Recipe for Success
Cooking up a storm at our ‘Residents’ Conference

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WIN
A bumper goody bag p7
LOVE LONDON METROPOLITAN LIVING WITH OUR EXCITING RANGE OF NEW HOMES

South West 9, Brixton – available now
A stunning new development comprising 81 one, two and three bedroom apartments available through Shared Ownership. Nestled just off Barington Road and offering a relaxed retreat from vibrant Brixton, South West 9 is 7 minutes’ walk to Brixton Station, which gives fast access into central London via the Victoria Line.
Prices start from £155,750 for a 35% share, with estimated minimum household incomes required to buy from £65,000.

Rye Green, Peckham – available now
A characterful new development offering a chance to buy a one, two or three bedroom apartment both through Shared Ownership and Private Sale. Perfectly positioned for Peckham Rye Park and access to central London, with London Victoria being just 13 minutes away by rail.
Prices start from £118,000 for a 30% share, with estimated minimum household incomes required to buy from £47,500.

Cavendish House, Colliers Wood – available now
A fantastic new development presenting 45 spacious one, two and three bedroom apartments available to own through Shared Ownership. Conveniently located just a minute away from Colliers Wood Underground Station, where local amenities and park spaces offer something for all lifestyles and just a short journey from the heart of the Capital, these new homes offer a great way to enjoy London and enjoy your own home more affordably.
Ask our team for pricing information.

New North Square, Hainault – available now
A striking new development in Hainault, where suburban London meets Essex villages. Our one and two bedroom apartments at New North Square are available to buy through Shared Ownership. Enjoy modern London living at its most desirable – with Hainault London Underground station being just a quarter of a mile away - putting central London within easy reach, yet with acres of peaceful green open space nearby.
Prices start from £87,500 for a 35% share, with estimated minimum household incomes required to buy from £34,700.

To find out more about these stunning new Shared Ownership developments from Metropolitan, contact our sales team:

020 3535 2555  mhosales@metropolitan.org.uk  mho.co.uk  @flythenest

Pricing and income information is understood as correct at the time of publication (October 2017) but may be either provisional or estimated and is subject to confirmation.
A word from our new Chief Executive

Welcome to the winter edition of @Metropolitan. As this is the first since I joined the team in October I wanted to take the opportunity to introduce myself to you all.

In my first few months I have met colleagues from different regions and teams, providing different services to customers. What has struck me is how enthusiastic and committed people are to delivering their best. That’s good news as it means people are happy to challenge the way things are done and come up with creative ideas that we hope will make a difference for you.

Bringing repairs and maintenance in-house with Metworks, for example, required quite a culture change, but we can now be far more flexible and respond quickly if we need to change the way we do things. More recently, we started formal discussions with Thames Valley Housing to form a partnership. You can find out more about this news on page 5.

We can of course only bring about positive change by working together. I’ve been out and about meeting customers – November’s conference was a great introduction and I’d like to thank everyone for making me feel so welcome. You can see what we got up to on page 6. One of the highlights of the day was meeting Instagram chef, Miguel Barclay. If healthy, affordable cooking gets your taste buds tingling, check out his shakshuka recipe on page 7.

I’m looking forward to hearing more from you over the coming months – after all, you know what really matters, and you know if things are improving or not. One of the main reasons I wanted to join Metropolitan is that it has a clear ambition to make a real difference. I look forward to working with you so that together we can do just that.

In the meantime, a very happy 2018 to you all.

Geeta Nanda
Metropolitan Chief Executive
Celebrating Black History Month in style
October 2017 marked the 30th anniversary of Black History Month in the UK, when we celebrate inspirational people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities who have contributed to our history and helped shape the country we live in today. As every year, we worked with residents to organise some great events.

At our Moorlands estate in Brixton party-goers enjoyed music, a fashion show, poetry and capoeira, while residents at Roundshaw in Sutton were entertained by a steel drum band courtesy of the local African Caribbean Heritage Society.

Time to talk, time to change

Did you know that a quarter of the UK population experiences some kind of mental health issue every year, with anxiety and depression being the most common disorders? Or that 10% of children have a mental health problem at any one time? How about suicide rates in the UK being among the highest in Europe and the greatest cause of death in men aged between 20 and 49?

World Mental Health Day in October was a time to reflect not just on these shocking statistics but on how we can work together to change attitudes. And the focus for the coming year is on mental health in the workplace. Research shows that 95% of people who take time off work due to anxiety or stress don’t tell the truth for fear of being seen as weak or unable to do their job, so it’s time for employers to promote mental health and show colleagues greater understanding.

We have signed up to the ‘time to change’ campaign (www.time-to-change.org.uk) to demonstrate our commitment to help change people’s views on mental health, not only for those customers we support, but also for the benefit of colleagues.

The website has some great resources, so if you have experience of mental health or are concerned about someone you know who may be struggling, do check it out.

Metworks apprentices learn on the job

The next generation of Mr – and Ms! – Fix-its have joined the Metworks team. Apprentices Loui and Sean (both 16) and Emily, 19, started in September and spend one day a week at Derby College with the rest of the week learning on the job. Their four-year apprenticeship will lead to a trade qualification, after which we hope they’ll join us full-time.

Emily is settling in well. She said: “I always liked the thought of being a plumber. My boyfriend’s a plumber too so he’s taking me out on small jobs and I’m learning even more!”

Remember, the quickest and most convenient way to report a repair is online at www.metropolitan.org.uk/report-a-repair.

Back of the net!

Congratulations to Metropolitan Hilltops, our five-a-side football team in Chalkhill, who were crowned champions of the Wembley area Powerleague in their very first season! With an average of ten goals per game, they amassed an impressive 126 in total to make them worthy winners of their league.

Mo Zeiani, team manager said: “Thanks to Metropolitan’s funding, more than 70 young people got involved. The players came from rival postcode areas but all united to play some great football, with two of them completing their first coaching badge.”
Walking the walk

If you see a group of Metropolitan colleagues walking around your estate with clipboards, don’t panic – it’s most likely an estate action day!

These quarterly action days take place across several estates and provide us with a great opportunity to talk to residents, find out who might need support or advice, as well as identify any potential issues and make sure that a plan is put in place to deal with them.

Latasha Benjamin (2nd from right) co-ordinates the walkabouts in Nottingham. She told us: “It’s all about taking a customer-focused approach so we can prevent issues from escalating rather than waiting until there’s a problem.”

Once back in the office, information is passed to relevant teams wherever action is needed. Latasha added: “We’re one team and hopefully our experience will work in other areas too.”

Keep a lookout for action days where you live and please do take the opportunity to raise any issues you might have.

Levi scores a century

Congratulations to Lambeth resident Levi Hamilton who recently turned 100!

Levi moved to England from Jamaica in 1945, followed by his wife Edna the following year. The pair moved to Ashmole in 1964 with their two sons and niece and shared their life there until Edna passed away in 1981.

Levi was remarried ten years later to Grace, until her death in 2007. As a fan of the West Indies cricket club, he has enjoyed many test matches over the years with friends and family at the Oval Cricket Ground, which is across the road and can be seen from where he lives.

Levi puts the secret of his age down to his belief in God and praying each day. Our special congratulations to Levi, who is pictured here with his son Delton and grandson Daniel.

In partnership talks

We’ve started formal discussions with Thames Valley Housing (TVH) to form a partnership. TVH is a housing association with almost 16,000 properties in London and the South East.

We believe that together we’d be able to improve the services we provide, invest more in our local communities and build more new homes. This would mean that more families on lower incomes would have affordable and secure homes.

The proposed partnership would not affect your rent or service charge, or result in any change to your tenancy or lease, or your rights and responsibilities.

Over the coming months, we’ll develop detailed plans for the proposed partnership. We’ll write to you to keep you updated and provide information on how you can ask questions and give us your feedback. In the meantime, our website is the best place to keep updated www.metropolitan.org.uk/partnership.
A recipe for success

Take one brand new Chief Executive, add 100 residents, mix in a bunch of colleagues and sprinkle celebrity chef Miguel Barclay on top. Place in a central London hotel for a day and what have you got? All the right ingredients for a great residents’ conference!

The conference was a great opportunity for residents to get together in a relaxed setting and hear from a number of speakers, including new Chief Executive Geeta Nanda.

Making sure the day ran smoothly was Chair of the National Customer Group, Graham Taylor, who took on MC duties and hosted the raffle. Some fabulous prizes were donated by our partners, including Leicester City Football Club, Derby City Community Trust, Morgan Sindall, Pinnacle, United Tutors and Absolute Print.

After lunch, celebrity chef Miguel Barclay was joined on stage by Geeta and volunteer resident sous chefs Luke and Laura. He demonstrated how to prepare Goan cauliflower curry – one of his delicious, simple and (at just 45p per person!) very affordable recipes.

A conference attendee commented: “I’ve never had much confidence in the kitchen, but seeing firsthand how easy it was to rustle up something so tasty has given me the cooking bug!”

Delegates also heard about what’s been going on behind the scenes over the last year and how we aim to deliver improved services in the coming year. A common theme among a number of delegates was lack of clear communication. We know this is something we don’t always get right and we are committed to improving. We are also reviewing other feedback from delegates and will keep you updated on progress via the website and in @Metropolitan.

In the meantime, see (right) how you can get involved and give us your input into how we can deliver the services you need in the ways that suit you best.

As Jerry Piper, Chair of the Customer Services Committee, commented: “The important thing is that everyone in this room is part of Metropolitan. The more feedback that customers can provide and the more input customers can give, the better that Metropolitan will be able to meet customers’ expectations.”

To give you a real flavour of the day, we’ve also posted a short film at www.metropolitan.org.uk/recipeforsuccess.

Did you know...?

We provide support services to almost 10,000 customers with a range of needs, including older people, people with mental health issues and people with a learning disability.
On a mouth-watering mission with chef Miguel

Master Chef, the Great British Bake Off, Saturday Kitchen – it’s probably safe to say that we spend more time watching programmes about food than actually cooking! So we hope to give you a taste for trying out something new with one of MetChef Miguel Barclay’s tasty dishes.

This really simple recipe for shakshuka (yes, a new one for us too!) is so quick and easy to make that we bet it’ll become a firm favourite for breakfast, lunch or dinner.

To create this Middle Eastern delight all you need per person is:

- 1 egg
- ½ red onion
- ¼ yellow pepper
- 200g chopped tomatoes (half a 400g tin)
- Chunk of crusty bread
- Olive oil
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- Salt and pepper

To cook...

Toast the cumin seeds in a small dry pan, over a medium heat, until they start to pop, then add a splash of olive oil and the sliced onion. Once the onion starts to soften, add the sliced pepper and chopped tomatoes. Season generously and simmer until the sauce thickens.

Make a small crater in the tomato mixture using the back of a spoon and crack the egg into it. Place a lid on the pan and continue to simmer gently until the white is cooked but the yolk is still runny.

Serve in the pan – and don’t forget to mop up all the juices with some bread.

Win a kitchen goody bag!

To get you started in the kitchen, email communications@metropolitan.org.uk by Friday 23 February 2018 (subject: Kitchen).

The first ten names out of the hat will receive a cotton shopping bag, a copy of Miguel’s best-selling ‘One Pound Meals’ and other kitchen essentials, including measuring spoons, a tea towel, food bag clip, food storage wheel, fridge magnet and spaghetti measure.

Have your say!

If you’d like to make a difference to the way we do things, there are a number of ways you can get involved.

National Customers Group (NCG)
Graham Taylor, Chair: “We are one voice: it’s as simple as that. As a customer you know what’s important and together we can make a difference. The NCG meets quarterly to give feedback on services and plans which impact on customers.

“For example, we visited the Met works team in Derby last year to see how things work in practice and it was a really useful day.”

Service Audit Committee (SAC)
Tony Curtin, Chair: “The Committee is made up of people like you who, through customer surveys and questionnaires, review and evaluate how services can be improved. They ask the questions “is it working?” and “how can it be fixed?” from a customer's perspective.

Customer Services Committee (CSC)
Jerry Piper, Chair: “The CSC is the link to the Metropolitan Board. It’s a committee with real influence that meets every three months. Membership consists of customers, staff and stakeholders. We come together to discuss any issues that could affect customers and work closely with the NCG and the SAC.”

To find out more about how YOU can make a difference, please call Michele Naclerio on 07824 609235 or email have.yoursay@metropolitan.org.uk
Winter 2018 – Issue 12

There was some good news when the government confirmed it was scrapping charges to the Universal Credit phone line, but issues still persist for claimants.

As this new benefit is rolled out across the country, many people are facing real financial hardship as money is paid monthly in arrears, and it takes anywhere between six to 12 weeks for the first payment to be received.

If Universal Credit hasn’t yet been rolled out in your area, it’s likely to be over the next few months, so now is the time to think about how you’re going to manage before you receive your first payment. If you don’t, you may fall behind on your rent, and that could affect your tenancy.

So far, around 1,000 Metropolitan customers have gone through the process of claiming, and many tell us that they have struggled during the transition to the new benefit. The good news is that we have a team set up to focus on supporting customers and their experience and advice is making a real difference.

Our money advisers can help in a number of ways, from supporting you to make your initial claim and making sure you have all the right paperwork, to securing advanced payments and, in cases of more extreme hardship, getting hold of food parcels.

With Universal Credit being paid to people who are on low incomes or out of work, looking at your work options is another area we can support you with. We run job clubs around the country and have links with employers and training providers who can help boost your job prospects.

Customers tell us that the range of support and advice we have provided has given them peace of mind and the confidence to get through the transition to Universal Credit. We can do the same for you too so please do give us a call on 020 3535 3535 and we can work together on a plan of action that suits you and your family’s circumstances.

How to be energy smart

To find out how to get the best deal for your energy needs, check out our handy guide.

Smart meters...
- show how much energy you’re using and how much it costs, in near real time
- mean no more estimated bills: you only pay for what you use
- are free and all homes should have one fitted by 2020
- Find out more at www.smartenergygb.org.

Switching suppliers
- Ofgem is the government regulator which makes sure UK gas and electricity customers get value for money
- You can trust options and pricing on Ofgem-accredited comparison sites (will have the Ofgem Confidence Code certification mark)
- Customers on pre-payment meters can also get better deals, as long as you owe less than £500 for gas and £500 for electricity.
- Visit uswitch.com or any other Ofgem-accredited site today.

Swapping tariff
- According to Ofgem, some suppliers are raising prices of their standard variable tariff, which are typically more expensive than fixed deals, so it makes even more sense to shop around
- The good news is that both switching supplier or swapping tariff with your current supplier can potentially save you hundreds of pounds a year on your bills
- Get in touch with your supplier and make sure you’re getting the best deal.

Still not sure about how to save money?
Call us today on 020 3535 3535 or check our website www.metropolitan.org.uk/money-matters for more top tips.

Supporting customers moving to Universal Credit

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Dorothy’s digital world

Eighty year-old Dorothy Howard, who lives in one of our sheltered schemes, is such an avid techie that she was name-checked by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg at a recent virtual reality conference in America.

She’s seen the Egyptian pyramids, ridden roller coasters and plans to head to Tibet – all from the comfort of her home in Cotgrave, Nottinghamshire. Dorothy’s keen to spread her enthusiasm for all things digital with others:

“I want to tell people my age not to be afraid, there’s lots of help around and there are so many ways to make life better. You can use technology to speak to friends and family and to help you feel more secure.”

Language skills boost confidence

Moving to a new country can be daunting – even more so when it also means having to learn a new language – so our weekly English classes in Derby are making a real difference to people who have moved here from overseas. Being able to speak English more fluently also helps build confidence and makes people feel more a part of their local community.

Eunice told us “I like the class. My English is improving. I am hoping to be able to support my children with their school homework. I would also like to work, so learning English is good for me.”

Kaltoum sees improvements too; “I am happy with my progress. I have made new friends. I am able to communicate much better.”

Can you dig it?

Our development team works hard behind the scenes to make sure things run smoothly and homes are completed on time. Sometimes, however, the most unexpected delays can crop up.

So, when pre-construction excavation work in Guntons Close in Soham, Cambridgeshire revealed evidence of Early Iron Age settlers, we halted work and brought in an archaeological team to investigate further. Their dig unearthed pottery, a well, pendants and beads, as well as animal and human bones dating back to at least 415 BC.

Once the team’s work was done we were back on the job to complete 14 stylish and considerably more modern homes than those the area’s former residents lived in!
Sutton residents have been celebrating the golden anniversary of the Roundshaw estate. Built on the former Croydon Aerodrome (the first international airport in the world!), many of the streets and buildings have an aerial association, such as Spitfire Road and Dakota Close, not to mention the Amy Johnson Primary School.

To celebrate the first 50 years, we supported the Roundshaw Community Network in organising a Golden Jubilee celebration in October. Well over 100 residents came out to enjoy pony rides, drumming, face-painting, stalls, goody bags, popcorn and much more. Councillor Jean Crossby, the Mayor of Sutton, also came along to offer her support and thank everyone for raising money for local charities.

Another milestone reached at Clapham Park

New homes are springing up across Clapham Park in South London, with 20 town houses recently completed and more than 200 new flats and a nursery currently on-site.

We’ve also started the final refurbishment phase of the regeneration programme at Kintyre Court, which is home to 60 families. By the time internal improvements are completed, it will bring the number of homes that we have fully modernised to well in excess of 750.

We’ve also had our plans for a new temporary community centre approved. The new multi-use venue will be significantly bigger and better than the current one, with a double height hall, outdoor garden space, a computer room, café, catering kitchen and meeting rooms. The new centre will host lots of new and existing activities and provide a really thriving community space for residents.

Let’s fight fraud

Did you know that tenancy fraud costs UK taxpayers £2 billion a year? Or that sub-letting is a criminal offence that can lead to two years in prison and a £5,000 fine?

It costs over £18,000 a year to keep a family in temporary accommodation, which is why we, as a not-for-profit housing association, do everything we can to make sure that we only rent our homes to eligible residents.

We now work with a specialist fraud investigation team to deal with cases of suspected fraud and, in recent months, we have successfully recovered six properties, with a further five currently in the process of being recovered. That means 11 families who will have an affordable home to call their own.

We need your help to make sure other families in need have an affordable home so, if you suspect tenancy fraud in your neighbourhood, please contact us in complete confidence on 020 3535 3535 or suspected.fraud@metropolitan.org.uk.

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No business like sew business

Around 50 customers in Nottingham took part in a five-week ‘Make to Make’ sewing project, learning new creative skills and sewing techniques from around the world.

The course was a great opportunity for people of all ages and diverse backgrounds to make new friends and share their skills.

The course was the brainchild of Kimberley Errington, who works at one of our schemes: “I set up Make to Make as it combines two of my passions: the fashion business and working in a care environment. I’ve also started a Big Lottery-funded Craft Cafe at Metropolitan’s Gedney Avenue centre and residents are welcome to join in and get creative too!”

News when you want it

We want to make sure that we keep you posted on relevant stories and news from across Metropolitan in the ways that suit you best.

That’s why we use a range of channels to share what we’re doing: for example we regularly post news on our website (www.metropolitan.org.uk/news) and details of activities on the online noticeboard (www.metropolitan.org.uk/noticeboard). We are also active on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram (if you don’t currently follow us, please do! Check below and on the back page for details).

We also publish news, features and updates in our @Metropolitan magazine. We want to make sure the content is relevant and interesting and would love to hear from you if you have any suggestions for regular features. You can send us your ideas to communications@metropolitan.org.uk.

Did you know...?

In the last year we invested £29 million in our planned modernisation programme, installing 650 new bathrooms, 1,321 kitchens and 1,378 boilers.

1,378 boilers
1,321 kitchens
650 new bathrooms
Make 2018 your year to **upskill!**

Why not make 2018 the year you widen your horizons and pick up a new skill? Whether it’s something that will help on your career path or more general personal development, our brand new training programme will have something to suit. **What’s new?**

- **Bursaries of up to £600**
- **Range of options, including face-to-face, online and at-home training**
- **Lots of new subjects –** everything from counselling skills and customer service, to caring for young people and how to lead a team, and much more!
- **£10 love2shop vouchers for the first 100 customers who register and complete an e-learning module**

Find out more and register today! Email training@metropolitan.org.uk or visit www.metropolitan.org.uk/training2018.

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**How to contact us**

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✉ contactus@metropolitan.org.uk
🌐 www.metropolitan.org.uk

Please contact us if you need this magazine in an alternative format, including another language or **large print**.

Metropolitan is one of the UK’s leading providers of affordable housing and care and support services. We own and manage approximately 38,000 homes, providing services to more than 71,000 customers across London, the East Midlands and the East of England. We deliver care and support to around 10,000 customers with a wide range of needs, including older people and those with mental health issues and learning disabilities.

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