

August / Summer 2024



Newsletter





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Do you find our newsletters useful?

We would love to know what you think of our newsletters. If you have any feedback or suggestions for how we can make them more useful, or accessible, please do let us know.

Welcome to PCHA's Summer Newsletter

Well, we are in the midst (or even at the end) of summer and I think we can all agree the weather has been disappointing to say the least! However, I do hope you have been able to enjoy the snatches of sunshine over more recent weeks.

I am delighted to announce that on the 1st July we took on a contract from the London Borough of Bromley to manage their housing stock – around 250 homes. This is a 10–15 year contract. We are delighted to welcome our new residents to the PCHA fold. It is a complicated contract, so please bear with us as we get to grips with this and get to know both homes and residents.

As a result of the contract, our staff team has almost doubled in size, so there are a few new faces around here too! We hope the additional resources will help us deliver a better service to all our residents moving forward. However, there has been a huge amount of change at PCHA over the last year or so, and the last month in particular, so it may take a couple of months for things to settle down.

We are also welcoming 4 new board members to PCHA, including a new Chair of our Finance, Audit and Risk Committee. Our Board sets the strategic direction of PCHA.



The Board is made up of a wide range of professionals who give their time to steer PCHA in the right direction and hold us to account for our performance. With the new Consumer Standards and Tenant Satisfaction Measures, the Board are very focussed on service delivery and resident satisfaction.

On this note, we have just completed our 2024 resident satisfaction survey so a BIG thank you to all those who responded. The report will be out in September so watch this space for the results!

Finally, I am pleased to announce that we have signed a contract to develop 6 new homes in Forest Hill – these will be completed next spring.

Best wishes,

Karen

Staff Changes at PCHA

An exciting period of change for PCHA has resulted in some changes and increases to our staff team this summer.

After many years' service providing tenancy management and support with BECHA and more recently with PCHA, Mary Loftus left us in May to explore new opportunities. Haley Ryan takes over her role as Head of Resident Services from August 2024.

With the introduction of the new management contract with London Borough of Bromley, we are delighted to welcome Gail Johnson as Head of Housing Contracts, alongside a number of staff who will continue to work with residents in the Bromley contract portfolio. A warm welcome to Demi-Louise Carter and Rosemary Munn (Tenancy Services Officers) and to Maintenance Operatives James Freeman and Dave Conroy who continue to be based at Manorfields, our temporary accommodation scheme in Orpington. We also welcome Miranda Charles who is joining us in a new Housing Support Worker role at Manorfields.

In addition to integrating the Bromley staff into the PCHA team, we have appointed three Income Recovery Officers: Marie Gayle, Carol Gowdie and Vanessa Harding; and strengthened our maintenance service by appointing a

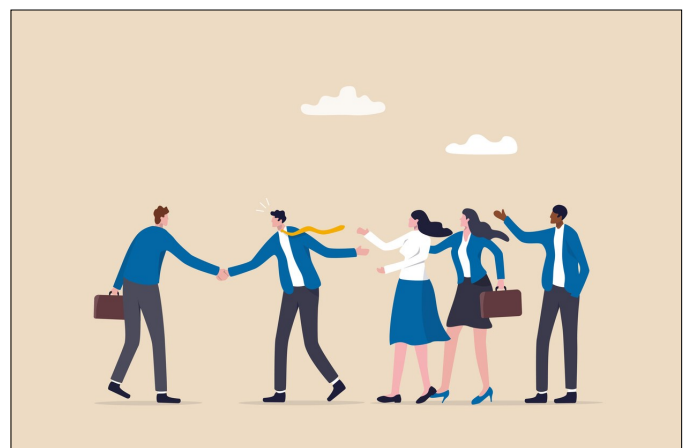
new Maintenance (Planned and Compliance Officer), Ana Vlad. We also welcomed Perry Davies as our Executive Support Officer.

We have some further recruitment to complete over the summer, including a manager at Manorfields and an exciting new role of Resident Satisfaction & Engagement Officer; this role will play a vital part in driving up resident satisfaction and ensuring that we act on your feedback.

With so many new staff it may take a little time for everyone to get used to their new roles and the PCHA way of working, so please bear with us!

We look forward to introducing all the team to you at events later this year.

If you are unsure who to contact within the team please contact our Customer Service Officers, Esmine and Georgie, who will be happy to assist you. They can be reached on **020 8659 3055** or by email at housing@pcha.co.uk.



Resident Engagement Update

Our aim at PCHA is to create homes and communities we can all be proud of. We need your help to do this! Hearing your views makes a real difference to the service we provide.

Please refer to our Resident Engagement and Involvement Leaflet in your handbook or on our website for more information about the various ways you can get involved.

Partnership Board

Within our Satisfaction Survey last year, we asked residents if they would like to be more involved with PCHA. We contacted everyone who expressed an interest to discuss how we could work together. This enabled us to make some progress towards establishing a Partnership Board, which will be made up of residents and staff, to scrutinize performance, develop new services/ideas and shape the future of PCHA. We will resume our briefing and induction sessions for this in the autumn.

If you would like to discuss ways of getting more involved in PCHA, please contact us on **020 8659 3055**.



Our Performance – January to March

P E R F O R M A N C E

As part of our commitment to resident engagement, we provide information on our performance in every newsletter. Our aim is to be accountable to, and transparent with, our residents.

In this newsletter we are reporting on our performance from January to March 2024.

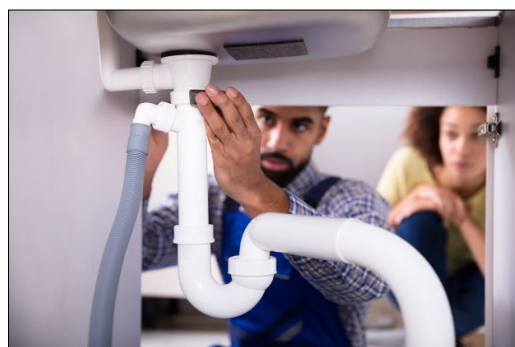
Repairs performance and satisfaction

From January to March 2024, **91%** of all repairs reported by residents were completed within our target times. We continue to aim for improvement here, and are happy to say that **96%** of repairs were completed on time from April to June, including 100% of emergency repairs. This will be reported officially in the next newsletter.

In the 12 months to the end of March, 85% of residents who responded to one of our repairs satisfaction surveys said that they were 'satisfied with the quality of the repair'. This is consistent with previous months. We are trying to make things better here, as we want all residents to be happy and satisfied with the quality of repairs in their home.

If you receive a text message asking if you are satisfied with a recent repair, please do respond: this helps us find and address any issues with our service or our contractors.

If you have any other feedback on our repairs service or the quality of a repair to your home, please contact us on **020 8659 3055** or repairs@pcha.co.uk.



Our Performance – January to March

Complaints

One formal complaint reaching Stage 2 was made between January and March. It related to our Communal Areas Policy and was not upheld.

In total, 4 formal complaints were made between April 2023 and March 2024.



PCHA aims to provide an excellent service to all residents, and we will do everything we can to resolve a query or complaint quickly. For more information see our 'Making a Complaint' leaflet in your Resident Handbook or see the Complaints page of our website.

ASB

We had 5 new ASB (anti-social behaviour) cases between January and March.

PCHA aims to take a proactive approach both to the prevention of ASB and to finding a positive solution where this does occur. To read more about our approach to anti-social behaviour, please see the ASB leaflet in your Resident Handbook or on our website.

Rent arrears

The total amount that current tenants owed in arrears at the end of March was £101,290. Our *percentage* arrears (i.e. as a percentage of total rent charged) was 3.2%, lower than the last time we reported to you. This is good news as it means we are collecting more of the money owed to us, enabling us to invest more back into our services and properties.

One of our priorities is to work with residents to help them sustain their tenancies, which includes paying rent on time. If you are experiencing difficulties paying your rent, please contact us on **020 8659 3055**.



Void properties

At the end of March we had only 2 void (empty) properties across Bromley and Bexley, down from 3 in December and 8 at the end of September 2023. We aim to relet properties as soon as possible so that homes are not sitting empty, and as many people as possible have a safe place to live.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

To meet new consumer standards resulting from the Social Housing Regulation Act, the Regulator of Social Housing has introduced a set of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) to assess the performance of housing associations like PCHA.

These came into force in April 2024 and we are required to publish our outcomes against these measures annually. You can view our results for 2023–24 on our website.

We are required to run tenant perception surveys to collect data for the tenant satisfaction measures TP01 to TP12 and we do this via our annual surveys undertaken by Acuity.

The TSM perception results for 2023–24 are based on our 2023 Satisfaction Survey data. Thank you again to everyone who completes these surveys – we really appreciate your feedback.

The two key areas for focus for improvement from our 2023 survey were complaint handling and communal cleaning/gardening. We have been working hard to improve our service in these areas.



A copy of the summary report can be found on our website at www.pcha.co.uk – see the ‘Our Publications’ menu and ‘Tenant Satisfaction Measures’.

However, if you would like more information or to discuss the TSMs with us, please contact one of our team by phone on **0208 659 3055** or email housing@pcha.co.uk.



TSMs 2023–24

Tenant Satisfaction Measures 23/24			
Code	Description	23-24 Annual TSM	Comments
Overall Satisfaction			
TP01	Overall satisfaction	76.3%	TSM Survey Sep 2023
Keeping properties in good repair			
TP02	Satisfaction with repairs	82.1%	TSM Survey Sep 2023
TP03	Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	83.7%	TSM Survey Sep 2023

Complaints Policy Update

We know that sometimes things go wrong and when they do, our aim is to put things right as soon as possible, learn from our mistakes and improve the way we work. Our Complaints Policy applies to all PCHA homes, whether owned or managed.

The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code

The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint handling code was updated in 2024 to make it stronger and encourage a positive complaint-handling culture. Each year we carry out a self-assessment of our compliance with the Code. We undertook a review in June and are proud to say that we already complied with the code in most areas. We have updated our Complaints Policy to ensure full compliance with the new Code and revised our Complaints Leaflet, which provides an easy guide for you on how we handle complaints.

On our website you can find:

- 2024 Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling code
- PCHA's Self-Assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code 2024
- PCHA Complaints Policy
- PCHA Annual Complaint & Service Improvement Report 2023-24
- Making a Complaint Leaflet

Visit www.pcha.co.uk and go to "Our Residents" menu and "Complaints".

What is a complaint? A complaint is defined as *"...an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of respondents"*

What is not a complaint? A complaint is **not** a first attempt to request a service, such as a repair, or to let us know something has gone wrong. A **service request** is *"a request from a resident requiring action to be taken to put something right"*. This will usually be the first time we have been made aware of dissatisfaction with our service. Service requests are not considered complaints but they will be recorded and reviewed regularly.

Please also note that a complaint is **not** a report of anti-social behaviour (ASB). We have special procedures for reporting ASB and neighbour / nuisance disputes. These are detailed in our Anti-Social Behaviour Leaflet and these issues will not be dealt with through our complaints process.

You can contact the Housing Ombudsman at any time if you require assistance. You can visit their website at: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk or phone them on **0300 111 3000**.

If you have any concerns about our service or performance, please call us on **020 8659 3055** or email housing@pcha.co.uk.

Resident Handbook & Rent Account Balances

Resident Handbook

In 2023 we launched our Resident Handbook and issued a copy to all residents. The Handbook comprises a wide range of leaflets detailing services provided by PCHA, our policies, as well as addressing a number of frequently asked questions from residents. It also includes our Support leaflets, which give information about a wide range of support available to residents in the boroughs of Bexley and Bromley.



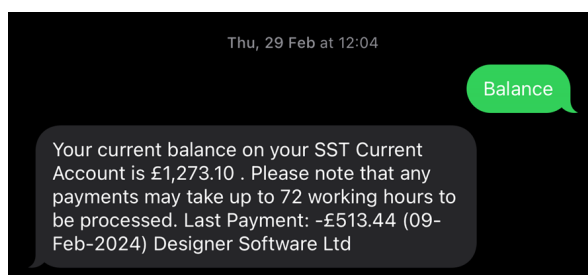
We are currently in the process of updating our Resident Handbook and leaflets. In September, all residents new to PCHA via our contract with the London Borough of Bromley will be sent a copy of the updated Resident Handbook. In the meantime, all residents can access the Handbook and all leaflets on our website—visit www.pcha.co.uk, go to the 'Our Publications' menu and 'Leaflets'.

Rent Account Balances

We are pleased to announce that from 19th August 2024, the balance of your rent account can be obtained by simply sending a text message to **07975 008266**.

You will need to make sure that the mobile number you are texting from is registered as the assigned contact number within our database. Please ensure that you let us know if you change your mobile number, or contact us to check we have right number on our database.

To get your balance, simply text the word 'Balance' to the number above. The response text will show your current balance, along with the last payment made and the date on which it was made.



If you have any queries about your rent account please contact our Income Recovery Officers – Carol, Marie or Vanessa – on **020 8659 3055** or email housing@pcha.co.uk.

E-Bikes & E-Scooters: Safety Guidance

E-bikes and e-scooters are increasingly popular but there are growing safety concerns around their storage and charging. Reports of fires in domestic properties caused by these items is increasing. PCHA has a policy which aims to reduce the risks associated with these items. Please request a copy if you are thinking of getting an e-bike or e-scooter.

Storage: these items should be stored and charged in your home or a designated, approved, non-flammable storage space – not in communal areas, on balconies or in understairs cupboards.

Follow the manufacturers' instructions for storage and maintenance of lithium-ion batteries which must be stored, like the e-bikes and scooters, in a dry cool place.

Please note that PCHA will not provide storage or charging points for e-bikes or e-scooters.



Charging: Follow the manufacturer's instructions, use the designated charger and always unplug it when finished. Never leave batteries to charge if you are asleep or away from home. Only use the designated charger and stop using the battery immediately to reduce the risk of fire if there is overheating, smoke, noise, smell or deformation of the battery. Never charge the appliance in an area required for exit from your home in the event of fire. Don't overload socket outlets or use extension leads. External trailing leads from windows, doors or other areas for charging purposes is not permitted.

Do not risk fire by disposing of batteries in general/recycling waste. In the event of a fire - get out immediately and call 999.

PCHA reserves the right to seek removal of these items if not used responsibly or damage is caused to PCHA's property.

If you have comments/queries about this safety guidance please get in touch on **020 8659 3055**.

Estate Inspections

Thank you to those who have joined us on our recent estate inspections. It has been great to have you on board and to have the opportunity to listen to your views on how we can make improvements. We are pleased to have received some feedback too.

We have increased our inspections to incorporate more of our Bexley properties, and are now doing 6-weekly estate inspections at the following Bexley schemes:

- Alliance Court
- 61 Avenue Road
- 71 Granville Road
- 21A Wrotham Road
- 22 Glynde Road
- 61 Station Road

We continue to work to make your estates and blocks nice places to live and to ensure they are well-maintained and pleasant spaces. These inspections enable us to keep a close eye on the standards of cleaning and gardening services, as well as ensuring the areas remain safe and meet health and safety standards. We welcome residents to join us on these occasions to offer your input to how we can improve and enhance our schemes.

We will send a text message to all scheme residents the day before we visit as a reminder. We may arrive at your estate or block at any time within the time slot listed below. If we have to postpone a visit for any reason, we will let you know.

Bexley Area: Alliance Court, 61 Avenue Road, 71 Granville Road, 21A Wrotham Road, 22 Glynde Road, 61 Station Road 11 am – 2 pm	Bromley Area: Garden Walk, Regina House, Mike Young House, South Penge Park 11 am – 1pm	Bromley Area: 27 Belvedere Road 11 Hamlet Road Stafford House 173 Anerley Road 1pm – 3 pm
13th August	16th August	14th August
17th September	27th September	25th September
29th October	8th November	6th November
10th December	20th December	18th December

Support & Signposting

Have you seen our Support Hub?

Providing support to our residents is a core value for us at PCHA. You can find information about the services we provide on the Support Hub on our website: go to www.pcha.co.uk and the 'Support Hub' menu.

On the Support Hub you will also find details of external support services available in Bexley and Bromley boroughs, and information about the monthly advice and signposting sessions we run on a drop-in basis at our Bexley and Penge offices.



Support & Signposting Sessions

During these sessions we provide one-off or short-term holistic support. We firstly identify areas of need for you as an individual. We can then provide personalised information and signposting services across a wide range of areas such as benefits, income maximization, social engagement opportunities, housing transfers and accessing support for physical and mental health issues.

All residents are welcome to attend these sessions which are usually held as follows:

Penge Office – 3rd Tuesday of each month

Bexley Office – 4th Tuesday of each month

Please refer to our website for details of forthcoming sessions and times or contact us on **020 8659 3055** or email housing@pcha.co.uk.

August to October 2024 advice and signposting sessions:

Penge office (99 Maple Road, Penge, SE20 8LN)

Tuesday 20th August 10am–12 noon & 2pm–4pm

Tuesday 17th September 10am–12noon & 2pm–4pm

Tuesday 22nd October 10am–12noon & 2pm–4pm

Bexley office (Rear of 21 Bourne Road, Bexley, DA5 1LW)

Tuesday 27th August 10am–12 noon & 2pm–3.30pm

Tuesday 24th September 10am–12 noon & 2pm–3.30pm

Tuesday 29th October 10am–12 noon & 2pm–3.30pm



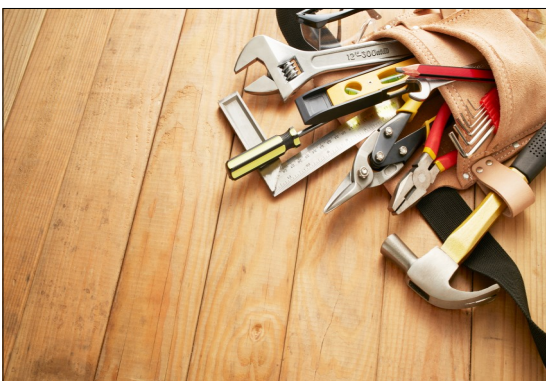
Home Improvements

You may make some improvements or alterations to your home, but you must contact PCHA to obtain written permission before work can go ahead.

Improvements include, but are not confined to:

- Erecting a TV aerial or satellite dish
- Erecting garden sheds, office buildings, etc.
- Structural alterations, extensions or loft conversions
- A new kitchen or bathroom
- Building a conservatory
- Building a patio or decking area
- Installing laminate flooring in flats.

Permission for improvements will not be unreasonably withheld, but may be subject to conditions. For example, you may be required to obtain planning permission or building control approval before work commences. You must ensure that all work is undertaken to a proper standard. We may also wish to inspect any works.



Always check what your Tenancy Agreement says about making improvements. Do not make improvements without PCHA's permission or you could be re-charged to put things back the way they were or to rectify any damage caused to the property. You could also be liable for any injuries sustained to third parties because of unauthorised improvements, and you may be in breach of your tenancy agreement.



If you have made an improvement but did not obtain written permission, you can apply retrospectively. Please contact our repairs team (see below) for further advice and to discuss this.

You may be entitled to compensation when you leave the property for improvements you have made – for example, if you have installed a new kitchen or bathroom with our written agreement. The rules and ways we work out compensation change from time to time and will depend on how long ago the improvement was made.

Please contact our repairs team on repairs@pcha.co.uk or **020 8659 3055**

CCTV & Video Doorbells

We do not permit the installation of CCTV equipment in any of our communal areas. Installation of video-recording doorbells is not usually permitted on any doorway that opens onto an internal communal area.

We apply this policy to ensure compliance with data protection and privacy rules relating to the use of video-recording doorbells.

If you configure your video doorbell so it only captures images within the boundary of your property and sound recording is disabled, then you are exempt from complying with data protection law.

However, if it captures images outside that boundary, such as your neighbours' homes or gardens, shared spaces or a public footpath or street, or records sounds (even sounds from within the boundary), then your use of the video doorbell must comply with data protection law. You would also need to put appropriate signage in place. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) can issue fines against those who abuse individuals' rights.

We recommend you use video doorbells responsibly in a way that respects the privacy of others. Please seek permission from PCHA prior to the installation of a video doorbell if you live in a flat or property with shared communal space or access.



If we receive complaints about your use of video doorbells, we will direct any complainers to the Police and/or the ICO. We will not be involved in complaints as this is a matter between you and the complainers.

We will ask you to remove video doorbells if we consider them to be inappropriately located.



Pocket Power Can Save You Money



We aim to ensure all our residents have access to up-to-date information and support around the best deals and savings for household bills and expenses. In line with this commitment, we have worked in partnership with Pocket Power since 2022, saving residents on average around £500 per year.

The service is offered via a phone call with the Pocket Power team who identify and help residents to apply for discounts such as social tariffs, water discounts, to wipe debt, and switch phone, broadband, car insurance and banking bills.

Pocket Power is set up to be simple and supportive to their customers, ensuring a streamlined and customer-focussed approach. The initial call lasts around 30 minutes. After this initial call they can also follow up to help people apply for new discounts, or make a switch when contracts run out.



One resident, Mark, was delighted to make savings of £739. Pocket Power was able to help him make savings around water bills and a water debt payment matching scheme, as well as assistance switching to Sky Social Tariff and receiving support to obtain a household appliance.

Helen, Managing Director at Pocket Power, said: *"We've really enjoyed working with PCHA over the last year. On average we saved every resident we spoke to almost £400 which is so needed, especially during this very difficult cost of living crisis. We're really looking forward to strengthening our partnership over the next year and building on the successes we've achieved so far."*

If you would like to find out more about Pocket Power or be referred to the scheme, please email housing@pcha.co.uk or call us on **020 8659 3055**.

Ask the CSOs – Tip No. 7

Our Customer Services Officers, Esmine and Georgie, are often the first people you will speak to if you report a repair or ring PCHA with a query. In each newsletter they give their answer to a frequently asked question. This time, they look at locating the stopcock for your home.

Your internal stopcock turns off the water from the supply pipe as it enters your property. This will shut off all the water in your property, meaning repairs can be made to pipes or disasters can be averted when there is a leak. For this reason, it is crucial you are aware of where it is located.

The standard stopcock is like a tap, but without an outlet spout. It may be found in these areas of the property:

- Under the kitchen sink
- In the bathroom
- Cupboard under the stairs
- By the gas meter
- In a cupboard - this can be common for flats.
- In communal corridors containing stopcocks for other flats

If you have a serious leak, you should turn off the water with your internal stopcock while you are waiting for a plumber to attend. This can often be done by hand, but you may need a set

of pliers to fully close it or get it moving if it's stiff. Turn the tap handle clockwise until the water stops. When you're ready to turn it on again, turn it back anti-clockwise.

If you need assistance to locate your stopcock, please call us on **020 8659 3055** or email repairs@pcha.co.uk.



Are you concerned about issues in your street?

FixMyStreet is an online platform designed to help people report issues with public services and infrastructure to authorities such as local councils or government agencies.

FixMyStreet was set up by a charity and is primarily for reporting things which are broken, dirty, damaged or dumped and need fixing, cleaning or clearing like graffiti, dog fouling, potholes or street lights that don't work.

Please also remember that if a problem relates to a PCHA property you should report the issue directly to us.

Please visit www.fixmystreet.com for guidance on what can and cannot be reported.

Is Cannabis Smoking Causing a Nuisance?

Cannabis is a Class B drug in the UK and its possession alone is illegal! It also smells strongly, and people may find the smell unpleasant. We consider activity associated with the use of illegal substances or the supply, dealing and disposal of illegal substances in the property or in the locality to be anti-social behaviour (ASB).

The police can take action if they find a suspected cannabis user on the street. However, if someone is using cannabis within their home the situation is more complicated. Unless the police have grounds to believe that cannabis is being grown at the address or the address is linked to drug supply, they have limited options. The police cannot charge with possession based on the smell alone.

If your neighbour is smoking cannabis and causing issues, it is suggested you consider speaking to them politely as a first port of call.



The local council have an environmental health department/ anti-social behaviour department who are often willing to help with regular and persistent cannabis use. They can issue warnings that will back up any enforcement action taken by PCHA. In cases of persistent and ongoing cannabis use where multiple households are affected, the police can also issue community protection warnings and notices that potentially end up in court if the behaviour continues.

We have a range of legal remedies and eviction is the last resort. We can only utilize these remedies where there is sufficient evidence and a substantial impact on victims and/or the community. For any ASB matters, it is therefore essential that you keep a clear and concise diary of when you are experiencing problems, including date, time and duration, and provide this information to us regularly.

We take all ASB seriously and understand the impact it can have on the quality of lives. Please refer to the ASB Leaflet on our Website and in your Resident Handbook for information. You may also contact us on **020 8659 3055** or email housing@pcha.co.uk.



Contact Us

Call us: **020 8659 3055**

Visit our website: **www.pcha.co.uk**

Contact us by email:

Enquiries: **housing@pcha.co.uk**

Repairs: **repairs@pcha.co.uk**

Health and safety: **healthandsafety@pcha.co.uk**

Complaints: **complaints@pcha.co.uk**

