

March | Spring 2024



Newsletter





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Welcome to PCHA's Spring Newsletter!

It is a year since we took a transfer of engagements from BECHA and we are now happily settled in Bexley as well as Bromley. The year has flown by!

We were delighted this year to have bought 9 new flats in Bexley on the site of the old Lord Kitchener Pub, providing much-needed new homes to local people. Whilst providing new homes is central to our aspirations, this year we have also been focussing on the condition and quality of our existing homes; following our stock condition survey we are currently working on a 3-year planned programme of improvements, which will be published soon.

We are also delighted to announce that we are in negotiations with the London Borough of Bromley to manage their housing stock on their behalf (about 300 homes). Subject to contract we hope to enter into a partnership with the Council from July of this year. Both parties see this has a really exciting opportunity to work together to address homelessness in Bromley. This will make PCHA much bigger but not so big that we lose our culture, identity or values. It is important to us that we remain a community-based housing association with a focus on people not numbers. There will be no impact on our existing residents; it should simply be business as usual.



We are very keen to get more residents engaged in working with us to shape our services, so please get in touch if you might be interested in working with us. We are also planning some resident events, so keep an eye out for details on these over the next few months – it would be great to see you at one of these.

Finally, as we head into spring, which officially starts on the 20th March, I am sure that we are all looking forward to some better weather to come. On this note don't forget the clocks go forward by one hour on the 31st March!

Best wishes,

Karen

Resident Satisfaction Survey Update



At PCHA we aspire to deliver a high-quality service and your feedback is really important. Listening to what you have to say and making improvements is essential and makes a difference to how we shape our services in the future.

Please remember that we always welcome suggestions from you about how we can do better!

Last year we were really pleased to receive so much feedback from you via our satisfaction survey completed by Acuity. We shared the results of the survey with you and have used these with the comments received to develop action plans for improvement. Every resident who submitted individual comments via the survey has had a response from us.



Here are some of the common issues we have identified and addressed:

Cleaning services in communal areas

We have reviewed the service contract for cleaning communal areas in Bexley properties and have put a new contract in place. In response to concerns about cleaning at some of our Bromley properties, we increased monitoring of standards across all properties where cleaning is provided to ensure standards improved where necessary.

Gardening

We are addressing concerns about gardening services, particularly at South Penge Park where we recently invited residents to a weekend “walkabout” to share their views on the estate and how we can work together to improve this.

Resident Satisfaction Survey Update

Repairs

The survey revealed high levels of satisfaction with the maintenance service overall, but there were issues around works being delayed. We are addressing this by improving communication with contractors to ensure a timely response, and with residents to facilitate access for works to be completed.

Security

A small number of people reported concerns about the security of communal doors and windows. These were investigated, and works completed where necessary.

Postal arrangements

Some residents were concerned about security of post in a block of flats so we have ordered new secure post boxes for this scheme.

Parking control

We received requests to look at parking at a small number of schemes. We are consulting with residents at two sites regarding options, and continue to monitor the level of demand for parking on other schemes.

Recycling

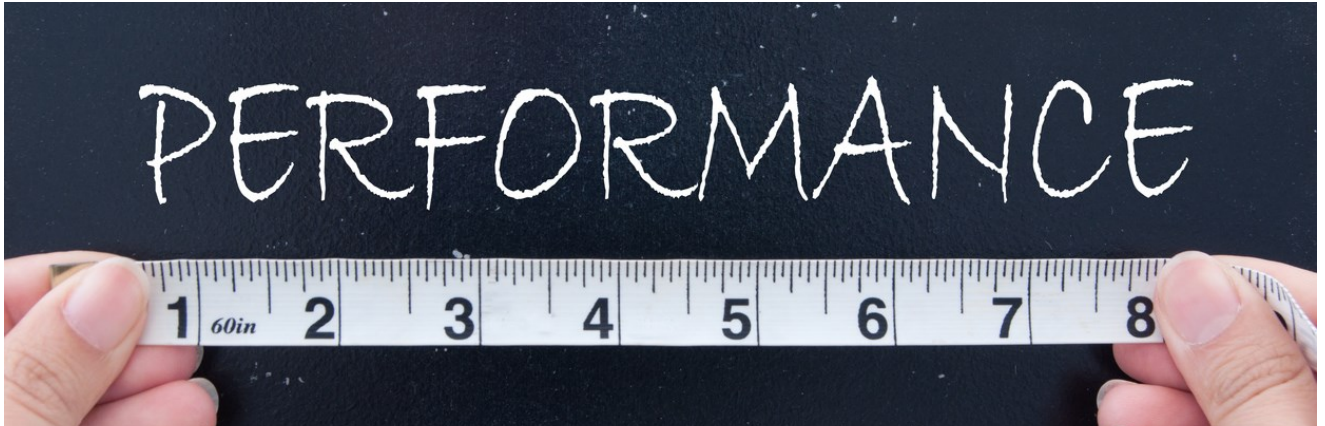
Some people were concerned about the poor use of recycling services and the impact this has on the appearance of our properties and risk of rodents. We have reminded people of the importance of following local recycling guidance in this newsletter (see pages 14–15) and continue to address any individual instances of misuse of recycling and bin areas where we can.

A new survey for 2024!

We have commissioned Acuity to carry out a new satisfaction survey, which will start in June/July 2024. We will write to all residents nearer the time to confirm arrangements. However, please remember you do not need to wait for our surveys to share your views with us – we always welcome receiving suggestions from you about we can do better! You can phone us on **020 8659 3055** or email us at housing@pcha.co.uk.



Our Performance – October to December



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 October to December 2023.

Repairs performance and satisfaction

From October to December, **93%** of all repairs reported by residents were completed within our target times. This is an improvement over the previous 6 months, when this figure was 86%.

In terms of repairs satisfaction, in the 12 months to the end of December, 86% of residents who responded to one of our repairs

satisfaction surveys said that they were 'satisfied with the quality of the repair'. This is the same as the previous few months.

We continue to focus on improving our repair times, as well as making sure that repairs are completed to a high standard. We aim for 100% of 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.

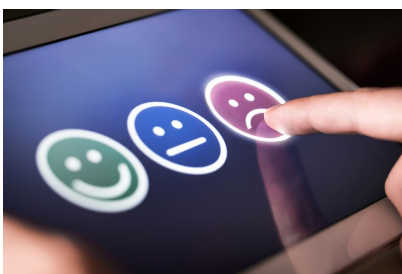


Our Performance – October to December

Complaints

We are happy to say that we received no formal complaints between October and December. We received 3 informal complaints of which 2 were subsequently escalated to more formal stages in 2024 and 1 discontinued by the resident.

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



ASB

We had no new ASB (anti-social behaviour) cases between October and December. We continue to work on 7 open cases.

PCHA aims to take a proactive approach both to 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 our current tenants owed us in arrears at the end of December was £97,953, and our *percentage* arrears (i.e. as a percentage of total rent charged) was 3.5%. This has gone up slightly since September, when we last reported to you. Having higher arrears means less money coming in to invest back into our homes and services, so we are always working to reduce this and get rents paid on time.

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 December we had only 3 void (empty) properties across Bromley and Bexley, down from 8 at the end of September. The team worked hard and let 10 homes in total over these 3 months!

Having fewer void properties not only means more people are safely housed, but also helps to sustain our income so we can invest more back into our homes and services.

Estate Walkabouts



As our 6-weekly estate walkabouts continue into the spring, we welcome all residents living at the schemes listed below to join us and share your views on how we can improve and manage your communal spaces. Recently we have been joined by residents who have offered us some good insight and useful feedback in identifying areas for improvement.

With the weather improving, we hope that more of you will be inspired to join us. Your opinions and improvement suggestions are extremely valuable, and we want you to have your say and

consider how to make the estates work as well as possible for you.

The list below shows the walkabout dates for spring and summer. We will send a text message to all scheme residents the day before we visit. If for any reason we need to postpone the date, we will notify you.

The times that we will be at each scheme are listed below next to the date. Within these time slots we will visit all 4 schemes in the order they appear from top to bottom. Please note that we may arrive at your estate at any time within the time slot in that order.

Mike Young House South Penge Park Regina House Garden Walk	27 Belvedere Road 23 Hamlet Road Stafford House 173 Anerley Road	Alliance Court
12 th April 2024 11am-12:30pm	10 th April 2024 1pm-2pm	2 nd April 11am-12pm
24 th May 2024 11am-12:30pm	22 nd May 2024 1pm-2pm	14 th May 11am-12pm
5 th July 2024 11am-12:30pm	3 rd July 1pm-2pm	25 th June 11am-12pm
16 th August 2024 11am-12:30pm	14 th August 1pm-2pm	6 th August 11am-12pm
27 th Sept 2024 11am-12:30pm	25 th Sept 1pm-2pm	17 th Sept 11am-12pm

Fire Safety

We take fire safety very seriously at PCHA. We complete regular inspections and Fire Risk Assessments to the common parts of our blocks of flats so that we can help keep residents safe within their homes.

Your cooperation in this area is much appreciated.



We would like to remind all residents of the following:

1. Please make sure you test any alarms in your home on a weekly basis to ensure that they are operational. **Remember that you are responsible for the replacement of any batteries within these.**
2. Please ensure that you do not store any personal items in common areas. This includes prams, tables, chairs and mobility aids.
3. Please report any damage to any fire safety equipment either in your home or to the common areas of your block (if applicable). This includes fire doors, smoke detectors, emergency lights and fire alarms.
4. If you have a balcony, please do not use any barbecues or candles, or smoke on them.
5. Please take the time to read any Fire Action notices on the noticeboard within the common area. This important information lets you know what to do in the event of a fire.

Fire Action notices

We will also be posting out individual Fire Action notices to residents where applicable (for blocks). Please look out for these, read them and keep them in a safe place.

If you have any questions or concerns about fire safety, please do not hesitate to contact us on

020 8659 3055 or email

housing@pcha.co.uk.

Avoiding Disrepair Scams



Talk to us!

Avoid disrepair scams... and talk to us if you need repairs!

We aim to provide an excellent repairs and maintenance service and want to ensure that we can all be proud of PCHA homes and estates. Key to this is providing a good repairs service.

If we have got something wrong, or you are unsure whether a repair is PCHA's responsibility or your responsibility, please contact us. You can also find guidance in our Leaflet "Your Repairs and Maintenance Service" on our website or in your Resident Handbook.

We have reported previously on the increase in companies contacting social housing residents and either offering to take on cases regarding outstanding repairs with the promise of compensation, or using this as an opportunity to elicit personal information from residents to steal money as part of a scam.

More recently we have been made aware of social housing residents falling victim to unscrupulous companies who promise 'no win no fee' support for disrepair claims. Where landlords have *not* been found to be negligent, the victims of some of these scams have faced substantial and unexpected legal fees.

Please be careful to avoid scammers promising compensation payments and requesting bank details, as they could proceed to empty your bank account. Never give your personal details or bank account details to any cold caller and remember the saying "there is no such thing as a free lunch"!

Please call us if you have queries or concerns about outstanding repair issues in your home so that we can take any appropriate action to address these. You can phone us on **020 8659 3055** or email us at repairs@pcha.co.uk.

Away From Home?

Going on holiday or away for a while?

If you are going to be away from home for a while, whether on holiday, visiting friends or family, or maybe even for a hospital stay, please ensure that you do the following:

- DO – ensure that you let us know so that we can arrange any necessary health and safety checks, e.g. gas safety inspections. Please be sure to let us know how long you are planning on being away for.
- DO – let your contents insurance provider know you are going away (if it will be longer than you advised them when you took out your policy).
- DO – ensure that you have a trusted keyholder so that should there be an issue within your home, we can attend to it.
- DO – let us know your contact details while you are away, and those of your trusted keyholder. Also, provide your keyholder with our details.
- DO – ensure that your keyholder visits your home regularly to check that everything is OK. If you are away from home for more than a week, they should run your taps and shower weekly and flush any toilet – this is to ensure that harmful bacteria do not build up.

If you need any further advice, please contact us on **020 8659 3055** or email us at housing@pcha.co.uk.



Advice & Signposting Sessions

Since January we have been holding regular Advice & Signposting Sessions for residents. We have been delighted with the response and outcomes achieved so far!

We recognise that families and individuals are facing unprecedented financial and welfare pressures. We want to do all we can to link up those in need with advice and support to help alleviate some of these pressures.

The service aims to provide one-off or short-term holistic support by identifying and addressing areas of need, and then providing personalised information and signposting services.

We seek to provide advice/signposting across a wide range of areas such as benefits, income maximisation, social engagement opportunities and housing transfers. We can also help with accessing support for physical or mental health issues.

The sessions are held monthly in both Penge and Bexley offices. The upcoming dates are listed on the next page. Please do pop along if you feel we may be able to help, or call us to find out more (asking for either Jackie or Jean).



Advice & Signposting Sessions

Upcoming advice and signposting sessions:

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

Tuesday 23rd April 10am–12 noon and 2pm–4pm

Tuesday 21st May between 10am-12noon & 2pm-4pm

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

Tuesday 26th March 10am–12 noon and 2pm–3.30pm

Tuesday 30th April 10am–12 noon and 2pm–3.30pm

Tuesday 28th May 10am–12 noon and 2pm–3.30pm



Case study

Resident 'A' came to our first session and wanted support to apply for Bromley Household Support Fund. The application was successful and the resident will now receive a £200 voucher!

We also made a successful application to Bromley Brighter Beginnings for help with school uniform for her child. A complete school uniform was sent direct to the resident, and a voucher arranged for our resident to collect school shoes.

The same resident also needed help to find an NHS dentist. We helped her to locate a local dentist taking on NHS patients, and an appointment was made for the very next day.



Recycling – Getting it Right!



Recycling is important – it's good for the planet, and recycling correctly keeps costs down!

Putting the wrong items in bins means they are labelled as “contaminated” by councils and will not be collected. Please help us by putting items in the correct bins.



What is contamination?

Common causes of contamination include:

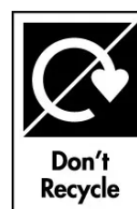
- Putting the wrong types of glass and plastic into the glass and plastic bins.
- Not washing your recycling (plastics, glass or tins) or putting dirty recycling in the recycling bin.
- Putting non-recyclable items in the recycling bin.



Recycling – Getting it Right!

Tips for avoiding contamination – what can and can't be recycled?

- Pyrex items (e.g. dishes, jugs) cannot be recycled as they are designed to withstand higher temperatures than bottles or jars.
- Broken glass cannot be recycled.
- Crisp packets, coffee cups, pizza boxes and metallised plastic film products such as baby food and pet food pouches cannot be recycled due to grease and food residue clinging to them.
- Tetra Packs (e.g., orange juice cartons) are made of paperboard, plastic and aluminium. They *can* be recycled but must go into the **plastic and glass** recycling collection and not the paper one.
- Pay attention to the labelling on the packaging, such as the examples here, as it will indicate whether an item can be recycled.



Check your council's website for full information on what can and can't be recycled. Useful links are provided below. Please follow the instructions and don't try to guess! The websites also give information on the recycling process, the reasons some recyclable materials can't be mixed, and how to recycle items not included in your weekly collection.

Note that when the council do not take contaminated waste, PCHA must pay for a private collection, and this will be reflected in your service charges.

Bexley borough: bexley.gov.uk/services/rubbish-and-recycling/recycling/what-goes-my-recycling-wheelie-bins

Bromley borough: bromley.gov.uk/household-waste-recycling

General: recyclenow.com/how-to-recycle/recycling-symbols

General: londonrecycles.co.uk/local-recycling/

Housing Perks – Helping You Save Money!

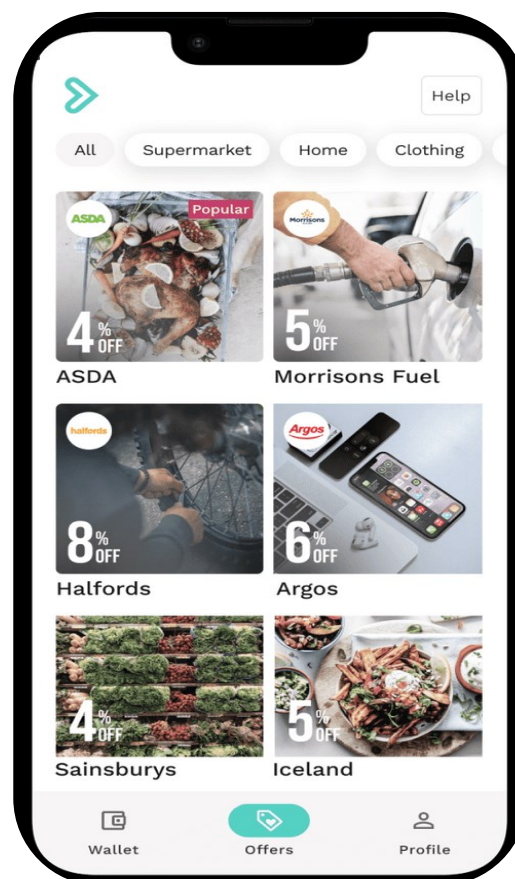


All residents should have received in February a letter and leaflet about the Housing Perks app. This is a discounts app that we have subscribed to. It's free to use for residents, and gives you discounts of up to 18% at over 100 brands and stores.

The app can help you to save money on essentials such as groceries, car fuel, clothing, school uniforms and equipment, home furnishings and DIY, and on family days out.

The discounts are with popular brands and stores including:

- Sainsburys
- Tesco
- Asda
- B&M
- Argos
- Primark
- TK Maxx
- B&Q
- Sports Direct.



Please refer to the Housing Perks leaflet accompanying this newsletter for guidance on how to use the app and make savings.

If you have any difficulties signing up, or need another copy of the letter that was sent to you with instructions for using the app, or have any other queries, please contact us on **020 8659 3055**. You can also come to one of our Advice & Signposting Sessions (see pages 12–13 for details) where we will be happy to help.

Celebrating Communities and Cultures

We would like to invite all our residents to share your cultural experiences and celebrations with us.

We believe that the diversity of our residents makes our communities vibrant and unique. Whether it's a traditional festival, a special holiday, or a cultural practice that you hold dear, we would love to hear about it!

Sharing your cultural experiences and celebrations not only allows us to appreciate and learn from one another, but it also helps foster a sense of belonging and unity with our communities that we live or work within. It's an opportunity to showcase the richness and beauty of our diverse backgrounds.

So please take a moment to share your cultural experiences and celebrations with us. You can write a brief description or share a photo or a link. Please send your contributions to housing@pcha.co.uk, write us a letter, or give us a call on **020 8659 3055**. With your permission, we will share your submission in our next newsletter.

Thank you for your participation!

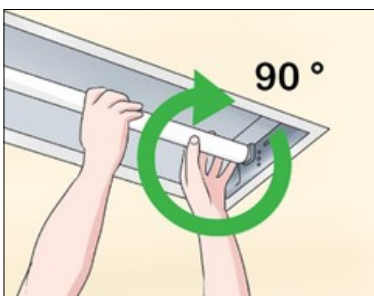


Ask the CSOs – Tip No. 6

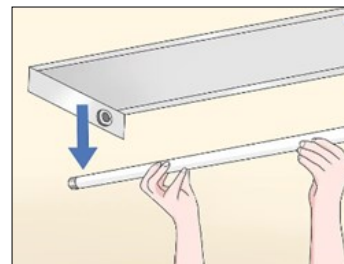
Our Customer Services Officers, Esmine and Georgie, are often the first people you will speak to if you report a repair or ring PCHA with a query. In each newsletter they give their answer to a frequently asked question. This time, they share how to change a tube-style fluorescent light bulb.

You can follow these simple steps to change a fluorescent light bulb.

1. Ensure the power is switched off before you start. Do not rely on the wall switch – use the fuse box to shut off power to the lamp's circuit. Do this task during the day while you have natural light.
2. Use a stepladder or other support. Do not stand on a chair. Make sure that you use a good solid and safe ladder, and position it underneath the light fixture. Ask a friend or family member to help.
3. Remove the cover if necessary. Rotate the first tube 90 degrees. Reach up, and support the first fluorescent tube with both hands, keeping your hands as close to the ends of the bulb as possible. Then rotate the tube in either direction a quarter-turn until it stops.



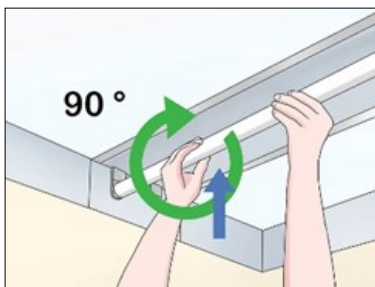
4. Gently lower the fluorescent tube straight down through the slot. Place the tube out of the way.



5. Check the number on the side of the bulb for the correct type and size of the replacement. You can buy these online or at local DIY stores or electrical suppliers.



6. Lift the new fluorescent tube into place. Line its prongs up with the slots in either socket. Push the tube straight up into the sockets, and then rotate it 90 degrees until you feel it lock into place. Give the lamp a gentle tug to ensure that it is firmly in place.



7. The starter for the tube may also need replacing at the same time as the bulb. These are normally fitted on the side and look like this:



If after following these steps your light does not come on, or if you would like any further guidance, please contact us on 020 8659 3055.

Please **do not** call our 'Out of hours' repairs service if your kitchen light is not working as this is not an emergency and you may be recharged.

Feeding Wildlife

Please do not feed wildlife around your property or in communal areas.

Our recent estate inspections highlighted that some residents are feeding wildlife by leaving food out in communal areas. We have also received some calls from residents who are concerned about it.

We understand that putting food out for wildlife is done with good intentions, but in reality it can make rodent issues worse. Food left out for birds and foxes attracts rats too. In addition, food left out looks unsightly and creates mess. It is also hazardous if placed in communal walkways. It is not acceptable to throw food out of windows.

Your co-operation and assistance to ensure that our communal spaces can be enjoyed safely by all is appreciated.





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**

