#DIY sorted
Our online clips show you how

INSIDE THIS ISSUE
A taste of Chalkhill  p8
Five ways to upskill and improve your CV  p12

Included with this issue:
See how we’re doing in our annual report
We often get calls about small jobs that customers are responsible for fixing. We’re not talking about anything technical of course — rather it’s little jobs, such as changing a light bulb or bleeding a radiator. We’ve produced some handy ‘how to’ film clips that we hope will be useful for many (details opposite).

We’re helping customers get a better credit rating through the Rental Exchange. If you rent from us we wrote to you about it in April; there’s a reminder about the benefits of the scheme on page 11.

Remember you can keep track of your rent account, report a repair or make a payment online or via your mobile whenever you want. Register at www.metropolitan.org.uk

As ever, if you need to get in touch, call us on 020 3535 3535 or email contactus@metropolitan.org.uk

Jenny Danson
Executive Director of Housing Services

Visit us online at:
www.metropolitan.org.uk
News

£10k for Age UK

Earlier this year we launched a Metropolitan-wide campaign to raise £10,000 for an organisation very close to our hearts: Age UK, the largest charity in the UK dedicated to helping people in later life.

Staff have been trekking, running marathons, dressing up, dressing down, singing, baking cakes (and eating cakes!), holding tea parties to celebrate the Queen’s 90th birthday and much more. Pictured are colleagues who trekked 28 km across 16 London bridges, starting at Putney Bridge and ending up five hours and several blisters later at Tower Bridge. Keep up with our progress by following us on Facebook and Twitter (@MetropolitanOrg).

Making connections

There are lots of reasons why people can find living independently at home a bit of a struggle: illness, disability, bereavement, or maybe money’s a bit tight.

Launched earlier this year, our community-based Connect service helps customers in Rushcliffe, Gedling and Broxtowe in Nottinghamshire get through a rocky patch and maintain their independence.

The service is completely flexible, providing support tailored to individual needs. We connect people with the most appropriate services to deal with any current issues – from physical and mental wellbeing to house moves, dealing with debt, combating isolation, taking part in activities or accessing affordable transport. Find out more at www.metropolitan.org.uk/connect.

Wherever you live, if you – or someone you know – could do with a little support to help maintain your independence at home, please call us on 020 3535 3535.

Art from Balham to Belgium

Nnena Kalu, who lives at a supported scheme in Balham in London, spent a week as artist-in-residence at modern art theatre Le Madmusée in Liege, Belgium.

Care and Support worker Joan assisted Nnena on the trip, which was funded by The Arts Council. Joan said: “It was a great experience for Nnena, and gave her the chance to travel, to work with others and to focus on her art.”

Repairs at your service

Metworks, our new in-house repairs service in the East Midlands, has now added planned improvements to their programme of work.

That means that as well as fixing faulty electrics and repairing roofs, our team is also now helping to deliver our multi-million pound modernisation programme. This includes installing new bathrooms and kitchens and replacing doors and windows.

Meanwhile, our London contractor, Wilmott Dixon, has taken on repairs and maintenance at Roundshaw, our estate in Sutton. Morgan Sindall continues to provide our repairs service in the East of England.

All of our contractors have had a busy few months and one of the key ways we measure how the service is doing – the number of repairs we fix first time – has improved, with 86% now fixed first time.

We’ve also maintained 100% compliance with our gas safety inspections – no mean feat when that involves checking out gas appliances and pipework in over 23,000 homes!

You can find out more about how we performed in repairs and other areas in our annual review at www.metropolitan.org.uk/annualreview.

On a community clean-up day in April, Chalkhill residents joined volunteers from Catch the Fire church, Metropolitan and Brent Council to litter pick, tidy gardens and meet neighbours for a chat. A handyman service, computer repairs and cakes were also on offer.
Great challenges

Great opportunities and a £500pa reward

Do you like to challenge opinions and be challenged yourself? If so, we have a number of vacancies on our National Customer Group (NCG) and Service Audit Committee (SAC) and would like to hear from you!

Along with the opportunity to meet new people and enhance your employment prospects, getting involved offers a sense of empowerment from improving our services and making a difference to the lives of others. What’s more, members on both groups are paid £500 per year.

The NCG is an influential, forward-looking group of customers who help us identify opportunities and develop new ideas. They help design and test new services and are vital in making sure the views and aspirations of customers are at the heart of what we do.

Members of the SAC have a keen eye for detail. They look at customers’ experiences through surveys, interviews, focus groups and visits and then help drive forward improvements.

The roles are suitable for people who are able to see the ‘bigger picture’ and make a positive contribution to strategic discussions.

To find out more or to ask for an application pack, please contact Michele Naclerio on 020 3535 3535 or email michele.naclerio@metropolitan.org.uk.

Your voice, your choice!

- Aged 16 to 25?
- Do you care about where you live and want to make a difference?
- Do you have something to say and want us to listen?
- Do you want to gain valuable skills and experience to add to your CV?
- Are you willing to work as part of a team?

At Metropolitan we’re keen to support and encourage the involvement of all. In particular we recognise that young people are the future and can make an enormous contribution to how our estates and communities are managed and developed.

Over the next 12 months we’re piloting youth forums in Nottingham and in Chalkhill and Clapham Park in London. Working alongside a number of like-minded young people, you’ll be supported to make a real difference. Each youth forum will have access to a pot of money to develop and deliver a community project based on what you think is important.

If you’re 16 to 25, have a passion for your community and want to be part of this exciting opportunity, contact Kelly Thomas at kelly.thomas@metropolitan.org.uk or call 07738 714182.

10 years at Clapham Park

This year marks the 10th anniversary of our involvement at Clapham Park. It was back in 2006, following a successful ballot of residents, that the estate was transferred into our ownership from Lambeth Council and we started putting our ambitious plans to regenerate the neighbourhood into action.

Since then we’ve made lots of progress on delivering our promises to provide a brand new or refurbished home to every resident, along with a range of other improvements.

So far we have built 490 brand new homes, providing local residents with a combination of properties for rent, shared ownership and private sale, as well as homes for people with extra care needs. We’re now starting the next phase of the regeneration, preparing the way for hundreds more new homes to be built so we can respond effectively to the current and future housing needs of residents.

To make way for the new homes we’ve seen lots of demolition activity across the estate in the last few months.

When we took over managing Clapham Park it was clear that although many buildings needed to be replaced, many were in good condition structurally – they just needed to be brought up to date.

So far we have refurbished well over 700 homes, installing new kitchens, bathrooms and double-glazed windows, improved heat and sound insulation, fuel-efficient heating systems and electrical rewiring. Many flats have also had balconies installed.

Our commitment to the local community goes further than providing quality homes. We’re working closely with Lambeth Council to make sure current and future education needs of families are met. To achieve that, we will be providing a new nursery and a second site for the Telferscot Primary School. We will also continue to offer a range of activities that, with the involvement of local residents, will help create and maintain a great sense of community.

Check out some time-lapse photography of recent demolition work in action on two of the larger sites, and keep updated on what’s going on around the estate at www.metropolitan.org.uk/claphampark.

“I am really happy with my refurbished home. There’s a real sense of change and the improvements are making Clapham Park a much nicer place to live.”

Cris Domingos, resident
Super social suppertime

Freshly cooked chicken, Mediterranean vegetables, pasta and tiramisu wouldn’t be out of place on any restaurant menu.

But this was a menu created entirely of supermarket surplus food, cooked and served by volunteers, and enjoyed by locals in a Nottingham community centre.

Our Super Kitchen – a partnership with a local social enterprise aimed at tackling food poverty and isolation – opened at Hill View Community Centre, St Ann’s, in early April. Diners can enjoy an affordable, tasty dinner and socialise in a warm and welcoming space. The project also gives volunteers the chance to learn new food and customer service skills.

The Super Kitchen is open every Monday from 5pm to 7pm, with a different menu each week – all for just £3 per person.

Get active this summer

Many of us aren’t too keen on the idea of exercise. It might be that we’re too busy or we simply can’t face the thought of it. But physical activity can help to prevent disease, maintain a healthy weight and make us feel better.

It’s not just about working out in the gym. Whilst doing regular exercise is important for your health and wellbeing, it’s equally important to avoid prolonged sitting – so try these simple and free tips to get your body moving!

- Walk whenever you can – get off the bus or train a few stops early
- Stand when talking on the phone
- Take the stairs instead of the lift
- Dance to a great tune at home
- Make time for a family walk or other activity during the weekend
- Try out an outdoor gym in a local park

How much physical activity do we need to do?

- Adults: at least 150 minutes each week
- Kids aged five to 16: at least 60 minutes each day
- Kids under five: at least three hours per day

Mozzarella and potato cakes

Serves 4

800g potatoes
100g grated cheese such as mozzarella
50g grated cheddar
2 egg yolks
2 spring onions, finely chopped
200g breadcrumbs
8 basil leaves, shredded
oil for frying

For the sauce

200g brie, rind taken off
1 tbsp cranberry sauce
200ml single cream
50g grated cheddar
black pepper

Method

Boil the potatoes until tender. Drain and cool slightly. Beat the egg yolks and mix together with the cheeses, onion and basil. Lightly mash the potatoes and combine with the other ingredients.

Shape your cakes (I make about 12), roll in breadcrumbs to coat and chill for half an hour.

Pour the cream into a pan and very gently bring to the boil. Turn the heat right down and melt in the brie and the cheddar. Spoon in the cranberry sauce and add black pepper. Pour enough oil into a frying pan to cover the cakes and fry until golden brown. Place on a plate, pour over the hot sauce and enjoy!

For more information and recipes visit www.theloungecafe.co.uk

Wholesome eating while you lounge

A new café has opened at our Chalkhill estate in London, offering customers healthy, affordable home-cooked meals.

The Lounge Café opened its hatch to the public in May and is run by Maria Kuehn, an award-winning cook and food writer who once beat Gordon Ramsay in a curry competition! The café serves a range of wholesome daily specials and regular dishes and is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5:30pm.

Maria uses local, seasonal ingredients and offers vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options. Why not try out her great recipe for mozzarella and potato cakes with a brie and cranberry cream sauce:

“This is a really tasty vegetarian starter and as cheap as chips. You can vary the ingredients to suit your own tastes so replace the mozzarella with gruyere or your own personal favourite cheese.

“I like to serve it with a simple mixed salad and some crusty bread to mop up the sauce.”
Money matters

Be prepared for changes to the benefit cap

The government has set new lower limits for the amount of benefits people can receive from autumn 2016. If you’re claiming working-age benefits, don’t get caught out – check now to see if you’ll be hit by the changes.

What is the benefit cap?
The benefit cap sets a limit on the total amount of benefits that most people aged 16 to 64 can get. If the amount claimed per household exceeds the limit, your housing benefit or universal credit is reduced and you have to pay the shortfall in rent.

Will the new cap affect me?
Check the table below to find out whether your weekly benefits exceed the proposed new limits.

The government has set new lower limits for the amount of benefits people can receive from autumn 2016. If you’re claiming working-age benefits, don’t get caught out – check now to see if you’ll be hit by the changes.

Who won’t be affected?
People aged 65 and over; and any households receiving:
- working tax credits
- any disability benefit
- war widows/widower’s pension
- armed forces payments

Carers and guardians allowance will be added to the exemption list later this year.

What can I do if my benefits are capped?
We can help guide you through the changes and offer advice and support on budgeting, managing debt and finding work. Please call us on 020 3535 3535 or email moneymatters@metropolitan.org.uk.

Benefit cap weekly limits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Outside London</th>
<th>In Greater London</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone parent</td>
<td>£500</td>
<td>£384.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple</td>
<td>£500</td>
<td>£384.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple with children</td>
<td>£500</td>
<td>£384.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking to move? It’s mutual!

Did you know you can swap homes with another tenant? And not only Metropolitan tenants: you can also swap with people living in other housing association or council properties, provided they have the right to do so and both landlords approve the swap.

There are lots of benefits to moving to a smaller home that fits the needs of your family or household members – more affordable rent and gas and electricity bills for starters.

When the under-occupancy charge (more commonly known as the ‘bedroom tax’) came in, thousands of residents were affected by having their housing benefit cut by 14% or 25%, depending on the number of bedrooms in their home. Not surprisingly the number of people looking to downsize has gone up.

If you’re in that situation, give us a call on 020 3535 3535 or search for ‘mutual exchange’ information on our website www.metropolitan.org.uk.

“I am so happy I did the mutual exchange as I have a smaller property and I can afford to pay my rent now!”

Ms N, Hackney

Credit where it’s due

Earlier this year we wrote to customers who rent from us to let them know about the Rental Exchange, a scheme we’ve signed up to which will help them create a credit history.

Why is that useful? Because, if you want to open a bank account, get affordable credit or benefit from the best deals on anything from mobile phones to gas bills, you need a good credit history. The way it works is that we share details of your rent account with Experian, one of the world’s largest credit reference agencies, and that payment history is included in your credit report.

So if you pay your rent on time your credit rating will reflect this and it will help you to access credit. If you sometimes struggle to pay your rent, we have staff with expertise to help you keep your spending in line with your income. Call us today on 020 3535 3535 to find out more.

Money matters

Countdown to paperless rent statements

To bring us into line with many other organisations, such as banks and utility companies, we’re phasing out our quarterly rent statement mailings.

This doesn’t mean you can’t easily access your rent account however; you can view, print and download details via our website www.metropolitan.org.uk. Just follow the ‘Customer Self Serve’ link to register or log in.

Our self service system is secure and convenient to use on mobile devices so you can manage your account, report a repair or edit your details whenever and wherever you want. If you have any questions about using Customer Self Serve, give us a call on 020 3535 3535.

Although we may no longer be sending out quarterly rent statements automatically after January 2017, we will be happy to send them out to customers on request.

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Career Pinnacle

From the ground up

Another grounds maintenance service that offers opportunities for green-fingered customers is Streetwise Environmental in Nottinghamshire.

As part of its contract it offers residents the chance to apply for 12-week paid placements to develop new skills and gain work experience. One in five of its employees are Metropolitan residents.

One of them is Zoe, 38, who started working with Streetwise last summer and was asked to stay on after her placement ended. “Getting this work has turned my life around”, she says. “It keeps me busy and gives me a real sense of pride to do a good job. I know how to do things now that I knew nothing about, like how to maintain my garden. I really enjoy working outside and being part of a team.”

Paul says: “Initially I was just looking to get something on my CV but I have found the work engaging and challenging. The work fits around my life – I have the opportunity to start and finish early which means I can still enjoy existing hobbies.”

First contact

This summer we’ll be recruiting six apprentices to join our busy Contact Centre in Nottingham.

The apprentices will be trained to develop IT and communication skills and earn a Level 2 Diploma in Customer Service.

We’re keen to offer this opportunity to our customers, because you know about our estates and properties, and understand the issues that customers face.

If you’d like to apply for a placement with Pinnacle or Streetwise, call Phil Parr on 020 3535 5132.

Art works

Residents in Derby have taken a creative path to becoming more employable, building confidence and skills through art.

We worked with community arts charity Artcore to run Art to Active Employment, giving out-of-work residents the chance to make paintings, pottery, mosaics, jewellery and more. The hands-on sessions were designed to develop imagination and skills which could be transformed into work and volunteering opportunities.

Participants learned to handle materials and tools along with improving idea generation, planning and communication skills. They also had training and support in cultural awareness, writing CVs, giving presentations and preparing for interviews.

One resident found a job after completing the classes, and two are volunteering. Here’s what a couple of participants had to say:

“It was a really beneficial project, especially for those who are unemployed. I learnt so many things: I did paintings, made jewellery, cards and I worked with clay. When I look at my work, I feel very happy and I can’t believe that I have made all of that. I wish Artcore could organise more sessions for us, so that we can learn much more.”

“It has been a really wonderful experience, seeing others enjoying themselves. Amazing to interact with people and see us all progressing with confidence and other qualities.”

To find out more, call Ewa Van De Schootbrugge on 020 3535 3535.

Metropolitan and 97.5 Kemet FM join forces

We’re working with Nottingham-based urban radio station 97.5 Kemet FM to deliver employment skills training to local people.

The aim is to provide trainees with transferable skills, knowledge and experience relevant to the event and media industries. Students on the six-week course will have the opportunity to develop their strengths, get invaluable hands-on experience and gain a Level 2 qualification – which could lead to higher training and employment.

Participants will also undertake the nationally recognised Security Industry Authority badge (SIA) to then be employed as event stewards at the Rock and Reggae festival on 30 and 31 July at the Gregory Boulevard Forest ground.
Find a home

Buying a home for less

If you’ve dreamed about buying a home of your own, but didn’t know where to begin or whether you could afford it, now could be the perfect time to do something about it! We have new homes across London, the home counties and the East Midlands available through shared ownership.

How does shared ownership work?
Shared ownership is more affordable because you don’t have to pay the full property price to become a homeowner. Instead, you have a mortgage on a share of the property that you can afford (usually between 25% and 75% of the value) and pay a subsidised rent on the remainder.

The deposit needed is smaller, because you only have to pay it on the share that you buy. Your monthly housing costs would also be less than what you’d pay if you’d bought the same home outright or rented it privately.

So who’s eligible?
Shared ownership is available to households (usually first-time buyers) earning up to £90,000 per year in London and £80,000 outside London, who can’t afford a suitable home on the open market.

Buyers will need to be able to fund the deposit and costs associated with buying (such as mortgage arrangement, legal and removal fees) and will need to have a balanced rent account and a good credit history to secure a mortgage.

How do I find out more?
Visit www.mho.co.uk or contact our sales team on 020 3535 2555 or mhosales@metropolitan.org.uk.

Staircasing
It’s possible to increase the share that you own – and even go on to own your home 100% – through a process called staircasing. Each time you buy an additional share of equity, your rent is reduced.

If you’re already a shared owner and want to find out more about your staircasing options, call 020 3535 2700 or email leaseholdaftersales@metropolitan.org.uk.

Room enough for four
After renting a two-bedroom property from us for seven years, Mr and Mrs Palomo bought a spacious three-bedroom home in Hackney, London, through shared ownership. As far as their two young sons Justin (7) and Kean (5) are concerned, this is great news as it means they each get their own room.

Using Homematch (a free service for first-time buyers looking in London), Mrs Palomo had spotted the apartment in Chervil House, developed by Hackney Council and marketed by our home ownership team. The family met the council’s priority list requirements and were eligible to put in an offer. They opted to buy a 40% share of their home and are keen to buy more shares in the near future through staircasing.

The Palomos say: “We feel really at home in Hackney, even more so now we have so much extra room to live in. Our thanks to Hackney Council and the sales team from Metropolitan – they’ve made it a smooth journey to a new phase in our lives.”

HIGH FIVE!
FOR FIVE OPPORTUNITIES TO BUY A NEW HOME AFFORDABLY THROUGH SHARED OWNERSHIP

1. Aldgate Place, Tower Hamlets
21 shared ownership apartments at this stunning, landmark Barratt development on the edge of the City.
One-bedroom apartment from £572,500 (£431,250 for a 25% share).
Available to those who live and/or work in London. Priority given to Tower Hamlets residents.

2. Canary Gateway, Tower Hamlets
A cosmopolitan canal side village of 17 one, two and three-bedroom homes designed for a dynamic lifestyle.
One-bedroom apartment from £154,500 (£115,500 for a 35% share).
Available to those who live and/or work in London. Priority given to Tower Hamlets residents.

3. South West Nine, Brixton
81 modern one, two and three-bedroom apartments close to the heart of vibrant Brixton.
One-bedroom apartment from £154,500 (£115,500 for a 35% share).
Please note present costings are based on an estimate and may be subject to change.

4. The Village, Walthamstow
Delightful one, two and three-bedroom apartments with access to transport links and local green space.
One-bedroom apartment from £266,000 (£192,750 for a 35% share).
Available to those who live and/or work in Waltham Forest.

5. Six Hills, Stevenage
14 modern one, two and three-bedroom apartments just 5 minutes from Stevenage station.
One-bedroom apartment from £130,600 (£93,900 for a 35% share).
Please note present costings are based on an estimate and may be subject to change.

020 3535 2555 mhosales@metropolitan.org.uk mho.co.uk
Keep an eye out for our new-look website which is launching this summer. The site will give you greater flexibility to access useful and relevant information as well as report repairs, check your rent account, make payments and keep your details up-to-date.

Open for business
Our new office in Stockwell is now open. The office is located at 344 Clapham Road, SW9 9AJ, a short walk from Stockwell tube station (Victoria and Northern lines) and Clapham North tube station (Northern line). The office is open to visitors Monday to Friday, by appointment only.

How to contact us
✉️ PO Box 10262, Nottingham NG8 9LE
📞 020 3535 3535
✉️ contactus@metropolitan.org.uk
🌐 www.metropolitan.org.uk

We want all of our customers to be able to understand the information we provide. The contents of this magazine can be made available in a number of other languages and alternative formats including large print.

Metropolitan is a leading provider of integrated housing services, care and support.
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