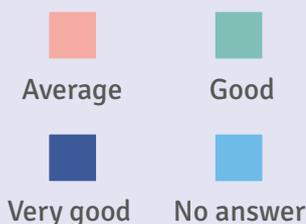
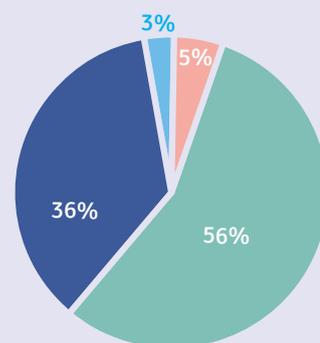
Over 300 of Hexagon’s 4,000 homes are managed by co-ops or agents. These are resident-led organisations who take on the management and maintenance of their homes. This means that they collect the rent, choose their own contractors and organise their own repairs. Hexagon continues to provide our co-op managed residents with some of the services that our directly managed residents receive, namely stock improvement works, cyclical maintenance, and access to Resident Involvement and Community Investment activities.

In April all co-op residents and staff were invited to the eighth annual Co-op Seminar held at Goldsmiths University in New Cross.

A record attendance of 45 guests joined Hexagon staff to network; hear how changes in social housing affects co-ops; and to ask questions to a panel which consisted of Chris Melville, (Operations Director); Rumana Khair, (Stock Improvement Manager); and Brian Hughes, (Resident Involvement Manager).

At the end of the evening 36 attendees completed an

Please describe your experience of the Co-op Seminar 2016



evaluation form which showed a 92% satisfaction rating with the Seminar.

One resident said, “As I am a co-op member, I have virtually no contact with Hexagon so it was interesting to actually see the cogs behind the organisation! It was good to be informed directly by Hexagon regarding government policies as there are a lot of changes going on.”

If you live in one of our properties which is co-op managed and have any suggestions for topics that you would like to see covered at the next seminar please e-mail them to krichards@hexagon.org.uk or call 020 8768 7991.



Image: Dermot and Lorraine from Three Boroughs Housing Co-op at the registration

THE NEXT GENERATION



LIKE US ON FACEBOOK
Hexagon Youth Mag

APPRENTICESHIPS OPPORTUNITIES

We have a variety of apprenticeship and work placements starting this summer.

Sign up for and complete our employment essentials for a guaranteed interview.

Employment essentials include:

- CV
- Covering letter
- Interview skills

DON'T MISS OUT ON THIS FANTASTIC OPPORTUNITY!

CONTACT: Andre Peters
Phone: 020 8768 7913
Email: apeters@hexagon.org.uk

Take a look inside at some job descriptions in construction and find out how to apply



HERE ARE SOME JOB DESCRIPTIONS IN CONSTRUCTION TO HELP YOU DECIDE WHERE YOU SEE YOURSELF:



PAINING AND DECORATING

Painters and decorators use a range of coverings to enhance and protect surfaces. These surfaces could include plaster, metal and wood. If you like practical work and enjoy being artistic, this could be a perfect career for you.

Your main tasks would include:

- Measuring surface areas to work out how much paint or wall covering you need
- Stripping off old wallpaper or paint
- Filling holes and cracks and making sure surfaces are level
- Preparing surfaces with primer and undercoat
- Mixing paint to the right shade, either by hand or using computerised colour-matching equipment
- Applying layers of paint and hanging wallpaper
- Tidying up after finishing a job

CARPENTRY

To become a carpenter you need reasonable maths skills for measuring and working out angles and you'll need to follow technical drawings and plans.

As a carpenter you may work in one or more of the following areas:

- Cutting and shaping timber for floorboards, skirting boards and window frames
- Making and assembling doors, window frames, staircases and fitted furniture
- Fitting wooden structures, like floor and roof joists, roof timbers, staircases, partition walls, and door and window frames (first fixings)
- Installing skirting boards, door surrounds, doors, cupboards and shelving, as well as door handles and locks (second fixings)
- Building temporary wooden supports for concrete that is setting, for example on motorway bridge supports or building foundations (formwork)
- Making and fitting interiors for shops, hotels, banks, offices and public buildings

TYPICAL WORKING WEEK

You will work on site for four days per week and attend college for one day a week. Most site hours are Monday to Friday, 08.00-17.00.

PLUMBING

As a Plumbing apprentice, you'll learn about the installation and maintenance of plumbing systems and components. You will be working under minimal supervision to complete the installation and maintenance of domestic hot water, cold water, sanitation, drainage and rainwater systems.

Your job could include the installation, maintenance, commissioning and servicing of domestic plumbing and heating systems and equipment, including:

- Showers, baths and sinks
- Heating systems fuelled by gas, solar thermal, heat pumps, oil and coal
- Drainage pipes, plastic and copper water pipes and guttering

Other tasks that you may be asked to carry out include:

- Detecting leaks
- Making adjustments to the surrounding environment to accommodate new systems
- Solving dimensional problems with applied maths skills
- Cleaning and maintaining tools
- Clearing away debris

As a plumber, you could find yourself working in many different places - from construction sites to residential homes. Job prospects are good, with plenty of scope for self-employment.

ELECTRICIAN

You will be expected to carry out skilled tasks including installing electrical cables and equipment in commercial environments, and the visual inspection and electrical testing of those installations.

Apprentice electricians are required to have both excellent written and verbal communication skills, including the skill of listening and following both simple and complex instructions.

As an electrical engineering technician you would install, maintain and repair electrical equipment and controls. You might work in a range of industries, including:

- Power generation and transmission - installing turbines, switchgear and power lines and street lighting networks
- Industrial machinery and equipment - making, fitting and repairing drives, motors and programmable logic control (PLC) panels
- Building services infrastructure - installing and maintaining lighting, heating, air conditioning, lifts and escalators

You would follow engineering instructions and use wiring and circuit diagrams when working on installations and repairs. You would also use a range of tools to calibrate, inspect and test equipment and machinery to make sure they are working correctly and safely.

APPLY TODAY

WE CAN OFFER YOU

- An irresistible CV
- A tantalising covering letter
- Provide mock interviews
- Give you fantastic tips for interviews
- Help support you find the job or apprenticeship that you are looking for

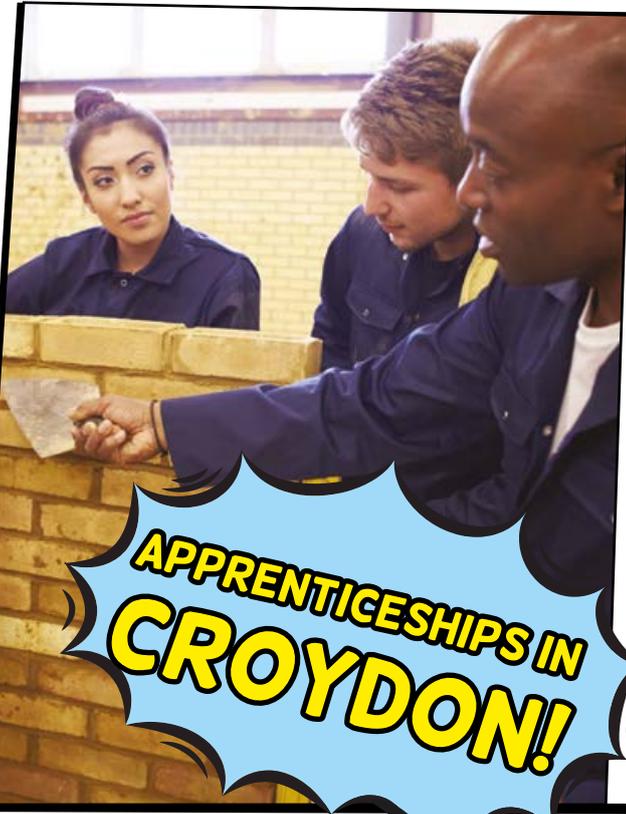
INTERESTED?

Interested in any of the apprenticeships or jobs you have read about? Please contact me:

André Peters

Tel: 0208 768 7910

apeters@hexagon.org.uk



**APPRENTICESHIPS IN
CROYDON!**

Are you a Croydon resident?

We are currently building a development on Brighton Road and are looking for someone who is committed in becoming a:

Bricklayer Carpenter Electrician

We are hoping to recruit and have you on site by August.

We are able to provide you with your CSCS card.

So hurry, call André today and secure yourself with a great opportunity!

WANT TO LEARN HOW TO GET ONLINE AND GET A FREE LAPTOP?

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 and using email.

Plus, using the internet to: Save money, look for work and access services.

All participants who complete the course in full will receive a refurbished laptop, 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). Courses start on Friday 29th July from 10am-3pm every Friday for 3 weeks and take place at the Hexagon Head Office.

Interested? Contact Lionne Whitfield on 0208 768 7915 or email lwhitefield@hexagon.org.uk

JOB VACANCY

DO YOU THINK YOU'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO BECOME A GROUND-WORKER?

We have a guaranteed position paying **£8 ph** (no experience) to **£13 ph** (experience).

The job would require the operative to be fully hands on, and this may involve a variety of works such as:

- 1) Excavation and installation of foundations
- 2) Excavation and installation of drainage
- 3) Placing ground floor slabs
- 4) Laying of road bases and paving areas

Training may be offered for individuals who stay with us for more than 6 months. This training may include plant and equipment operating, therefore the right person may need a full UK driving licence, but this is not essential.

Please contact André for more information.

UNIVERSAL CREDIT UPDATE

The Government is continuing with its gradual roll out of Universal Credit, a new integrated benefit that will eventually replace many existing benefit payments. A small number of claimants in all areas are now starting to move to Universal Credit, with larger numbers moving over in some parts of Croydon and Southwark. Around 30 residents have already moved across to Universal Credit. The process is likely to accelerate further in the coming months, although it will still be several years before everyone affected moves over to the new benefit.

Eventually, it is expected that all working age residents (if you are of Pension Credit age, you are not affected by Universal Credit) who receive any state benefits other than child benefit will move across to Universal Credit. This means you will eventually be impacted by Universal Credit even if the only benefit you receive is partial Housing Benefit. If you want to know more about what the changes mean for you, call **0208 778 6699**.



BENEFIT CAP REDUCTION

ARE YOU AFFECTED?

The Benefit Cap has now been in place for three years, having been introduced in 2013. The cap limited the amount any household could receive in benefits to a maximum of £26,000 per year, or £500 per week (a lower limit applies to single people with no children living with them). The cap includes all main state benefits (including Housing Benefit), although families who are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance / Personal Independence Payment are exempt.

So far, relatively few Hexagon residents have been affected by the cap. This is mainly because Hexagon rents are generally much lower than those in the private sector, and also because the cap has been relatively high. However, the cap is now being reduced to a maximum of £23,000 for households in London (again, a lower limit applies to single people with no children living with them). This reduced cap will result in more Hexagon residents being affected.

Whether you are affected will depend on a number of circumstances, but broadly speaking, if you have 3 or more bedrooms and 3 or more children

it is likely that you may be affected. Remember also that if you are already affected by the cap, you will lose an additional £3,000 per year (close to £60 per week) when the reduced cap comes into force in the autumn (we await the dates from the Government). If you are affected by the cap, your Housing Benefit will reduce to reflect the shortfall, but you will still be liable to pay your rent to Hexagon in full.

If you are worried about the cap or would like further information, please contact us on **0208 778 6699** and we will be happy to help.

WORKING PARENTS

Parents are faced with several challenges when deciding to return to work. Having heard that working parents often feel guilty about not spending time with their children and keeping a perfect home, I decided to interview three colleagues here at Hexagon; Jodyne Brown, Victoria Savill and Pius Bello, to discuss the challenges of working parents.



Jodyne Brown is a full-time Housing Officer with two children aged 12 and 3. She works 35 - 40hrs per week, with 1 day of home working. Monday – Wednesday her little one is with her Dad during the day and Thursday and Friday, Jodyne takes her to nursery before work and collects her after work.

What influenced your decision to go back to work?

Mainly financial reasons, but also being a mum can take over your life; it's nice to be Jodyne as opposed to 'someone's Mum'. To do something different other than running a house etc. – it helps me to remember who I am as a person. I am a Mum and that's a big part (probably the biggest) of me, but it's one of many! I also want to be a good role model for my children.

How do you manage 'mum guilt'?

It's very hard, so I try to make sure that I get my youngest involved in anything I'm doing whilst I'm at home (she likes to

'help' with the cooking, laundry etc.) I always try to arrange a specific activity with my eldest where we spend some time together, but if this is not possible then I clearly explain why. It's a struggle, all I can do is try!

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Being a mum is very hard work. Being at work as well makes it all the more difficult, but I wouldn't change it for the world. Having kids makes me want to do better, so that I can give them the best start in life I can. They are my proudest accomplishments in my life.

Victoria Savill has one 6-year-old son and works full time as a Surveyor. She manages the turnaround of all Hexagon Housing void properties and the mutual exchange inspections to check the property condition before the exchange takes place.

Do you have any advice you would like to give to the mums who are looking to start working again?

It's hard! You have to be organised and always thinking one step ahead; as a colleague of mine once said, what you do

every day is like plate spinning. Managing home life, work life, school life there is no time for social life...

What in your opinion are some of the pros of being a working mum?

I have the opportunity to provide as much as I can for my son and I ensure I give him as many life experiences as possible. I waited many years to meet Franky, my miracle. In my opinion, I feel as a responsible mother I need to make sure he has whatever I can provide in order to give him a stable grounding for a successful and happy life.

What was challenging with going back to work?

Was it the right decision and why? I had no choice but to return to work; there were no options. To live in London and maintain a regular life (not posh!) both parents have to work. I often say I wish I was born in an earlier decade as life was so much simpler then and mothers could stay at home and watch their children grow. Life is tough now.

Any advice for would be returnees?

I would recommend before returning to work that you have a solid support network around you and prepare for times when you may need alternative

childcare. I am very lucky to have Mum and also to have a wonderful manager. My manager is so supportive and she makes working life and home life so much easier to manage together.



Pius Bello has three wonderful children (one girl age 15, two boys 13 and 10) and he is the Learning and Development Adviser who started working 17.5 hours a week from April 2016. This has enabled him to devote some more time to Church (Victory International Church UK) projects that he is involved with outside work. Prior to this date he worked full time at Hexagon Housing Association.

What are the benefits of working?

I have enjoyed flexible working and employee benefits such as a childcare voucher scheme - quite handy in saving for the childcare costs, especially when my children were younger. I have

had a number of different roles where I have been able to apply my skills and experience. The working environment is quite friendly and supportive; it is one of the reasons I have stayed for over 9 years at Hexagon.

What advice would you give to someone that is struggling with the decision to work or stay at home?

I would encourage such persons to try volunteering first in their areas of interest. This will enable you to test the waters and determine if you would like to continue. There are a lot of work/life balance opportunities that can be useful in helping the integration into work.

What are your challenges as a working Dad?

Taking time to ensure that you are around before the children go to sleep for interaction and bonding especially during their early development. Also, the challenge of trying to organise family holidays which tends to be difficult during term times. It can be challenging and costly especially around the cost of childcare. There are some opportunities that have to be forgone when you have a young family but in these cases I do not mind especially when I can bring joy to the family.

I would like to thank my colleagues for their candid interviews and for giving us a taste of what it's like being a working parent. It will be a different situation for everybody, but I hope this article has provided you with 'food for thought' as to whether working is for you.

If yes is the answer, there is definitely a lot to consider and you will need to be thinking about what will the change mean for you, and for the other people in your life. It can be helpful to think about this by looking at the different 'roles' you play and thinking about the impact that a return to work will have on those roles.

Please feel free to contact me on 020 7768 7915 to discuss if you would like assistance with gaining suitable and sustainable employment.

I am looking for Hexagon residents to interview who would like to share some of their work/life experiences with others here. If you want to find out more get in touch with me at lwhitfield@hexagon.org.uk and get involved.

*Lionne Whitfield
(Employment Support Adviser)*

NOT “JUST A MUM”

Throughout my time working as an adviser placing people into education and employment I have often heard mums say “I don’t have the skills to do that job, I’m just a mum!”

This has inspired me to write this article, because I genuinely believe that being a mother teaches a woman a number of invaluable skills that can be easily transferred and add value in the world of work.

You may think that a lack of relevant, industry-specific experience will stop you from getting a job but this is not always the case. If you are changing careers, looking for your first job, or returning to work after a long period out, you will be pleased to learn that employers are often looking for potential. It is vital, that you ‘sell’ your potential by demonstrating the transferable skills that you have developed already. Lack of direct experience is not necessarily a barrier to a new job!

Employers are usually looking for abilities and qualities that they recognise to be present in the most effective employees. These soft skills, such as efficiency, being able to communicate effectively in a variety of situations, showing initiative, time management, being thick-skinned and having a good work attitude, are valuable across all industries.

The first one of these transferable skills I would like to focus on is efficiency. Being a mother forces a woman to

learn to juggle a few tasks at the same time. Being a mum is a challenging, high-paced job and you do not just stop because it is time for lunch or it has hit 5pm on a Friday. There is an endless list of things that need to be completed with your child being a demanding ‘manager’, continuously assessing your efforts and evaluating your progress. This ability to multi-task is invaluable in a workplace where you may, for instance, be required to prepare a presentation while answering client calls and contacting the IT department for assistance – all at the same time. On top of this, you are subjected to great time pressure to accomplish all of these tasks.

This brings me to the next fundamental transferable skill – effective time management. Being a mum, you normally may not get a chance to read, relax and listen to music in the privacy of your own company unless your child is sleeping. Therefore you learn to use these precious few hours to catch up on the latest soap/news, return phone calls and maybe, if lucky, upload posts on to Facebook. You become a ‘master’ of time management, taking seconds to skim through interesting articles, or books, or read long emails, or listen to the news while preparing the next batch of milk for your constantly



hungry baby. I kid you not - the modern workplace 'screams' for employees who can plan and implement an important project in a matter of hours and while you're at it, do it to the highest quality standard. As well as having the added ability to keep taking on more tasks in order not to waste the remaining time.

The third, but not least, transferable skill I would like to emphasise is the ability to be thick-skinned after numerous setbacks. Mothers face many frustrating rejections and challenges on an almost daily basis – the baby may refuse a bottle or your toddler only wants to eat chips for their lunch, or suddenly change their mind about the time of their nap. A mum needs to be able to adjust fast and find an alternative course of action to achieve the result. Thick-skinned employees who can pull themselves together

after a failure or any kind of setback are respected and in high demand. For example, if a manager is not satisfied with a final presentation you have produced on the back of a long and difficult project, it can be easy to get de-motivated and start blaming your colleagues who have also contributed to it. Being a mum teaches you to just pull yourself together and spend some time perfecting the parts of the presentation your manager is not happy with.

I believe that being a mum equips you with an array of highly-transferable skills that employers seek out in potential staff. It is a matter of believing in yourself, emphasising these abilities and the ways they can be of use in a workplace. It may take years for some people to develop and perfect these skills so take advantage of this wonderful unpaid job called being a mum!

All skills and abilities can be transferable, depending on where they are being transferred to and from. When applying for a job you should remember, that the type of transferable skills you highlight in a cover letter or in your CV should be related to the position for which you are applying.

If you're interested in gaining employment or need help updating your CV, please feel free to contact Lionne Whitfield on **020 8768 7915**.

Lionne Whitfield
(Employment Support Adviser)



WRITING YOUR CV

Here is an example of a CV, which shows how transferable skills can be applied to a job environment:

Joanna Bloggs

🏠 111 Hexagon House, London SE26 5JY
☎ 07903 123 456
✉ jobloggs@hotmail.com

Personal Profile

As a highly reliable and conscientious individual, with a friendly disposition and a good sense of humour, I am able to work as a team member or alone using my own initiative. With excellent time keeping skills and a strong ability to multitask, I have developed a passion for customer service which would make me a great candidate for any front of house position within a reputable Housing Association.

Key Skills

- Service Orientation - actively looking for ways to help people
- Time Management - managing one's own time and the time of others
- Coordination- adapting actions in relation to others' actions
- Persuasion - persuading others to change their minds or behaviour
- Instructing - teaching others how to learn new skills
- Negotiation - bringing others together and trying to reconcile differences
- Communication - communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience
- Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents
- Active Learning - understanding the implications of new information for both current and future problem-solving and decision-making

Employment History

Full Time Mum to Four Children	Mar 1998 - Present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for running and organising the home • Plan menus and prepare cooked balanced healthy meals • Manage the finances of the home • Liaise with teachers and assist with school homework • Provide support and advice to family • Organise activities • Administer basic first aid 	
Receptionist	Dr Jones Medical Practice
	Jul 1994 - Feb 1998
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcomed and greeted patients, staff and visitors • Registered new patients • Answered and transferred incoming calls • Sorted and distributed post to all departments • Ordered stationery and negotiated prices with suppliers 	

Education and training

South Thames College	Sept 1992 - Jun 1994
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 2 Health & Social Care • RSA Introduction to IT • Mavis Beacon - Touch Typing 	
Trinity Girls School	Sept 1987- Jun 1992
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 GCSEs achieved at grades A- C in English and Mathematics 	

Interests

As well as spending time with my friends and family, I also enjoy reading, listening to music and baking.

References Available Upon Request

Does your CV...

1. Have your NAME and up to date CONTACT details at the top of your CV?
Y N
2. Include a Personal Profile?
Y N
3. Only include information that is TARGETED and RELEVANT to the job?
Y N
4. Have a CLEAR layout and readable font? (Times New Roman, Arial or Verdana at least size 11)
Y N
5. Consider the needs of the employer? Put yourself into the employer's shoes and consider how they will interpret the style and content of your CV (avoid your personal needs and sell your value to potential employers).
Y N
6. Use spacing in an effective way? It should be clear and easy to read with headings. Keep it to 2 pages or under if possible.
Y N
7. Free of spelling or grammatical errors? If so, your chances of success are drastically reduced! (Use British spellchecker whilst typing up your CV and use spell checker after typing.)
Y N
8. Reflect what you are doing now? Is your most recent employment first and are all gaps accounted for? Is any voluntary/part time/temporary work included?
Y N
9. State 'References Available Upon Request'? Do you know, which two people you will use and have you contacted them to seek permission?
Y N

CV's need to be of a high professional standard as they are often your only opportunity to make a good first impression to an employer. Use the CV checklist to check for common mistakes and make sure you have included all key information.

Once you have completed your CV, please tick YES or NO to each of the questions to the right.

If you have any ticks in the 'No' column, then go back and correct it.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND YOU

With changes to your lifestyle and using less energy you can save energy, help tackle climate change and help to leave our planet for the future generation.

What is climate change?

The Earth's climate has changed throughout its history caused by variations in the Earth's orbit. However, we know the recent warming trend has not happened at the same rate in the past 1,300 years.

Technological advances have allowed scientists to see the big picture via satellites and monitor global climate patterns over several years. This has revealed worrying evidence of the heat trapping nature of the waste gases produced from using fossil fuels.

Scientists believe the Earth's average temperature is increasing as a result of the human consumption of fossil fuels. This has led to changes such as the melting of the polar ice caps, as well as variations in the pattern of the seasons, such as floods, droughts and so on.

You can read more about climate change on several web sites but these two are a good reference:

- + [Climate.nasa.gov/evidence](https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence)
- + why-sci.com/climate-change



Why should we be concerned about our energy use in our homes?

Because we are contributing to the overall global warming of our planet directly by using fossil fuels to heat our homes.

We are buying more and more from abroad – leaving us vulnerable to supplies becoming cut off, or prices increasing suddenly. The use of reusable energy along with insulating our homes contributes to reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and at the same time reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

We need to reduce our energy consumption and waste by reusing and recycling in our everyday life.

Understanding Energy

- Our homes account for 27% of the UK's carbon emissions
- We can be more efficient in our use of energy which also means we can save money on our fuel bills as we use less
- Energy costs are going up every year and we are paying more towards our fuel bills
- Most of us buy energy from the 'Big Six'
- If one of the Big Six puts up prices, then the rest will follow suit... so shop around to find the best ethical deal



PAINTING A ROOM

The key to successfully painting a room is all in the preparation - the more time you spend prepping the room and woodwork the better your results will be.

Let the painting start!

First, clear the room you are painting from as much furniture as possible. If you are unable to move the furniture out of the room, move it all into the center of the room and cover with a dust sheet.

Next, select a paint brush at least three inches wide to paint all the edges of the room.

Secondly pour your paint into a paint tray and paint the large areas of the room. As you work wipe away any drips before they dry.

Finally allow the paint to dry. In some cases you may need to apply a second coat of paint to the walls.

Once you have painted the walls remove any masking or painters tape and paint your woodwork. The same principles

apply in that the woodwork must be sound and well prepared in the same way you prepared your walls.

You can either use gloss or eggshell paint dependent on the finish you wish to achieve to paint your woodwork. Use a good quality brush, which will help ensure that one coat should be enough. The woodwork will take slightly longer to dry so allow at least 48 hours.

Don't forget! If you are painting the ceiling of the room, do this first using a roller with an extension pole. This is the quickest and easiest way to cover a large and difficult area to paint.

When you've finished you will have a fantastic looking room ready to move your furniture back in to and re-hang your pictures. Good work!

YOU WILL NEED:



Paint



Roller or paint pad



Paint tray



Paint brushes



Step ladder



Extension pole



Wet rags



White spirit

Top tips:

- Fill any holes, cracks or imperfections with filler and wait for it to dry, and then lightly sand the patches
- Clean the walls if they are dirty (especially in a kitchen or bathroom)
- Stir your paint before you begin, and don't paint straight from the can
- If you want to use tape, buy masking or painter's tape (it's usually blue, white or green)
- Cover your belongings and furniture with a dust sheet to avoid damage

KIDS CORNER

SUMMER SIZZLER

Q: What do you call a dog on the beach in the Summer?

A: hot dog!



- | | | | |
|----------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| AUGUST | FISHING | LOTION | SWIMMING |
| BEACH | HAT | MOSQUITO | TENT |
| BIKINI | HOT | SHORTS | VACATION |
| BOAT | ICE CREAM | SUNBURN | WATERMELON |
| CAMPING | JULY | SUNGLASSES | |
| FAN | JUNE | SUNTAN | |

Find the words in the puzzle grid above. Words may go forwards or backwards and across or down. If you think you have found all the correct words in the word search, simply cut out and send to the address below by **Friday 5th August**.

Send your word search entry to: Resident Involvement Admin, 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 **Mariah P. Forde (SE15)**, **Alisha Badchkam (SE13)** and **Leah Avis (SE22)** whose correct entries each won the Word Search in the last edition.



STRAWBERRIES & CREAM CHEESECAKE JARS

You will need:

- 200g buttery biscuit (we used Fox's Butter Crinkles)
- 200g cream cheese
- 200ml double cream
- 6 tbsp icing sugar
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 500g strawberries halved or quartered
- 8 jars with lids

How to make

1. Blitz the biscuits into crumbs in a food processor or in a bowl with the end of a rolling pin. Divide the biscuit crumbs between the jars.
2. In a large bowl, whisk the cream cheese, cream, 5 tbsp icing sugar and the vanilla extract until softly whipped. Tip half the strawberries and the remaining sugar into another bowl and crush with a fork to a purée. Ripple the purée through the cream and divide between the jars.
3. Top each cheesecake with remaining strawberries, secure the lids and chill until ready to pack up. Transport in a cooler bag.

Repairs Freephone

☎ 0800 393 338

If you need to report a repair (except gas central heating and hot water) please call the Repairs line. This number is staffed from 8am – 5pm, Mon – Fri. When phoning outside of office hours you will be forwarded to the Emergency Out-of-hours Repairs number (shown below).

General Enquiries

☎ 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/Hot Water problems

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

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

"ንክብርታዎን ከሌሎች ለገቢ ለገቢ ለገቢ!"

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 D Cripps (SE23), Nalina Johnson-Zuberi (SE28) and Gail Rigby (SE6) who each receive a £20 voucher for their correct entries.

The answers to the last Competition Time were:

1. 301
2. Universal Credit
3. Dirty Dancing or The Bourne Trilogy
4. 0
5. nearly 25 years

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

1. Where is Residents Day taking place?
2. In what year was BSW established?
3. How long should you allow for freshly painted woodwork to dry?
4. Where did the ground collapse happen?
5. What is the new maximum amount of benefits a household in London can receive?

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 5th August** 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