

WINTER 2019/2020

HOME NEWS

Hexagon



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COMMENTS TO THE EDITOR

Resident feedback on the Autumn 2019 edition of Home News

"I'd like to say that I was impressed with your editing of my piece about the training courses. It retained my style and 'voice', so thank you." [D. Parke \(SE19\)](#)

"First of all to Adrian the new editor... Wow! Overall and first impressions were of a job very well done. The layout of text, colours and images (fully focused on residents) filled each page evenly and was carefully thought out. The messages on each page were very interesting and engaging - connecting with residents more directly than the earlier Home News magazines. Personally, I enjoyed reading each page because it was easy to read." [S. Muwanga \(SE13\)](#)

"I loved the continuation of the green themes and also all the information about recycling - for example glass becoming a rare commodity due to the building trade surprised me!!! I loved the new hexa-cubes highlighting facts, like that methane is 25 X more problematic than CO2 - I fact checked this too. Well done!! So far so good!" [A. Ingram \(SE4\)](#)

"I like the gold Hexagon's that are now a feature to advertise any competitions, and that there are now more competitions for resident engagement." [S. Nurse \(DA17\)](#)

If you would like to make a comment about Home News please send your response to homenews@hexagon.org.uk. You can also use this email to register for a copy coming direct to your phone instead of the traditional paper edition.

WELCOME...

TO ANOTHER EDITION OF HOME NEWS

Hexagon's Board works very hard to ensure that our services to residents stay on a continuous improvement trajectory. They recently met to consider some of the most important issues facing us all in the future and these are outlined on Page 3.

I recently had the pleasure of giving out some Staff Excellence Awards at our recent annual Staff Conference, so I just wanted to say 'thank you' to those residents who took the time out to nominate some of our staff for the awards.

Hexagon is always at its best when residents are involved in helping us improve our services and some of the ways we do this are outlined on Pages 12 and 13. If you are interested, please see our Resident Involvement Team to get involved.

Tom McCormack, Chief Executive



UNDER SCRUTINY

PRIORITIES FOR THE HEXAGON BOARD

Once a year, Hexagon's Board hold an Away-Day to consider the future direction of Hexagon. In that context, I thought it would be useful to summarise some of the key issues that emerged from their discussions.

First, the Board is very keen that we re-double our efforts to improve resident satisfaction, particularly with our repairs service. We are beginning to see some real improvements, but this needs to be embedded over time, as we know this is the key service by which Hexagon's residents judge our performance.

Following the tragedy at Grenfell Tower, we have put a lot of additional resources into Fire Safety and this trend will continue. Nothing can be more important than ensuring our residents are safe in their homes.

Hexagon tries to minimise the harm that our work does to the environment and the Board wants to ensure that we continue with our focus on reducing carbon emissions. To take just one specific example, we think the climate emergency we all now face will result in us needing to move away from fossil fuel boilers

over time, so we need to re-double our efforts to introduce practical alternatives.

The Board is also very keen to ensure we are doing all that we can to support residents moving onto Universal Credit (UC) - both to stop the current increase in rent arrears of those moving onto UC, and to ensure that all residents can sustain their tenancies.

The Board also wants to review our resident engagement strategy, to ensure that we are doing all that we can to listen to our residents and ensure that your voice is heard. We see this as central to our efforts to deliver continuous improvements in the way we work, so we will be considering all of our methods of communications with you, including some digital options, such as a new resident on-line portal.

Tom McCormack, Chief Executive, Hexagon Housing Association

ARE YOU USING YOUR BIN STORE CORRECTLY?

Did you know? Leaving large items in communal bin stores can leave you and your neighbours out of pocket.

Removing household items and refuse bags that are left on the floor in bin communal stores is a big issue. In some cases, they can prevent the bins being emptied by the council. A special refuse clearance can cost around £300-£500 and this is charged to all residents in the block.

It's not only rubbish removal that adds to the costs. If the recycling bins are contaminated with general household waste, the council will refuse to empty them. If we have to arrange for a contractor to empty the bins, the cost will be added to the service charges.

As this is such a growing problem, Hexagon have started a programme of random monitoring of communal bin stores. We will recharge anyone who is misusing the refuse facilities.

Hexagon knows that the majority of residents deal with their waste responsibly.

For the minority who don't – please begin now to help your neighbours and the environment by using the appropriate bins for your waste, and take large items to the local recycling centre rather than the bin store.

Local authorities will remove white goods and other large household items – check your council's website for details and charges. You can also check your local council's website if you are unsure which items are recyclable and which are general waste or visit www.recyclenow.com



Large items such as defunct white goods and mattresses, and refuse bags left on the floor in bin communal stores, cause an eyesore that will leave you and your neighbours out of pocket. A refuse clearance can cost around £300-£500 and this is charged to all residents.

When waste is not binned correctly, it can spread to contaminate the local environment for all residents.



REVENUES TEAM PLEDGE TO REDUCE PAPER

With our human impact on the environment at the forefront of everyone's mind, the Revenues Team here at Hexagon are mindful about how we can contribute our bit to reduce our environmental footprint.

One of the ways in which we can achieve this is for the Revenue Team to use the technology available to us when communicating with our residents, to ultimately reduce the amount of paper we use. As some of you may have already noticed, when you make a payment via telephone and ask for a receipt or request a rent statement, your Revenue Officers will ask if these can be emailed to you in the first instance to try and reduce our paper usage. With

smartphone usage on the increase emailing documents is a quicker, more efficient way, to engage and get this information to you, whilst doing our bit to save the planet. Therefore can we please ask, where possible, for your support in helping us to reduce our paper usage by sending emails rather than paper based rent statements or receipts. Thank you.

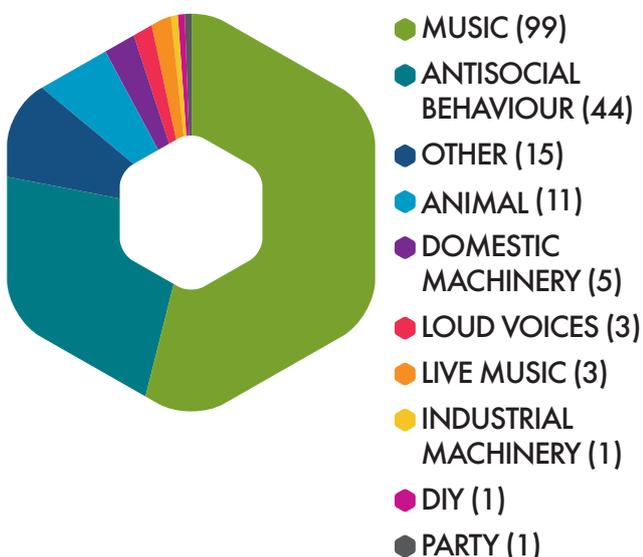
The Hexagon Revenues Team

CORRECTION TO NOISE NUISANCE ARTICLE

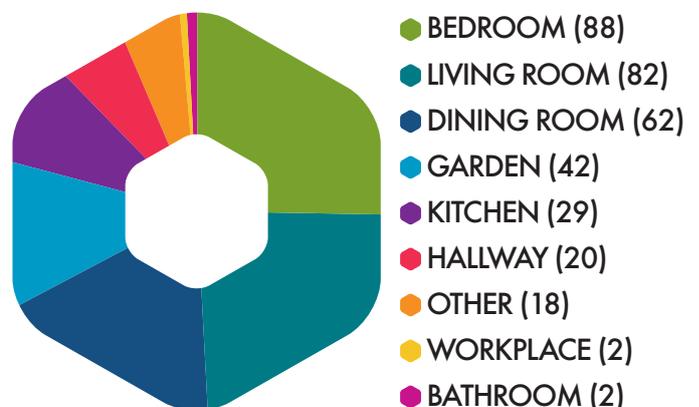
On page 15 of the Autumn Home News, 2019

The article should have stated that whenever Hexagon residents request our help with this issue, please report in the first instance to Hexagon. We can then supply you with the appropriate Noise Nuisance app, as we are unable to use other Noise Monitors apart from the one we supply.

REPORTS PER NOISE SOURCE



REPORTS PER RECORDING LOCATION



Recent data concerning the types of noise experienced, and where it was recorded.

NEW YEAR – NEW FINANCIAL YOU?

So once again, another new year is upon us - with the usual raft of resolutions. Whether it's getting more active, giving up smoking, or going on a diet, many new year's resolutions involve taking better care of ourselves.

THESE ARE ALL WORTHWHILE AIMS. BUT WHAT ABOUT MAKING SOME NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS AROUND YOUR MONEY?

Small financial changes can make a big difference. Putting a little bit of money aside regularly – even £2 per week – will give you £100 by the end of the year. This can make a big difference to the stress of money issues around Christmas time. But finding extra money to put aside can be difficult, so a good way to tackle this can be a resolution to look into ways of reducing your outgoings.

Giving up that daily take away coffee could save you over £500 by the end of the year! But reducing outgoings doesn't have to involve giving things up. It's also about looking at ways of getting the same amount for less. And here, a little bit of time invested now can make a big difference by the end of the year. It is often possible to save hundreds of pounds per year, just by reviewing the services you receive.

- **Switching mobile phone tariff can save significant sums if you are out of contract. If you have a phone you are happy with, some providers have SIM only deals that are much cheaper than packages bundled with a new phone. But be sure to check that your phone will work with the new provider before switching!**
- **Switching energy providers can offer savings of up to £300 per year, although the exact savings will depend on your household and energy use**
- **Shopping around for the best landline and broadband package deals can often save you over £100 per year**
- **Other savings can also crop up over the year. A good example is insurance. Shopping around at renewal can save you significant sums compared to just renewing your existing policies**
- **Review your direct debits. Are you still paying for things that you no longer use? Cancelling such payments (if there are no penalties for doing so) offers another saving**



Every penny counts. What ways can you save yourself some pennies? Hexagon's Welfare Fund (see Page 7) is one option for those in desperate need, however it is NOT usually the first port of call as there are criteria to meet plus the fund is very small and therefore very competitive. Why not try some of our suggestions about ways to build a new financial you in 2020?

For more information contact our Community Investment Team. Email cit@hexagon.org.uk
Tel 020 8768 7925

The suggestions in this article are for information purposes only. They should not be considered as advice, and you are responsible for any decisions that you take around your money. If in doubt, seek independent advice before making any financial decision.

MY JOURNEY BACK INTO EMPLOYMENT

Hi there. My name is Etulan. In 2018 I read in Home News about how Hexagon's Community Investment Team and Love London Working help residents to find paid employment, including help with writing CVs and preparing residents for interviews.

After four years at home looking after my young children, my lack of success in job applications was a blow to my confidence. I had never imagined that finding paid employment would be so difficult. My applications always received responses saying, "Thank you for applying but unfortunately..."

I contacted Hexagon and joined some meetings (often with my youngest daughter) at the Hexagon Office. At these sessions organised by the Community Investment Team I met other job seekers and we worked on introducing ourselves and talking about our goals. I also attended networking events for women returning to work.

Hexagon's Community Investment Team helped me tailor my CV and sent me jobs which they considered were within my skill set. I felt no pressure to apply for roles I did not like.

Previously I had just done a cover letter and stated I had the skills. Hexagon taught me how to make stronger job applications by demonstrating I had the skills outlined in the person specification. This made all the difference and I started being invited to interviews.

In November 2018, there was a vacancy for a short-term contract with an organisation where I had been volunteering. Hexagon encouraged me to apply, reviewed my application before I sent it off, and even gave me a mock interview to test my interview skills. As a result my application was successful and I was offered the job. The Community Investment Team then cushioned the initial cost of going back to work, helping me meet childcare costs and providing vouchers for my work clothes and lunch.

For anyone out there who is looking for a job, I would encourage you to contact the team at Hexagon. They are so helpful and will point you in the right direction.

WELFARE HARDSHIP FUND

Hexagon strives to do our best to help residents through tough financial times.

To this end we offer a Welfare/Hardship Fund to vulnerable tenants. For applications to be approved, applicants will normally need to demonstrate at least two of the following three things:

1. That they have sought assistance elsewhere and been turned down
2. That there is no ability to obtain the support required through any statutory route
3. That the urgent need for particular support means that the timescales of other funders are not suitable in this instance (in exceptional circumstances, this ground alone may be sufficient to support an application)

Meeting the above does not guarantee acceptance – but is a pre-requisite for the consideration of applications. This grant is very small and we need to be sure that the criteria above is being followed.

The designated Hexagon officer will have the ability to approve awards of up to £500 independently (unless they are the person supporting the application). Awards above this level will also need the approval of the Neighbourhood Services Manager

If you would like more information, please contact your Neighbourhood Services Officer on 020 8778 6699.

HELPING ROUGH SLEEPERS

Home News Editor Adrian Beckingham talked to Neighbourhood Team Leader Peter O'Neill to find out more about what Hexagon is doing to help our city's homeless people.

Recent government figures show a 28% increase in the number of people sleeping rough on the streets of London. Thamesreach, a charity working with homeless people, report that over 8,850 people were sleeping rough in London last year. The number of homeless people dying on the streets has also increased by over 22% since 2017 (Office for National Statistics).

Hexagon have a pool of 30 properties available as part of the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI). Under the RSI scheme, the accommodation is initially for two years and may be extended to four years. Many of these people have been sleeping rough a long time, and can need help to adjust to living indoors. Hexagon's Love London Working team helps these residents develop skills for a more autonomous life, such as computer training and preparing for job interviews.



YOUNG HOMELESS PEOPLE

Hexagon also has some properties for young people, some of whom have been homeless. These young people are mostly aged 16 - 24 years. Two to four young people usually share each flat. Part of their agreement is that they actively engage with a designated support worker, to help them with issues like sorting out their benefits, paying bills, finding training, accessing college or help to get a job.

AGENCY MANAGED SCHEMES

As well as its directly managed properties, Hexagon provides accommodation in a number of hostels and other supported accommodation which are managed by other organisations on our behalf. Residents in these properties may have complex needs including issues with addiction or mental health needs and they can receive intensive specialist support in their accommodation.

If you are concerned about how to help a homeless person in your area, contact Streetlink via their website www.streetlink.org.uk or on 0300 500 0914. This is the first step you can take to ensure rough sleepers in your area are connected to the local services and support available to them. ●

Who would want to live on the streets? Homelessness can come about through a wide variety of reasons. Hexagon presently provide specific accommodation for 13 young people who were previously homeless - as part of their occupancy we facilitate two year person-centred training programmes to help them develop more autonomous lives.

RECOVERY DAY

Recovery month in September is an international movement to raise awareness that there are many paths to recovery for those who suffer from mental health and/or substance misuse.

Social stigma should be challenged and any pathway to recovery is to be celebrated. Newstead Road celebrated by having a barbeque day where people could get together. There was a real sense of community spirit where everyone enjoyed a variety of food, some of it made by residents. Music was played by the resident DJ, and there was a group painting activity on the theme of recovery that all could contribute to. Initially people left their handprints on the painting and then it began to become an expression of words associated with recovery – words such as hope, freedom, love, forgiveness, inspiration and peace. The day continued with a Storyteller to ignite imaginations and encourage dreams and the day ended with a resident, PS, giving a talk on the theme – ‘What does recovery mean to you?’ The honest presentation by PS which focused on how he has recovered was well received and it started a group discussion where people began to share their own perceptions... the main message being that people do recover and this is to be recognised, celebrated and supported! ●



Residents at Newstead Road celebrated Recovery Day with activities including cooking and art.



Hexagon's own storyteller The Man from Story Mountain inspired imaginations

STAFF EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2019

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

We had an excellent response to requests for nominations and received 44 nominations for 31 members of staff. After consideration by a panel, it was decided that 26 members of staff would receive Staff Excellence Awards. Recipients included the following members of staff:

Samson Marley – Support Officer

“Samson always puts the residents at the heart of his work and always works with a smile. He never seems to be in a hurry to end the conversation with residents, and appears to really enjoy engaging with all residents.”

Elsbeth Brown – Responsive Repairs Manager

“Elsbeth went above and beyond to rectify all the issues I raised and kept me informed every step of the way. She emailed me outside of office hours and also met with me personally to discuss my concerns and listened with empathy. I really appreciate all the effort she went through to help me.”

Errol Grant – Project Surveyor

“I feel he always gives you his full attention and does his best to resolve a problem or gives you the information to help.”

Lloyd Morgan – Project Surveyor

“Lloyd always provides excellent customer service by ensuring the resident is heard and understood at the first point of contact.”

Joanne Snell – Customer Service Adviser

“Always extremely helpful. I struggle using the phone and would rather talk face to face. However this is not always possible. Joanne can tell when I am getting stressed and does the talking for me.”

Fiona Jones – Housing Support Officer

“Fiona was very helpful when I questioned how much benefits I was actually entitled to.”

The **Newstead Road Team** also received Awards with an amazing 20 nominations across the team of 9 staff. ●



Elsbeth Brown, Responsive Repairs Manager receiving her Staff Excellence Award from Phil Newsam, Finance & IT Director

Samson Marley, Support Officer, Kirkwood Road, receiving his Staff Excellence Award from Phil Newsam, Hexagon's Finance & IT Director



UNDER SCRUTINY: ESTATE GRADINGS

ESTATE GRADING RESULTS

In September 2019 a small group of residents completed the annual round of this successful project.

The Estate Grading project has been running for seven years, and involves residents visiting and inspecting our estates to grade them Gold, Silver or Bronze against set criteria. Estates for inspection are selected by the Resident Involvement Team to enable complete impartiality

When grading an estate, residents look at shared areas such as:

- Communal gardens
- Cleaning standards
- Communal repairs
- Noticeboards (Upkeep and relevance of information posted)

They also give a view on the general appearance and upkeep of the estate.

The grading team make recommendations for improvements, which form an action plan for Hexagon to resolve issues within a specified timescale. The plan is monitored to ensure that correct action is taken. The collaborative work between residents, the Housing Services team and the Repairs teams at Hexagon has seen the standard of Hexagon estates improve from mainly silver and bronze estates to all silver and gold estates. This pattern was consistent again as 10 estates scored a gold grade and 7 silver.

This is a great achievement for everyone involved, and an excellent example of how Resident Involvement activities can lead to improvement.

This project will continue every year, and will help to make Hexagon estates a better place to live. We thank our panel members for their valued critique and contributions. Results are also published on the Hexagon website. ●

The results following the recent round of Estate Grading are as follows:

Grade Estate

Gold	Alexander Evans Mews SE23
Gold	Biggin Hill SE19
Gold	Bramble Close CRO
Gold	Culling Road DA17
Gold	Frederick Court DA17
Gold	Friendly Street SE8
Gold	Michel Walk SE18
Gold	Nihil Place CRO
Gold	Storer Drive DA16
Gold	Vidler House - Campbell Road CRO
Silver	Brickfield Cottages SE18
Silver	Foxgrove Apartments / Virgo Fidelis CRO
Silver	Giblin House - Samuel Street SE18
Silver	Lyles Court DA1
Silver	Raleigh House / Mitcham Road CRO
Silver	Southport Road SE18
Silver	Waleorde Road SE17

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

“Looking back now I am surprised I was a housing association tenant for two decades before I became actively involved. With the new year upon us, why not branch out and try a new experience by involving yourself more in your housing association community? Most groups meet several times a year, reimburse £5 towards your travel costs, plus reward your effort with Love2Shop vouchers. As a social landlord Hexagon values your input. There are a host of ways in which you as a resident can get involved to help improve Hexagon’s services – take a look at the list and see what appeals to you.”

**Adrian Beckingham,
Home News Editor and
Hexagon Resident**

READERS’ PANEL

Are you interested in reading *Home News* and providing feedback? This group meets four times a year to review what you like and dislike about Hexagon’s quarterly magazine. This panel offers guidance both in design features and story ideas, helping your Home News editor and the Editorial Panel of Hexagon directors and managers to decide what to focus on in future issues of the magazine.

ANNUAL REPORT GROUP

Similar to the Readers’ Panel, except you will be part of a consultation process to decide on the content and design features of our once yearly Resident Annual Report. Here you will review the last issue and tell us how you evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, to help us make the next issue even better.

Nii Mansro Solomon (left)
and Christine Matthews at a
meeting of the Readers’ Panel



RESIDENTS' INSPECTION

Residents' Inspections are an example of scrutiny. During an Inspection, residents review in detail how well a particular service is delivered. Residents make recommendations for improvements, which are reported to directors so that action plans can be put in place and acted upon.

ESTATE GRADING

The Estate Grading team are a group of residents who visit Hexagon estates and inspect the condition of them against set standards. The group decides on a rating of Gold, Silver or Bronze based on their findings; this then leads to an action plan for improvements, which Hexagon works to deliver on. (More info on Page 11)

PERFORMANCE REVIEW GROUP

This Group is a panel of residents who meet four times a year to scrutinise the performance of the housing service. Recommendations are made to the Board on where and how improvements need to be made.

TENANTS' & RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS

These are groups of people from the local area who work together to represent the views of all residents living there. Tenants' and Residents' Associations often work to have improvements made to the area, which in turn helps to make the neighbourhood a better place to live in.

CONTACT US

To get involved or find out more about these and other activities, please email getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk or telephone 020 8778 6699 and ask for the Resident Involvement Team.

RESIDENT BOARD MEMBER

This is involvement at the highest level in Hexagon, where tenants have a place on the Board and help to decide the strategic direction of the Association. Of the 12 Board members, four are Resident Board Members. Each year one Resident Board Member stands down and an election is held to elect a resident to replace the one standing down. (More info on Page 3)

RESIDENTS' DESIGN GROUP

This group gathers residents' input into design plans for new-build Hexagon homes, and helps to identify what works well in new properties and what needs to be improved.

REPAIRS GROUP

The Repairs Group meet every three months to scrutinise, challenge and improve performance and value for money in the Responsive Repairs service on behalf of Hexagon residents. The Group focuses primarily on contractor performance.

ESTATE CHAMPIONS

Our eyes and ears, these residents volunteer to ensure repairs and other communal issues are reported to Hexagon on a regular basis. This helps to keep estates in tip-top condition.

ENERGY CHAMPIONS

These are residents who have been trained to advise on 'green' issues relating to Hexagon properties. Residents provide advice and information to other residents on the best energy usage in their homes. (More info on Page 15)

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus Groups are your chance to join other residents for one-off meetings to give your views on new policies, procedures, services or strategies that affect the service we deliver to you.

RESIDENTS ADVISORY GROUP

See Page 14 for information on this brand new group.

NEW RESIDENT POLICY GROUP UP & RUNNING

In the summer edition of Home News we told you about the new resident policy group that Hexagon is setting up and about how you could join it. The group has been set up to give the residents perspective into Hexagon's major policies and strategies to help ensure that these reflect the needs of all residents.

Over the autumn Hexagon has been busy recruiting to this new group. Following the Home News article last July:

- We had 32 residents expressing an initial interest in the new group.
- From this number, 16 residents made an application.
- All 16 residents were invited to attend an informal interview with a small panel to explain their interest in the work of the new group.
- The panel consisted of a Hexagon director, the Independent Chair and a resident.

The interviews resulted in 11 residents being invited to be part of the new group. Their first meeting in early December allowed the members to meet each other along with key staff and Board members. At that meeting the group agreed to call the new group the Residents Advisory Group.

The new group will provide another key way residents can become involved to directly influence the services that Hexagon provides. The group will meet six times over the year

ahead. One of the major strategies that the group will begin working on is Hexagon's new Corporate Plan.

Jane Eyles, Independent Chair of the new group said, **"It was so exciting to chat with each resident volunteer to see all of the amazing personal qualities that they bring to the group. Every volunteer wanted to give something back to their communities by making sure Hexagon was improving services for all. We are so grateful to residents that volunteer their time to make a difference."**

Hexagon would like to offer thanks and appreciation to our residents Chantelle Swaby (Chair of the Performance Review Group) and Denny Senner (Resident Board Member) for being part of the interview panel that recruited the new members onto the new group.

Home News will bring you regular updates about the new group's achievements. To find out more about ways in which you can get involved in influencing the service that Hexagon provides, see pages 12 & 13 or email the Resident Involvement Team at getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk



The new residents group attracted a wide range of applications. Thank you to all who showed an interest.

TOP TIPS FROM AN ENERGY CHAMPION

RESIDENT SARAH TIBBATS TALKS TO HOME NEWS about her experiences as a Hexagon Energy Champion.

"I find it extremely rewarding being an Energy Champion. I've been out to various estates and met some fantastic people!

"I realised quickly that most people do already know some of the everyday measures they can be taking to save on energy. For example not overfilling the kettle is an energy saving tip that most people know, and many already practise it every time they refill.

"Some things are however more out of people's control - e.g high energy prices eat into the household budget, and shopping around can be daunting due to fast changing tariffs and confusing contract terms. Vulnerable households are often the least likely to shop around, and older people may think this can only be done online."

MY TOP TIPS AS AN ENERGY CHAMPION

- A water-saving shower head cuts down hot water use. Using LED lightbulbs helps the environment, as does turning domestic appliances off standby.
- Larger energy and money savings are possible through proper regulation of your hot water and heating systems and in the choice of supplier you use.
- At home experiment with your main thermostat and thermostatic radiator valves, to find the best way to get them to work together. This will make you significant savings.

If you would like to find out more about being an Energy Champion with Hexagon, please call 020 8778 6699 and ask for Catherine Foxwell, or email getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk



Between 18 to 20 degrees is usually recommended as the optimum temperature at which to set your home thermostat, to conserve both energy use in your home and your financial spend on heating.

GREEN ENERGY SUPPLIERS.

Some energy suppliers now only use non-fossil fuel sources like wind, solar or wave power. There are ethical providers who now often beat mainstream companies on price, so why pay more **and** damage the planet when alternatives are available?

You can compare tariffs on green energy providers with these online tools:

- MoneySavingExpert.com (www.moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/cheap-green-energy/)
- SimplySwitch.com (www.simplyswitch.com/energy/guides/compare-green-energy/)

You can learn more about ways to get involved in our resident groups by reading the article on pages 12 & 13 or emailing to getinvolved@hexagon.org.uk

COMPETITION

Create a list of energy providers who claim to be sustainable, and state what percentage from each of them comes from a sustainable source (such as wind). One list will be chosen as the winner, and will appear in the next edition of Home News. It's author will receive a £20 Love2Shop voucher. Entries can be emailed to homenews@hexagon.org.uk, or mailed to Competitions, Resident Involvement, Hexagon Housing Association, 130 - 136 Sydenham Road, London SE26 5JY.

Entries must arrive by Friday 14th February, and contain the entrant's name and full address including postcode.

CONDENSATION

WHAT CAUSES CONDENSATION?

Condensation is caused when moisture held in warmer air meets a cold surface like a window or wall and condenses into water droplets.

WHAT DAMAGE CAN CONDENSATION CAUSE?

If condensation happens regularly, mould may start to grow. This usually appears on cold outside walls and surfaces and in places where the air does not circulate well. The moisture created can damage for example wooden window frames, paintwork, fixtures and fittings, wallpaper, clothes, and furnishings.

If you allow a constant build up of water vapour from condensation, this can lead to mould growth on cold surfaces such as walls, ceilings and window sills.



WHERE DOES CONDENSATION OCCUR?

You can often see condensation for short periods in bathrooms and kitchens because of the steamy atmosphere in these rooms. Quite frequently it appears for long periods in unheated bedrooms.

Sometimes it is in cupboards or corners of rooms where ventilation and movement of air are restricted.

WHEN DOES CONDENSATION OCCUR?

The most severe condensation usually occurs in winter because buildings are cold, and windows are opened less, so moist air cannot escape.

All houses are affected by condensation at some time. It usually occurs when a lot of moisture and steam are produced. For example:

- When cooking
- Having a bath or shower
- Washing clothes
- After a cold night when bedroom windows mist up

WHAT ARE THE MAIN CAUSES OF CONDENSATION?

- Drying clothes inside the house/flat
- Steam from cooking in the kitchen
- Steam from bathing and washing
- Lack of air circulating in the house/flat
- No ventilation (this can be made worse by too much draught proofing)
- Raising room temperatures suddenly. This can put warm air in contact with cold surfaces increasing the chances of water vapour condensing.
- Unvented tumble dryer

Photo supplied by Responsive Repairs Team

HOW CAN I CUT DOWN ON CONDENSATION?

- Keep your house/flat warm
- Open vents in windows or walls
- Keep furniture – such as beds and wardrobes – clear of walls to let air circulate
- Try not to dry clothes in your home
- Don't put wet clothes on radiators
- While we sleep, we produce about one litre of water vapour, so try to leave your bedroom windows or vents a little open at night
- When cooking, use the extractor fan and keep the kitchen door closed and lids on pans
- When bathing or showering, keep the bathroom door closed, and switch on the extractor fan

Rising damp can create a 'tide line' on walls



Photo supplied by Responsive Repairs Team

Condensation occurs when moisture held in warmer air meets a cold surface like a window or wall and condenses into water droplets.



Photo supplied by Responsive Repairs Team

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DAMP AND CONDENSATION

Damp occurs when a fault in the building's basic structure lets in water from the outside.

Penetrating damp occurs if water is coming in through the walls or roof, for example under a loose roof tile or through cracks.

Rising damp occurs if there is a problem with the damp proof course. The usual evidence of rising damp is a 'tide mark' on the walls which is usually light brown in colour.

MOULD

If you allow a constant build up of water vapour this can lead to mould growth on cold surfaces such as walls, ceilings and windowsills.

It is important to clean this mould as soon as it appears – failure to do so will allow it to spread to other areas of the house/flat. This can damage the property but also can lead to respiratory problems for the inhabitants. A mould cleaner can be bought quite cheaply from any DIY store. ●



Photo supplied by Responsive Repairs Team

SPOTTING TENANCY FRAUD

People committing tenancy fraud are breaching their tenancy agreement and are breaking the law.

Tenancy fraud can take many forms. The type of housing fraud that most people are familiar with is subletting. This is where a tenant rents out the whole of their property to another person or family member, usually for monetary gain. Falsely claiming the right to take over a tenancy when the tenant passes away, using a Hexagon property for AirBnB or other short-term lets, selling keys to someone for a lump sum payment, abandoning a property and not telling us, and false Right to Acquire applications are all forms of fraud that we regularly encounter.

Some people may see tenancy fraud as a 'victimless' crime but we take it very seriously as there aren't enough social housing homes for the people who need them. Tenancy fraud causes even longer waits for those entitled to live in social housing, including people who urgently need rehousing on Hexagon's waiting list.

Signs that someone may be committing tenancy fraud are:

- A neighbour being vague about who lives at the property or what their relationship is to those living there
- Increased anti-social behaviour at the property
- Regular changes of people occupying a Hexagon property
- A neighbour may have passed away and a friend or family member is now living at the property
- The property appears to have been abandoned

Attempting to sell the keys for a Hexagon property to someone in return for a lump sum payment is a form of tenancy fraud we regularly crack down on.



TAKING IN A LODGER

Having a lodger is allowed under the tenancy agreement and is lawful. This means you can allow someone to live in a part of your home and charge them rent. You will need to complete a form (available from Customer Services) and get it authorised by Hexagon before you formally agree to take in a lodger.

If you are in receipt of benefits you should check whether taking in a lodger will affect your claim. You can find more information here:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/housing/renting-a-home/subletting-and-lodging/lodging/taking-in-a-lodger-what-you-need-to-think-about-first/.

If you suspect a Hexagon tenant of committing housing fraud, you can report it anonymously to us at TenancyFraud@hexagon.org.uk or to the Tenancy Fraud Forum at www.tenancyfraudforum.org.uk/report-tenancy-fraud

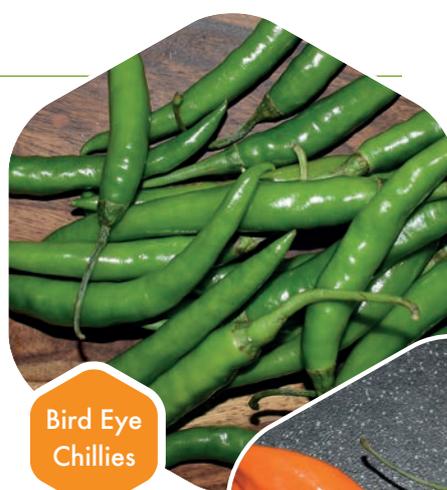
Good neighbours can help their community by watching out for signs of tenancy fraud and where necessary alerting Hexagon or the local authority.



DENNY'S DIGS

CHILL OUT WITH CHILLIES

Winter can drag us down – so remember gardening is good for you. Join me this new year in growing one of my favourites to look forward to – chilli plants.



Bird Eye Chillies



Komodo Dragon Chillies

SOWING GUIDE

1. Purchase chilli seeds.

- Chilli flavours range from spicy to citrus to chocolate and more. Consider what dishes you like to cook and eat. It can help to consult *the Scoville scale*, which lists the heat properties of all chillies.
- **If you are a window sill grower** Choose a compact bushy variety with a heat and flavour to suit what you like to cook.
- **If growing in your garden or greenhouse**, your choice will be wider.

Get planting soon because January to February is the best time to sow chillies.

2. Sow chilli seeds

- Sow in a propagator or seed tray placed in a bright warm spot (never below 15 degrees celsius).
- Add seed compost dampened with tap water and firm down level.
- The next day thinly sow your chilli seeds across the top of the compost and cover lightly with *vermiculite* or more compost. Firm down gently. Label and cover.
- After about 7-10 days little seedlings should pop through! When this happens, remove the cover during day.

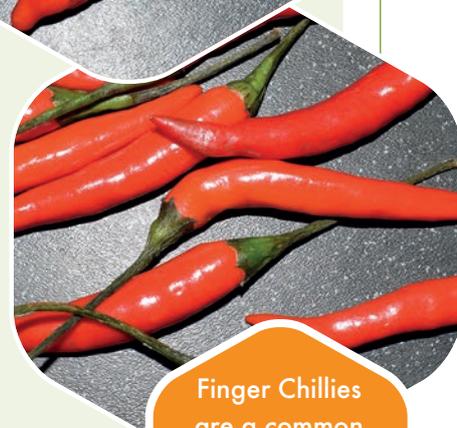
Chillies come in many varieties of flavour and heat intensity. Grow a variety that matches your taste buds!

3. Replant to final container

- When little white roots poke through the bottom of the pots, replant them to a larger container.
- Ensure all risk of frost is past if moving the container to the garden or greenhouse.

4. Final tips

- Once flowers appear, feed the plants fortnightly with a tomato fertiliser.
- Chilli fruits will follow the flowers in summer. These are ready to pick once they turn from green to the colour of your variety (red, yellow, orange or purple).



Finger Chillies are a common choice but which variety will you choose?

TRANSPLANT CHILLI SEEDLINGS

- Once large enough to handle, gently transplant the seedlings to small pots of general compost.
- If on a windowsill, turn the pots daily so your plants grow straight and bushy.

Throughout the process: Don't over water, but do water regularly! Keep the compost moist, but not wet.

LIVING WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

BY DARREN PARKE

According to the Royal National Institute of Blind People, about one in every thirty people living in the UK has a sight problem seriously impacting on their daily lives.

Born very short-sighted, I have always worn thick glasses. But by 2017 I began regularly walking into people and lampposts. I was diagnosed with glaucoma and cataracts and registered as Partially-Sighted.



The Sensory Impairment Team at Croydon Council assessed my home for adaptations to help me remain independent and safe.

I underwent mobility training, learning how to use a guide cane correctly to both keep myself safe and to inform other pedestrians that I am visually impaired. I was taken along routes I walk regularly to learn how to navigate them. Learning to identify different types of paving and how to cross them safely proved invaluable. The tactile cone on pedestrian crossings which spins when the 'green man' is illuminated proved a big help, as did guidance on using public transport for a visually impaired person.

But when people in my life failed to adapt to me as a visually impaired person, frustration at my deteriorating eyesight turned into depression.

By 2016 I was registered Severely Sight Impaired (SSI or what they used to call 'blind'). This new term was encouraging to me. I felt it would be more appropriate and understandable. When people hear the word 'blind', they think that person cannot see a thing - whereas only about 1% of people registered as 'blind' have 0% sight.

In the summer of 2018 - with the help of Croydon Vision, a charity that supports visually impaired people - I was offered a Hexagon flat. I became a Hexagon resident with high hopes of beginning my independent life as a visually impaired person.

Since my sight loss I've come to realise how very visual the world is, and how frustrating this is when you suffer from visual impairment.

Often people tell me that they couldn't tell I was blind if it wasn't for my cane. Admittedly, I've had rubbish eyes all my life so sub-consciously

I've found ways to cope. I have 10% vision in my left eye and 20% in my right. Everything is blurry to me in varying degrees, so I try to deduce shapes and patterns. It is very mentally draining.

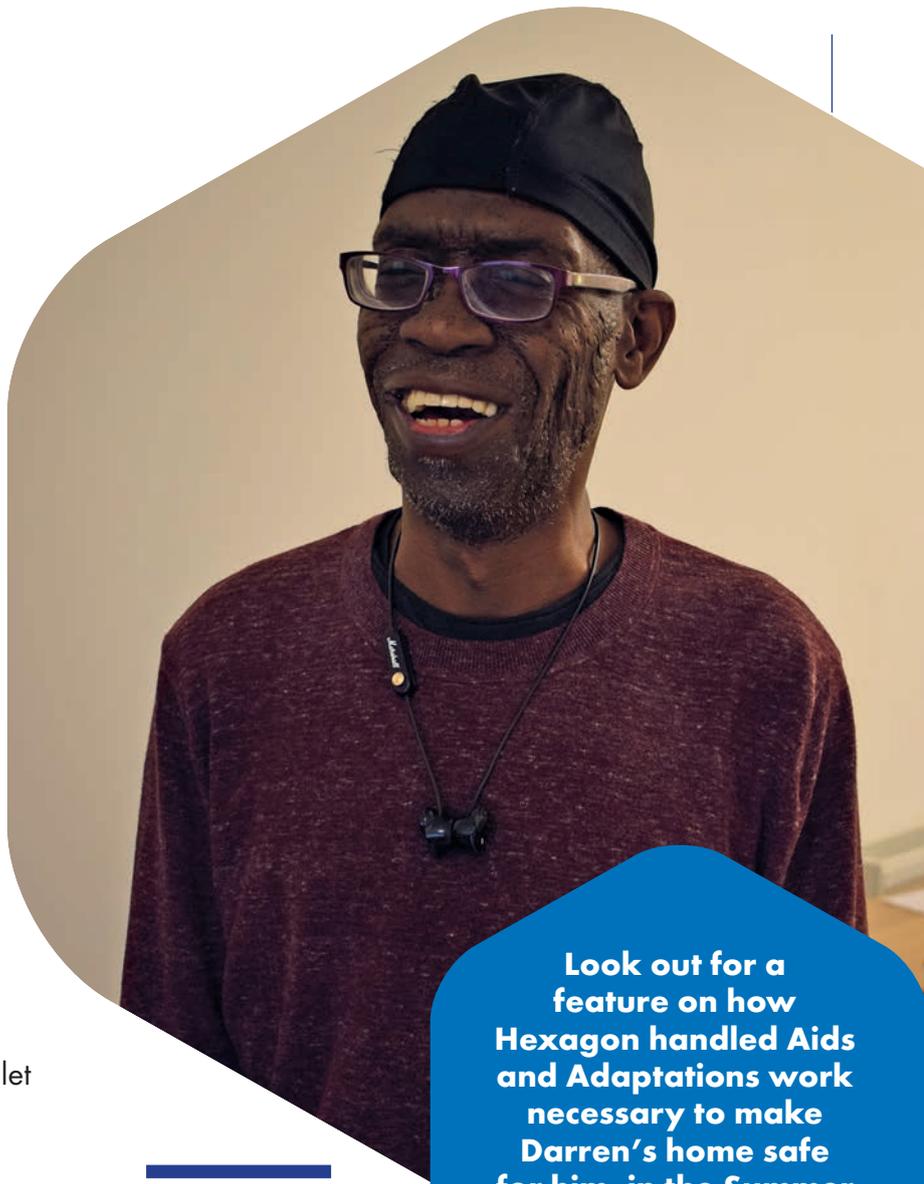
I may be walking along the street and see a dark shape up ahead contrasted against the pavement. I often can't tell if the shape is moving or not. I may deduce it's a person and politely move to one side - this goes against my mobility training. Then as I approach the shape, I discover it is a bin or a lamp post!

I often walk past someone I know without acknowledging them. Sometimes they're offended, thinking I'm being rude. The truth is that I just haven't seen them. So it's handy if people introduce themselves to let me know who they are.

Perhaps the scariest thing I go through on nearly a daily basis, is navigating over roads that don't have a crossing. If a car is approaching, I can't tell how far or close it is, or how fast it's going. Sometimes I think I see a car coming and will stand waiting, until I realise that it's parked. So it can take me quite a while to do something as seemingly straightforward as crossing a road.

I am still adapting to my sight loss, learning to incorporate it into my identity. Some people seem to find this easier to do than others but I remain annoyed with myself at how long it is taking me.

I left my last job as a Teaching Assistant back in 2008, because I had experienced increasing difficulty with seeing the classroom board and people. Today, part of my journey is to find paid work. I have been volunteering one day



Darren Parke

a week on the reception desk at Hexagon to refresh old skills - figuring out how to do things in a different way - and learn new ones. I am very slowly building up my confidence and self-esteem toward believing that I can have a fulfilling and independent life as a visually impaired person.

Websites of interest:

Croydon Vision
www.croydonvision.org.uk

South-East London Vision (SELVIS)
www.selvis.org.uk

Look out for a feature on how Hexagon handled Aids and Adaptations work necessary to make Darren's home safe for him, in the Summer 2020 edition of Home News.

KIDS' ZONE



FEATURED ENTRANTS
£5 Love2Shop voucher

ART & POETRY

The theme for last edition's Art & Poetry Competition for children was: **HALLOWEEN** and/or **CHRISTMAS**. Congratulations to our winners **6 year-old Anaiya (SE19)** for her magical picture of Santa in his sleigh, and to **11 year-old Jayvaan (SE19)** for his creepy Halloween picture and poem! Both winners receive a £20 Love2Shop voucher!



Drawing by Anaiya (SE19)

Halloween Poem (by Jayvaan aged 11)

The Corrupted is here! Created on Halloween.
This spooked, creepy Spirit is gonna make you scream!
This scary, dark creature hunts by sound.
You have to be very quiet or you will be found!
He hides in the shadows, out of sight.
He can only come out in the night.



Drawing by Jayvaan (SE19)

The theme for this edition's Art & Poetry Competition for children is: **WHEN I GROW UP I WANT TO...** So if you are a child up to the age of 12: Put on your thinking caps and share with us your dreams for your future by drawing a picture and (if you like) adding a short poem of up to 50 words about it.

Children up to 12 years of age are welcome to enter. Any winning entries will be published in Home News and will receive a £20 Love2Shop voucher (per entrant).

Email your entries by **Friday 14th February** to: homenews@hexagon.org.uk Or mail your entry to: **Competitions, Resident Involvement, Hexagon Housing Association, 130 - 136 Sydenham Road, London SE26 5JY.**

WINNER
£20 Love2Shop voucher



- BOOTS
- COAT
- COLD
- GLOVES
- HAT
- ICE
- SLED
- SCARF
- CHRISTMAS
- DECEMBER
- JANUARY
- MITTENS
- SHOVELLING
- SKATING
- SNOWFLAKE
- SKIING

Congratulations to A. Fenton (SE4), V. Richardson (SE18), and S. Ellis (SE19) who all won the Word Search competition in the last issue and each receive a £10 Love2Shop voucher.

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

If you think you can find all the correct words in the word search, cut it out and send back to us at the address above by **Friday 14th February**. Three entries drawn at random will each **win a £10 Love2Shop voucher**.



Is there a better
'winter warmer'
comfort food than

**BANGERS
& MASH?**



Resident's Recipe

ALL RECIPES IN HOME NEWS ARE INTENDED TO BE EASY ENOUGH FOR OLDER CHILDREN TO PREPARE WITH THE HELP OF AN ADULT. ENSURE YOUR CHILD RECEIVES THE NECESSARY HELP TO LEARN HOW TO COOK SAFELY.

INGREDIENTS

ESSENTIAL

One big potato per person (or up to four smaller ones)
Sausages (meat varieties or veg),
Butter, Milk, Salt

OPTIONAL

Balsamic vinegar, Stock cubes, Herbs, Cheese

METHOD

- 1 Peel the potatoes with a **vegetable peeler**.
- 2 Place the potatoes in a pan and cover with cold water. Bring the pan to the boil, adding a little salt. Then simmer gently until you can poke the potatoes with a fork and it comes out without sticking.
- 3 While the potatoes are simmering start to cook the sausages in a frying pan. Prod them with a fork to help the middle cook. Turn occasionally until all sides are cooked gently brown. Set the sausages aside in a warm place.
- 4 Ask an adult to help you drain the pan of boiling water. Leave potatoes in pan a few minutes to cool. Add butter then mash with a potato masher. Gradually add milk, stirring gently on a low heat.
- 5 Add your options like cheese and herbs. Stir in gently.

FOR GRAVY

Ask an adult to help you make some gravy (yum yum!). You can use a ready mix (just stir in boiling water) or make a gravy from scratch using balsamic vinegar, stock cubes, possibly a red onion, and herbs.

READY TO GO!!!

Pile the mashed potatoes onto a plate with the sausages on top. Pour the gravy on top and MMMM ready to eat!

Adrian Beckingham, Home News Editor and Hexagon resident

IF YOU HAVE A RECIPE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SUBMIT TO HOME NEWS, please email it to homenews@hexagon.org.uk

COMPETITION TIME



To enter this edition's Competition Time, simply answer the following by Friday 14th February:

1. List 3 ways to be actively involved as a Hexagon resident.
2. How many properties does Hexagon make available for the Rough Sleepers Initiative?
3. Who pays for a special refuse clearance when rubbish is dumped incorrectly in communal areas?
4. List 5 signs that suggest someone may be committing tenancy fraud.
5. List three things you could do to help combat loneliness for yourself or others in your locality.

Congratulations to our last edition's winners:

B.Fashina (SE18), A.Dissington (SE23), and C.Matthews (SE26) who each receive a £20 voucher.

The answers to last edition's questions are as follows:

1. Normal living noise is not a statutory nuisance. A statutory nuisance is a noise that may be mechanical, repetitive and artificial.
2. Green initiatives at home could include: Place small recycling bins around your home, use eco-friendly lightbulbs, use lined curtains and close them at night, keep home heating on at 18 to 20 degrees, choose a Green Energy Supplier.
3. Each assignment in a Level 2 course offered by Hexagon is marked by the tutor and feedback is given. A few weeks after completion you get a certificate in the post.
4. Ways to access cheaper furniture to purchase for your home include: Buy a second hand or refurbished product.

Visit websites such as ilovefeagle.org or freecycle.org

5. Some ways you could help someone sleeping rough on the streets this winter are: Find the person a shelter nearby or a place to have a hot meal, Offer them a hot drink, food, warm clothes or a blanket, Contact Streetlink via their website <https://www.streetlink.org.uk/> or on 0300 500 0914 to ensure the person can access the services to which they are entitled.

Make donations to, or volunteer with, an organisation which helps homeless people.

The winner of a £20 voucher for the Recycling Competition was V.Fashina (SE18)

who wrote: 'Recycling is very important as waste has a huge negative impact on the natural environment. Harmful chemicals and greenhouse gases are released from rubbish in landfill sites. Recycling helps to reduce the pollution caused by waste. It reduces the need for raw materials so that the rainforests can be preserved.'

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: homenews@hexagon.org.uk

Three correct entries received by Friday 14th February will be drawn at random and will each receive a £20 shopping voucher. The competition is open to all Hexagon residents. The editor's decision is final.

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 enquires

Gas Central Heating Contractor
0800 206 1367

(24 hours, 7 days a week)

Emergency Out-of-hours Repairs
020 3701 3518

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**

Follow us for regular updates, event invitations and news:

HexagonHousingAssociation

@HexagonHousing

TRANSLATE!

Always happy to translate!

Chinese

永遠樂於翻譯！

Eritrean

"ንክነተርጉመልኩም ኩሉግዜ ሕጉሳት ኢና!"

French

Toujours heureux de traduire!

Portuguese

Sempre feliz a traduzir!

Vietnamese

Luôn luôn vui lòng phiên dịch!

Urdu

ترجمے کے لیے ہر دم تیار

LARGE PRINT

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