

Hexagon

HOME NEWS

WINTER
2018-19

OPPORTUNITIES

**JOB VACANCY:
DIGITAL
CHAMPION
MENTORS** /p10

Win
£20
Shopping
Vouchers

to spend on the High Street
(see back page
for details)

PICTURED

**Neighbourhood
Event in
Rotherhithe** /p06

**Go Digital:
Help the
Environment** /p10

**Celebration
Event:
21st February** /p13

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Cover: Shekainah Gbassah enjoying face painting at the Neighbourhood Event in Southwark (see pages 06 and 07)



Welcome...

to another edition of Home News.

Hexagon recently held its Staff Conference and I was privileged to be able to hand out a number of Staff Excellence Awards to many of our staff. This follows nominations made by many of our residents, so I just wanted to say "thank you" for your input. We don't always get it right, and when we don't, we try and learn, but where staff are providing excellence, it's great for them to be recognised with your help.

Universal Credit continues to roll out and has now reached all of the boroughs in which we work. So have a look at the article on Page 21 and if you need any further information, please don't hesitate to contact our Financial Inclusion Advisor, as invited to in the article.

Hexagon recently submitted our response to the Government's Housing Green Paper which proposes a number of interesting new ideas for the future, and you can read more about this on Pages 18 and 19. Our submission was assisted by input from members of two residents' groups, who are the Performance Review Group and the Repairs Group, so I'd like to thank them for helping us with the submission.

We will of course await the Government's response to the consultation and share the outcomes with our Home News readers.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of Home News.

Tom McCormack
Chief Executive



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

See page 10 for the benefits of going digital.

Staff Excellence Awards 2018



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 that was held in November.

We had an excellent response to requests for nominations and after consideration by a panel, it was decided that 16 members of staff would receive Staff Excellence Awards.

THANK YOU!

Recipients included the following members of staff along with the reason for their nomination:

Lisa Cole –

Leasehold Officer

“Lisa was very helpful and would go the extra mile carrying out all of her duties. She is very understanding – she is perfect to me. She’s the best!”



Elsbeth Brown – Responsive Repairs Manager - *“Excellent provision of customer service has not historically been Hexagon’s strong point. She is prompt and professional, takes ownership of the issues, follows through and actually does what she says she’ll do. She’s been a breath of fresh air.”*



Joanne Snell

– Customer Service Adviser nominated by 12 residents – a record number of nominations!

Comments included “Joanne always goes the extra mile for all enquiries. She is a credit to Hexagon. She is always so pleasant to speak to and remembers you personally. She really makes you feel she is interested and cares. Always bubbly, friendly and helpful.”

Cherina Ramsay –

Housing Support Officer *“She gave me the support, strength and understanding to be able to deal with an horrific ordeal. She went above and beyond to keep my family safe – she has been my guardian angel.”*



Jason Herbert – Senior Financial Inclusion Officer

– *“Not only does he help residents with their financial difficulties, but he presents at seminars for Managing Agents so that some of his enormous knowledge is trickled down.”*



Lionne Whitfield

– Senior Employment Adviser *“She is an absolute star and I could not have done*

if without her. Whenever I am down and on the verge of giving up she is always positive and helps me to dust myself down and carry on looking for work. Her support is the reason I am in employment at the moment.”

Pictured (from the top): Lisa Cole, Joanne Snell, Cherina Ramsay and Lionne Whitfield all receiving their awards from Kerry Heath (Development & Sales Director).

Where has my Housing Officer Gone?

In an article in Home News in July 2018 we explained that we were making some changes to Housing Services. So, what did we do, and how is it working?

For some time you would have been used to dealing with a Housing Officer. Following a restructure which we recently carried out into our Housing Services team, you will now have contact from two officers. The restructure has resulted in changes to the way the housing service is provided.

There are now two teams working within Housing Services: the Neighbourhood Services team and the Rents and Revenue team.

Our Housing Services staff are all now working in their new roles: dealing with rents and revenues or with neighbourhood services.

In our Neighbourhood Services team, we have nine Neighbourhood Officers, of which three work with our Supported Housing residents. The Neighbourhood Officers look after estate and tenancy issues and take the lead on safety. In addition we have a dedicated officer who can take the lead on difficult Anti-Social Behaviour cases and who supports our Neighbourhood Officers with other cases when required. There is also a Leasehold Officer who deals with Hexagon's fully leasehold schemes and provides support and training to the Neighbourhood Officers when they are dealing with leaseholders. A Housing Support Officer works with our more vulnerable residents. Some roles have remained the same and have not been affected by the changes within the restructure; these include – the Estates Services Monitoring Officer, and the Allocations and Administration team.

In the Rent and Revenue group, there are five Revenue Officers and a Team Leader. They work with residents to ensure that our rent and service charges are paid and to reduce our outstanding arrears levels. Housing Benefit is currently being phased out for all claimants except those over pension age and is being replaced by Universal Credit (UC). UC is paid to the claimant directly per month and it is the role of the Revenue Officer to work with

claimants to ensure that they use the money received for their housing costs to pay their rent. It is the rent that you pay which goes towards funding the repairs and maintenance to your home.

In spite of these changes resulting from the restructure, Housing Services is overall one team which works to clear priorities, namely:

- **Safety** – ensuring the safety of residents – whether spotting and dealing with fire hazards or dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour before it affects the quality of life on our estates.
- **Responsiveness** – being responsive to the needs of residents: that could mean listening to your views, acting on them or making sure we produce accurate and clear service charge information.
- **Income** – making sure that we collect the income that Hexagon needs to continue providing the repairs and the management of your homes.

If you contact Hexagon by phone or email you will find that many of your queries can be dealt with by the Customer Service Centre. If you have a rent or service charge question, the Rent and Revenue team will have someone available to speak to you. If you want to talk to your Neighbourhood Officer, they may be out on site: carrying out estate inspections or Fire Risk Assessment reviews, or showing prospective residents around properties to be re-let. In these circumstances, there will be a duty officer who will either deal with your query or ask your Neighbourhood Officer to contact you.

By bringing in the changes to the Housing Services team, it is expected that we are able to provide a more efficient housing service to our residents and to support our residents more effectively to keep rent and service charge payments up to date.



Energy Champions

Last summer a group of six Hexagon residents received training on how to provide energy saving advice to our residents. This was the first step in them becoming Energy Champions. The training was carried out by Groundwork, a leading organisation in energy advice and energy efficiency.

Fully armed with lots of information, our Energy Champions attended Hexagon's Southwark Neighbourhood Event in September (see page 6) and provided some really useful tips to a number of residents. An "energy saving" workshop was held at Mountacre Close in Sydenham in November where residents received one-to-one advice and guidance on how saving energy saves them money.

We are looking to hold more energy saving events this year, but to help you save money in the meantime there are a couple of organisations that can give you some help.

Shine

This Mayor of London supported project can provide you with a free warm and healthy home check. From energy and water bill discounts to support on clearing energy debt, Shine can help you to keep safe, warm and well this winter. With one phone call you can access over 20 services including:

- Energy advice – on how to cut your gas and electricity bill
- Energy and water bill discounts – at least £300 for the average home
- Energy Doctor in the home – visits for free energy saving measures in your home

To find out more contact Shine on:
0300 555 0195
contact@shine-london.org.uk
www.shine-london.org.uk

Thames Water

Thames Water offer a number of money saving freebies which could help you save money on your water and energy bills. These include new showerhead fittings, adaptors for your taps and devices to use less water in your toilet.

These products are free, so to find out more you can call Thames Water on Freephone **0800 316 9800** or go online to **watersavingdevices.thameswater.co.uk** to claim your free devices.

We are always looking for residents to join our Energy Champion team. If you are interested in becoming an Energy Champion, or want to find out more, please contact **getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk** for details of the next training date.

Pictured: Hexagon Chief Executive Tom McCormack (centre) in conversation with residents



Meeting Our Residents in Rotherhithe

The Southwark Neighbourhood Event was held on Saturday 29th September, at Bonding Yard Walk, Rotherhithe, SE16. The day was very sunny and warm, which provided great conditions for the outdoor event. Hexagon would like to thank all residents who attended the event, which includes coming in from as far as Camberwell (SE5) and East Dulwich (SE22)!

This family friendly event allowed residents to meet with Hexagon staff, get advice on saving energy in the home, enjoy activities and find out what's happening in the local area. Hexagon staff were available to talk with residents who wished to raise any issues that they had.



Pictured: Tasmine and Sanya designing and printing T-shirts

The main issues raised were around cyclical decoration and delays in repairs.

The feedback provided from this event was very helpful and has enabled an action plan to be created. Hexagon is now working on the issues raised and liaising with the residents who raised their concerns at the event.

Southwark Council were also in attendance to consult with residents about refurbishment proposals planned for the Bonding Yard Walk play area. The consultation was very successful and all residents questioned expressed full support for the proposals.

In addition, three Hexagon residents, trained as Energy Champions, provided tips and advice on how to save money by saving energy in the home.

Children and young people were out in force. They enjoyed football coaching skills, provided by the talented coaches of Girls United Football Association. Music mixology and T-Shirt art workshops were provided by Youth Urban Arts Forum (YUAF). Thank you

YUAF for the excellent background music that attracted some even non-Hexagon visitors to the event! Some youngsters had their faces painted with pretty designs. A few explained they were having their faces painted especially for parties that they were attending later that day. They all looked very beautiful. Hexagon would like to thank our contractor, The Bell Group, who generously sponsored the face painter for the event.

Families played giant 'Connect 4' whilst others, even family pets, enjoyed creating wonderful bubble shapes with the giant bubble-maker kit. Hexagon Director Andrew Green noted "Bubble making seems to be a hit with all ages!"

As the afternoon drew to a close, free pizza and refreshment was enjoyed by residents who stayed until the end.

Thank you to all residents for making the afternoon such a wonderful success.

Please look out for details of Hexagon's next event in Lewisham planned for spring 2019

*Pictured:
Tasmine displaying
her newly printed t-shirt*

*Right: Hanaa playing
Connect 4*

*Below: Getting to grips
with the decks*



Investing in our Communities



What do you think?

Hexagon wants to create communities that people have a real connection with and which improves the prospects and opportunities of residents living in those communities. The work that we do to help us achieve this is called Community Investment.

There are many different things we could do to help improve the prospects and opportunities for individuals, and to help create communities people want to live in.

However, we know we can't do everything that we might like to do. We have limited resources, and therefore we want to ensure that we focus on the things that you think are important. Listed below are the main areas we concentrated on over the last three years.

Money Matters



We aim to ensure that everyone who needs support to manage their money can get help.

This includes:

- Helping you manage your money and maximise your income
- One to one support for people who are experiencing money worries
- Advising you on what benefits you could be entitled to, how to claim them and what to do if you are experiencing problems
- Referring you to one of the debt advice agencies we work with for you to get specialist debt advice when needed

Jobs, Training and Skills



We aim to support as many residents as possible in developing skills and accessing training opportunities in order to get nearer to, or into, employment.

This includes:

- Providing dedicated employment support for residents who are not currently working
- Provision of one to one support for individuals looking to develop their skills and move into employment
- Work experience placements, help with CV writing, interview skills, job search, training courses or help with childcare

Digital Skills



We aim to increase the number of residents who feel confident to get online by having at least the basic digital skills.

This includes:

- Offering 'computers for beginners' courses, where residents completing the course receive a refurbished laptop and an internet dongle
- Digital Champion programme where residents can receive digital skills support on a 1-2-1 basis or as part of a small group

What else do you think we should concentrate on?

We hear lots of good ideas for things we could do during the course of our work. We wish we could do them all, but that is not possible. But we can do some. What do you think we should do? Below are some possible ideas.

Growing and Gardening



Activities here could include:

- Gardening groups
- Gardening competition
- Grow your own fruit and veg
- Workshops to learn more about gardening

Health and Wellbeing



This could be to support opportunities for social interaction for residents who are lonely or at risk of isolation. From the feedback we have received from residents, we are very aware that loneliness can have a damaging impact on people's health.



Communities and the Environment



To make long-term quality of life differences and help to build more sustainable neighbourhoods that bring direct benefit to our residents and the wider community. We know we get the best responses to the work we do when we bring it to you, rather than asking you to trek to meet us. Working in communities is a great way for us to get to know residents and for residents to learn more about the services and support on offer, and to meet each other. Activities could include:

- 'Skip Days' where we provide a skip and work with residents to help spring clean their area by disposing of bulk rubbish
- Neighbourhood events – working with other Hexagon teams to try and improve our services by listening to your feedback
- Grow your idea – working with residents to turn their ideas for making a difference in their community into a reality
- Support projects and activities designed to reduce anti-social behaviour and crime reducing initiatives

So, what do you think we should do? Why not let us know by filling in this short survey:

Do you think our current work areas are the right priorities?

| | Yes, strongly agree | Yes, agree | No, disagree | Don't know |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Money Matters | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Jobs Training and Skills | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Digital Skills | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Do you think we should concentrate on any of the following areas:

| | Yes, strongly agree | Yes, agree | No, disagree | Don't know |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Communities/Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Growing and Gardening | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Health and Wellbeing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Something else:

Get involved – you can complete the above, cut out and post to the Hexagon office or email your response to nhazelwood@hexagon.org.uk

Go Digital – Help the Environment

The world has gone digital. These days many people prefer to read their favourite magazines online, either through their computer, tablet or smartphone.

Because of this, many people are accessing magazines online or by digital versions. Perhaps you already do this yourself. Whether you already read digital magazines or would like to move over to doing this, have you considered that you could be reading this magazine online?

The latest edition of Home News, as well as the previous editions, are hosted on the Hexagon website, at www.hexagon.org.uk/residents/home-news but did you know that by choosing to access

Home News in the digital format, you would also stop receiving the paper version in the post? Instead, Hexagon would email the magazine to you. This has a number of advantages:

- **Cost saving** – the more residents who choose to opt out of receiving the magazine by post, the more that Hexagon saves on printing and postage. These savings could then be ploughed into other areas of the Hexagon service.
- **Easy accessibility** – no more wondering where did you put Home News in moments of needing to grab important information. It will be there either in your email inbox or on the Hexagon website, anytime and anywhere.

- **Kinder to the environment** – cutting back on paper magazines plays a big role in the fight against deforestation. In a world facing major climate change, every effort that we make to reduce paper waste is important.

So why not make that first step to reading Home News just in its digital format? Simply send your name, home address and email address to getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk and we'll do the rest. You can then no longer expect to receive the magazine in the post and instead you will get it in your email inbox. By taking this small step, you will be taking a big step towards reducing the effects of paper manufacturing on the environment. And this is good for us all and for the planet!

JOB VACANCY

Wanted: Digital Champion Mentors £13 per hour

Do you have a good understanding of computers and the internet, and enthusiasm to share your skills with others? We are looking for Digital Champions to support residents to improve their basic digital skills, enabling them to take advantage of the benefits of being online.

Interested?

Contact: **Remi Oshibanjo**

Phone: **020 8768 7954** or **07908 434 805** (mobile)

Email: rosibanjo@hexagon.org.uk

Closing date 30th January. This opportunity is as and when required, working up to 12 hours per week. We will be holding interviews as we receive applications, so please apply as soon as possible.



COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

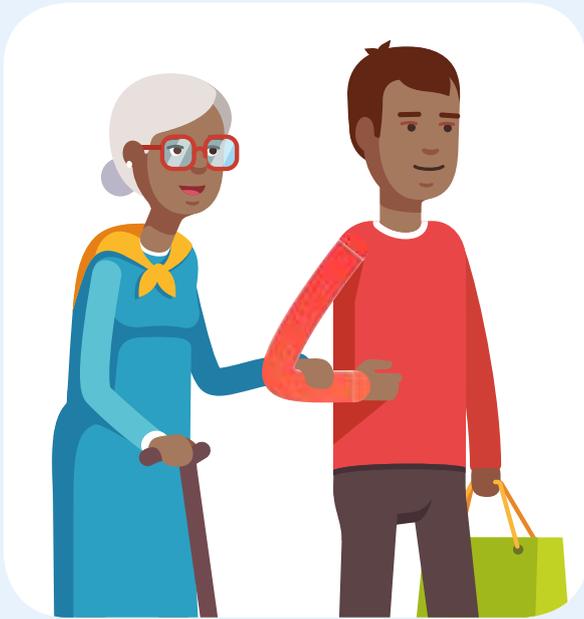
CAREERS + OPPORTUNITIES + SUPPORT

Support for All

Celebration Event

Functional Skills

In Work Support



CALLING ALL CARERS

Hexagon Carers we want to hear from you! The Community Investment Team wants to learn how we can help you to continue the invaluable work you do every day in caring for people. The Carers Trust defines a Carer as: “...**anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction, cannot cope without their support.**”

It is estimated that there are over 7 million carers in the UK. That's one for every 1 in 10 people and the number is increasing with the rising age in the general population. Around 3 in 5 people will at some point in their lives become carers. Of this number there are 376,000 young carers aged 16–25 who unwaveringly look after relatives. The highest number of people who are carers are those aged 50–64 of which a massive 20% of this age group are carers.

Caring for others is a noble and worthwhile challenge but it is difficult emotionally, physically and financially for

those who are in the care role. Some 35% of carers miss out on benefits because they didn't know they were entitled to them; 60% had used up their savings and 53% of carers had been forced to borrow money.

Luckily there are some fantastic organisations that can support carers in the UK. Carers Lewisham in Forest Hill supports over 2,500 carers. Carers Lewisham support carers in all aspects of their lives, be that emotionally (by providing counselling and support groups), financially (by providing advice on what benefits and grants they could be eligible for) and

providing access to respite care. These are but a few of the amazing services Carers Lewisham offer. So if you are a carer in the Lewisham area please do get in touch with them to register on **020 8699 8686** or via email on **info@carerslewisham.org.uk**

The Community Investment Team at Hexagon Housing wants to support its residents in every way it can. We are aware of the challenges that carers face so please get in touch with the Community Investment Team on **020 8768 7984** to discuss the ways in which we can help you.

SUPPORT FOR ALL

“Back in March 2016 I was living with my very unhappy, demotivated and often difficult 17 year old daughter. She was in her first year at Sixth Form College and was not enjoying the experience at all. It was difficult to persuade her to get out of bed and her absences from college were frequent and causing a problem. My daughter seemed to be drifting towards an undesirable path of lethargy and lack of interest in her future. I really didn’t know how I was going to get her back on track.

As a Hexagon resident the Home News magazine is delivered to me regularly and I always have a look through it. On this particular occasion one advertisement caught my eye. Hexagon was offering a service to 16 to 24 year olds to support them in gaining apprenticeships, training or employment. They were offering one to one support in writing CVs, job searches, interview skills and applications to name but a few. I showed my daughter the advert and asked her if she would be interested in following this path rather than continuing a second year at Sixth Form College. She was very positive about it and so I arranged an appointment for her to meet with Lionne Whitfield at Hexagon.

For the first appointment I went with my daughter as she was quite nervous. However, after meeting Lionne and being made to feel so welcome, I never had to accompany her again. Lionne was able, very quickly, to make my daughter feel at ease and more importantly made her feel that there was a future to look forward to. She very quickly found out my daughter’s interests and what kind of jobs she

“Hexagon, in particular Lionne, had solved what was becoming a major problem for me.”



would want to apply for. As a typical teenager my daughter did not really have clothes which were particularly suitable for interviews so Lionne arranged for her to visit Smart Works, which donates good quality clothes to unemployed women who require clothing for interviews and work.

Over the next few weeks my daughter met up with Lionne on several occasions and there were many emails between them as they worked together to produce her CV, her cover letter and develop her interview skills. Lionne provided her with information to support a successful job application and interview, including ways of presenting oneself at interview and having an appropriate email address. At one meeting with Lionne my daughter was given the opportunity to print off, address and post many applications for apprenticeship and jobs. From this my daughter acquired an apprenticeship, as a nursery assistant on her second interview, something which I would never have thought possible prior to her work with Lionne. The support continued with Lionne calling and emailing to see how things were going and to offer extras such as luncheon vouchers to help in the initial period of settling into work.

Hexagon, in particular Lionne, had solved what was becoming a major problem for me. My daughter loves her work; she has passed her probationary period, she is working towards

further qualifications and she is earning money. I now have a confident, motivated young woman living with me rather than a disgruntled teenager. A young woman who happily attends college on a Saturday and puts in study time at home in order to pass her NVQ. I would almost certainly never have thought of this solution if I hadn't seen the ad in Home News and been able to introduce my daughter to Lionne.

To me, this was a unique situation as I had never come across a housing association which offered these services. The whole approach by the Hexagon team has been highly supportive, professional and sympathetic. To me this is all above and beyond the services one would expect from a landlord. I have already recommended to some of my friends with teenagers who need support that they contact Lionne.

Overall this is an amazing service for young people which has totally transformed the life of my daughter and me. I will be forever grateful."

The author of this article is Alwyn Rees and it is with great sadness that we have to report that since writing the article Alwyn has sadly passed away. She will be missed by her family.



*In loving memory of Alwyn Rees (right)
15.04.1954 - 12.09.2018*

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT CELEBRATION EVENT

Come and be part of it!

On **Thursday 21st February**, the Community Investment team will be organising a celebration event to applaud the achievements of residents that have engaged with all the different parts of the Community Investment offer and the great things they have achieved whilst working with us. There will be a special focus on the Love London Working project and of all the residents who have been able to sustain work with the help of the programme in the last three years.

There will also be an address from Tom McCormack, Hexagon's Chief Executive, along with presentations about the various different parts of the offer such as Digital and Financial Inclusion. Also, there will be a chance for residents that are not yet engaged with any part of the service to come and find out more about the various parts of the offer and engage with the team.

If you would like to be a part of the evening, please send an email to **Remi at roshibanjo@hexagon.org.uk** and you will be put on the invitation list. Refreshments will be provided on the evening.

Date: **21st February**

Venue: **Sydenham Arts Centre, SE26 5QX**

Time: **5.30 to 9pm**

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN
IMPROVING YOUR MATHS SKILLS?

FUNCTIONAL SKILLS IN MATHS

ALL LEVELS WELCOME

ENROLMENT TAKING PLACE IN FEBRUARY

Course Details:

The aim of this course is to promote mathematical thinking and transferable skills rather than rote learning. You will benefit from the teaching of useful mathematics, for everyday life situations and the world of work. Additionally our aim is to emphasise the benefits of maths to people who have been 'turned off' by the subject. This course is suitable for students of various ages and from diverse backgrounds in terms of lifelong learning.

Teaching will be done in groups of 10-15 learners with your tutor. You will be expected to undertake independent study, and having access to a computer will be beneficial.

Duration:

This course has 2 options:

- FAST TRACK - 2 days per week for 7 weeks
- STANDARD 2 days per week for 2 weeks followed by 1 day per week for 10 weeks.

To book a place on this course
or to find out more information:

Contact: **Lionne Whitfield**
Call: **020 8768 7915**
Email: **lwhitfield@hexagon.org.uk**

Other courses available:

Teaching Assistant
Housing
Management

NEW YEAR, NEW YOU!

Happy New Year and welcome to the first Employment & Skills article for 2019. 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 and lack confidence in joining the workforce? Is the cost of childcare fees putting you off looking for work? 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.



SUPPORTING YOUR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Are you currently in work but struggling with bills and need to be maximising your income?

You are not alone as over 8 million working age adults in Britain struggle despite holding down a job. Hexagon has an answer - book in a session with Ray Quintal and get on the Ray-dar!

Ray Quintal has over thirty years' experience working with the National Careers Service and has helped thousands into work over that time. Ray is helping people get into work and is doing 1-1 sessions for residents at Hexagon on Tuesdays from 9am to 8pm.

Call Lionne on **020 8768 7915** or email on **lwhitfield@hexagon.org.uk**

Is your job getting you down but you feel you lack confidence to go for a new job?

Need help with interview technique as you haven't had one in ages?

Ray's session has received great reviews. Here's some below.

"Energy levels were good and it was very inspiring." Elaine (SE26)

"Excellent! Absolutely amazing. Very empowering." Christabel (SE21)

"Knowledgeable, was exactly what I came here for! Great tips and information." Martin (SE8)

Ray's sessions go quickly so make sure to call early to avoid disappointment.

Denny's Digs

Here we introduce the first of a regular feature giving you tips for planting and gardening

Brought up in Lewisham, married with 2 children and now living in Brockley – I love London and wouldn't want to live anywhere else. For me this is the whole world in one city!

I have been a Resident Board Member with Hexagon for the last year, and I applied for the role as I believe residents need a voice in a climate where people seem valued according to their financial assets and not who they are and what they do. I wanted to do my bit to help that voice be heard.

I've worked as a professional gardener for 20 years – plants are my passion! Gardening at work, at home or on my allotment, makes me happy...and I love sharing anything garden related!

Winter sunshine in a pot

Growing plants – whether on a window sill, a balcony, or in a garden – means a happier, healthier you.

Gardening can be a full-on workout, or a gentle exercise, or done sitting down. Whatever is your level of choice, gardening will make you feel good, help put a smile on your face, and you'll find you're starting a plan of what to do next!

So, at this dreary time of year, let's lift our spirits and get started with our first project...



Winter sunshine in a pot

1. Choose a sunny window sill. Buy or re-use pots/containers that fit neatly in the space you've chosen. (A container can be anything that will hold soil and allow water to drain away. Be creative! How about an old boot or trainer, and make some holes in the bottom?) Stand the container on saucers to catch water.

2. You'll need a small bag of general purpose compost.

3. From the supermarket, buy 1 living pot of your favourite herbs per 2 or 3 of your windowsill containers and 1 small pot of miniature daffodils (just popping through) per new container. They'll flower earlier than those in the garden.

4. Knock herbs out of their pots, and gently tease roots apart into 2 or 3 new plants. (Enjoy the scent as you slightly bruise the leaves. Think of sunny days!) Place a little compost in the bottom of each new container, pop the herbs in towards the back so that the soil is at the same level in the new container as they were in their pots.

5. Knock out small daffodil pots and place gently in front of the herbs in each container, then fill in the spaces with compost. Give each container a little knock to settle in the compost, gently pushing in the soil at the edges. Water and keep moist, but do not kill with kindness!

Now, as needed, clip the top leaves of herbs to use fresh in cooking. This will allow the plants to grow more bushy, and give you fresh herbs for many weeks. For the scent of summer, brush your hand over your growing herbs to release their pungent scent every time you're near them. Your herbs can also be used in tea, cakes or added to bath water.

As the daffodils flower, your room will burst with sunshine yellow, or 'winter sunshine in a pot'. It gives you the scent and colour of summer when we all need it the most!

Once your daffodils have finished, they can be replanted into the garden to grow again. Your containers can then be replanted with herb plants and a flowering plant appropriate to the season, or why not grow your herbs from seed? Starting in spring, most herbs are very easy to grow on a sunny windowsill (and seeds are much cheaper than plants).

Next time... pizza in a pot

Start planning for this now by sowing tomato seeds, on or around Valentine's Day, in a propagator in a sunny spot. After a month or so, sow basil seeds in a warm sunny spot indoors. Choose a small cherry tomato variety if using a small container, hanging basket or window box. These will taste like gorgeous sweets, but you won't need to go to the dentist!

Look out for the next issue of Home News where we'll talk about what to do with them.

by Denny Senner



Social Housing Green Paper

On 14th August, the Government issued a Housing Green Paper.

It has been produced partly as a response to the tragedy at Grenfell Tower a year earlier and in that context we thought it might be interesting to outline what it's all about and what it might mean for Hexagon's residents.

The context is that shortly after Grenfell an inquiry was set up. The Prime Minister asked the then Housing Minister, Alok Sharma MP, to travel around the country speaking to tenants to find out about their concerns. This was partly in the context of the residents in Grenfell Tower saying that their voices and concerns over safety matters had been ignored by their landlord.

We have had two Housing Ministers since then, but it's fair to say that the Government's focus on this topic remains committed. The Green Paper is a consultation paper and contains 48 questions. The deadline for responding was 6th November. Hexagon provided its response with input from residents on our scrutiny groups. A copy of the Hexagon response can be found on our website at www.hexagon.org.uk/housing-green-paper-hexagons-response

The Green Paper has 5 chapters:

- **Chapter 1** is all about how we can ensure homes are safe. This chapter is clearly informed by Grenfell. The central idea is about Housing Associations working with residents on this area more closely. This is a very important area as the safety of our residents is paramount and we will want to ensure we are doing all we can to ensure their safety. We would also support a review of the now historic "decent homes" standard.
- **Chapter 2** proposes some improvements to complaint resolution. There are currently long waiting times for complaints to be heard by the Housing Ombudsman. Clearly resolving residents' complaints quickly is a priority. In that context we will also reflect on how we can speed up complaints within Hexagon as this is an important area.
- **Chapter 3** is really the heart of the consultation document. It is called 'Empowering Residents and Strengthening the Regulator'. The proposals here include:
 - The introduction of standard performance measures (around repairs, maintaining safe buildings, complaint handling, engagement with residents, neighbourhood management and tackling anti social behaviour).
 - A stronger role for the regulator over performance and giving them more teeth to intervene.
- **Chapter 4** is all about tackling stigma around social housing. Many tenants across the country told the Minister that they felt they were being treated as "benefit scroungers" and were being "demonised". Hexagon would support Government measures that help tackle the stigma our residents face.
- **Chapter 5** is about explaining supply and new homes. Tackling the housing crisis is clearly an urgent priority and we have added our voice to others encouraging the Government in doing this.



In conclusion, the Green Paper does propose some big changes. Safety in homes will take centre stage as will quality. Tenants will be empowered to ensure that their complaints are dealt with quickly. The social housing regulator will have more teeth to deal with housing associations who are not delivering on their service promises to residents. Those who don't deliver good services may find themselves without funding for new build homes.

It is worth remembering that at the moment this is simply a consultation paper so we won't know exactly what the new proposals look like until the government have considered the results of the consultation and reported back. We don't expect any immediate changes, but we do think this Green Paper signals a fundamental change in direction and one that will definitely impact on the way that Hexagon operates in the future.

SUB-LETTING

Tenancy Fraud is a Crime

There is a serious housing shortage in London and we want to make sure that our homes are lived in by those who need them most and by those they are intended for. Sadly, there are people who try to exploit the situation by sub-letting their homes for profit or by getting a tenancy through deception. This is known as tenancy fraud.

Fraud is a criminal act. If a Hexagon tenant sub-lets the whole of their home, even if that is to a family member without profit, it can be a criminal offence that attracts a custodial sentence under the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013 and the Fraud Act 2006. Hexagon can also ask the courts to order the tenant to pay back the unlawful profits they have made.

If someone withholds a fact to a social landlord, or tells a lie in order to be granted a tenancy or to be transferred to a larger property, then they are misrepresenting facts and this is a criminal offence which can lead to a prison sentence. It can also be an offence if another person misrepresents facts on behalf of the tenant even if they didn't ask them to.

Hexagon takes the fight against tenancy fraud very seriously. We are working successfully in partnership with local authorities who assist us in detecting and prosecuting tenancy fraud.

If you suspect that a Hexagon property is not occupied by the legal tenant, you can contact us in confidence either by phone on **020 8778 6699** or by email to **TenancyFraud@hexagon.org.uk**

You can also report any social housing tenancy fraud on the Tenancy Fraud Forum website **www.tenancyfraudforum.org.uk/report-tenancy-fraud**

Introducing our Housing Support Officer

Cherina Ramsey introduces her new role with the Housing Services Team, that of Housing Support Officer.

“

The Housing Support Officer is a new role at Hexagon. It was created to ensure that vulnerable residents or households have the appropriate support in place, where needed, to help sustain their tenancies.

One aspect of this new role is to identify vulnerable residents who have complex support needs. Once these needs have been assessed, referrals are made to various services for specialist advice and support. The Housing Support Officer post was created 6 months ago, and in that time I have worked with a vast amount of residents with individual needs. The needs can range from those who have sensory impairments e.g. sight deficiency, to victims of domestic abuse, to hoarders and those with mental health needs to name a few. My work involves liaising with partner agencies to provide tailored support to households and this has helped reduce the risk of rent arrears increasing and from evictions taking place.

The way that I approach my role is to have an understanding ear and a non-biased voice. Due of the sensitivity of most cases, I always ensure that a high standard of confidentiality is employed when sharing information with partner agencies.

If you find that you are struggling to maintain your tenancy please speak to a member of the Housing Services Team who will be able to assist in making a referral for the appropriate support. We will be happy to assist.

”



Universal Credit Latest News

The Government's roll out of Universal Credit has now reached all areas that Hexagon serves. Find out more about how this benefit will affect you.

Universal Credit is a single benefit that will eventually replace Income Support, Employment Support Allowance (income based), Jobseekers Allowance (income based), Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit and Housing Benefit (for working age residents). Eventually, all claims for these benefits will end, with Universal Credit replacing them. Universal Credit only applies to people of working age, so if you are of pension age, you are not affected by Universal Credit.

Because of the changes, most working age residents will not be able to make new claims for the benefits mentioned above that are being replaced. If you need to make a claim for any of those benefits, you will usually need to claim Universal Credit instead. Remember that in Universal Credit, all of your benefits (including your housing costs) will be paid as a single monthly payment. This means that you will need to make arrangements with us to pay your rent if you move to Universal Credit, because your housing costs will be paid directly to you for you to then pay us.

You should always get independent advice before claiming Universal Credit. This is because some things that might appear to need a new claim can actually be dealt with by making changes to an existing claim, and you may be better off doing this than claiming Universal Credit. This is particularly true if you receive a "disability premium" in your current benefit, and people who get such premiums should always seek advice

The information in this article is for general information only, and should not be considered advice about your own circumstances. Always seek advice if you are unsure of what action is best for you.

before claiming Universal Credit as people in this category are particularly likely to be worse off under Universal Credit. Indeed from January 2019, residents receiving the severe disability premium will not need to claim Universal Credit because of this.

The last budget from the government also announced a number of changes to how the detail of Universal Credit will work. Most of these changes are in fact good news for residents, and are scheduled to be phased in gradually over the next 18-24 months. The first change is the removal of restrictions on the ability of 18-21 year olds to claim Housing Benefit, and this took effect in December 2018.

If you need any help or information regarding Universal Credit, please don't hesitate to contact our Financial Inclusion Adviser on 0208 768 7925



Condensation

one of the most common causes of damp in residential properties.

What is condensation?

Condensation is moisture caused by everyday living activities e.g. breathing or cooking. The moisture is taken up by the warm atmosphere of your home. When your home cools down, the moisture rests on cold surfaces, such as windows and walls.

What are the causes?

When warm moist air comes into contact with either a surface or air that is colder than it is, the moisture is released causing condensation to form, quickly followed by mould.

Day-to-day activities such as cooking, washing and drying clothes, heating and even breathing all contribute to the moisture in the air.

How do I know I may have a condensation problem?

An obvious symptom is water streaming down the inside of windows, particularly bedroom windows in the morning. Another sign is mould growing on walls and ceilings; underneath a bay window, behind the television, under a bed or behind wardrobes and furniture. This mould growth can be virtually any colour, with the most common being black.

How can you cut down condensation in your home?

There are a few basic ways to control the problem of condensation:

- Try not to dry clothes in your home – if you do, dry them in your bathroom with your extractor fan on and the window or trickle vent open.
- Do not put wet clothes on radiators.
- When cooking, use extractor fans and keep the kitchen door closed. Use lids on pans especially when boiling.
- When bathing or washing keep the bathroom door closed and switch on the extractor fan. If there is a lot of water vapour then open the window.
- Keep furniture, such as beds and wardrobes etc. clear of the room walls in order for the air to circulate.
- Keep your home warm.
- Open any air vents in the windows or walls.

While we sleep, we produce about a litre of water vapour, so it really helps if you leave your window vents open or if you don't have a vent then leave your windows slightly open at night.

If you follow these basic controls, the problems of condensation should be significantly reduced, if not ceased altogether.

Kids Corner

Chocolate Microwave Mug Cake

- 4 tbsp self-raising flour
- 4 tbsp caster sugar
- 2 tbsp cocoa powder
- 1 egg
- 3 tbsp milk
- 2 tbsp chocolate chips (optional)
- 1 large mug (or 2 ordinary size mugs)



Caution! 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
2. Add the flour, sugar and cocoa powder to the mug and mix
3. Add the egg and mix
4. Add all the other ingredients (apart from the chocolate chips if you are planning to use them) and mix until smooth
5. Add any optional extras: chocolate chips/nuts/raisins/chopped banana/peanut butter and mix well
6. 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
7. Watch it rise and check it doesn't overflow
8. Allow to cool then serve - you can eat it straight out of the mug or tip it onto a plate

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Winter Word Search

- Blizzard
- Boots
- Chilly
- Cold
- Fireplace
- Frosty
- Frozen
- Giving
- Gloves
- Hat
- Holidays
- Hot chocolate
- Ice
- Iceskate
- Pinetree
- Scarf
- Snow
- Snowball
- Snowflake
- Snowman
- Snowsuit
- Wind
- Winter

Find the words in the puzzle grid above. Words may go across, diagonally and down. Once you have found all the words, please send your answer with your name and address to:

**Resident Involvement,
Hexagon Housing Association
130-136 Sydenham Road,
London SE26 5JY**

Entries must be received by **Friday 1st February**. Three correct entries will be drawn at random. Each will receive a £10 Love2Shop voucher.

Congratulations to **Holly-Ann Githendu** (SE1), **Tony Odukoya** (SE1), and **Suse Ferner** (CRO) who each won the Kids Corner competition in the last issue!

Winter Warmers

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| Where does a Polar Bear keep their money? In a Snowbank | What did Frosty call his cow? Eskimoo | How does an Eskimo stick her house together? With igloo |
|---|---|---|

Competition Time



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

1. How many carers, aged between 16-25, are there estimated to be?
2. Which chapter is the heart of the Social Housing Green Paper?
3. Which event did the Energy Champions attend?
4. How many areas did Community Investment concentrate on over the last 3 years?
5. Name the two teams which make up the overall Housing Services team

Congratulations to our last edition's winners:

Mrs J Calverley (SE23), Christine Matthews (SE26) and Ada Phu (SE13) who each receive a £20 voucher for their correct entries for the last Competition Time.

The answers for the previous edition were:

1. Jack Baxter
2. Portable Digital Assistant
3. Neighbourhood Services Officer
4. Dame Judith Hackitt
5. Performance Review Group

How to enter?

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 1st February 2019** 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.

Ways you can contact us

Freephone

☎ 0800 393 338

Landline

☎ 020 8778 6699

- Option 1 for all gas queries – your call will be automatically transferred to our Gas contractors
- Option 2 for all repairs related queries
- Option 3 for tenancy and rent queries
- Option 4 for general enquiries

Gas Central Heating Contractor

☎ 0800 206 1367 (24 hours, 7 days a week)

Emergency Out-of-hours Repairs

☎ 020 3701 3518

Other ways to contact us

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

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

🖱 www.hexagon.org.uk

📱 Text: 07537 400 527

✉ 130-136 Sydenham Road,
London SE26 5JY, UK

Translate!

Chinese
永遠樂於翻譯！

Eritrean
ግዴታ ብድርጅት ን ህጻናት ን ህጻናት ን ህጻናት

French
Toujours heureux de traduire!

Portuguese
Sempre feliz a traduzir!

Vietnamese
Luôn luôn vui lòng phiên dịch!

Urdu

ترجمے کے لیے ہر دم تیار

Large print

If you would like this edition of Home News in **large print or braille**, please contact Hexagon.

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