

# NEWSLETTER

## WINTER 2021



# Christmas Opening Times

## Our opening times over the holiday season:

Friday 24th Dec: **Closed**

Monday 27th Dec: **Closed**

Tuesday 28th Dec: **Closed**

Wednesday 29th Dec: **Open 10am–4pm**

Thursday 30th Dec: **Open 10am–4pm**

Friday 31st Dec: **Closed**

Monday 3rd Jan: **Closed**

Tuesday 4th Jan onwards: **Normal opening hours resume**



## Emergency Repairs

If you need to report an emergency repair while we are closed, please call:

BAS (for non-heating repairs)  
on **020 8854 8700**

or

Clairglow (for gas heating and boiler repairs) on **0800 0748055**.





# Introduction from Karen



As we approach Christmas I am conscious that this year has been challenging for many of us. Indeed, I suspect many of us are looking forward to 2022 and a more positive year ahead! Nobody envisaged that the pandemic would last for so long and have such an impact on so many aspects of our lives.

However, this time of year is often one of reflection and I find myself feeling grateful for many things as I look back over the past 12 months. This period has reminded me of the importance of home and family and having a real connection with others. Communication has never been so important—even if it is through a device! It has made me think of all those frontline service workers who have worked tirelessly to keep things moving, often for little reward. Mostly it has reminded me of the importance of human kindness and compassion, even in trying circumstances. We added kindness into our values this year, as a constant reminder of the need for tolerance, patience and kindness with each other.

I am extremely proud of my team at PCHA who have worked hard to continue to deliver the best possible service, despite the challenges and I want to thank them for their passion and commitment. I would also like to thank all our residents who have generally been patient, reasonable and understanding (even when we have got things wrong!).

*So from myself and the team we would like to wish you a very merry Christmas and much happiness in 2022. Karen, Chief Executive*

# Resident Satisfaction Survey

At PCHA we pride ourselves on the relationship we have with our residents. We aspire to deliver a high quality service. Listening to your views and comments helps us to do that and is really important to PCHA. Your feedback and suggestions make a real difference in shaping our services going forward.

## STAR Survey ('Survey of Tenants and Residents')

Earlier this year we commissioned Acuity, an independent consultancy, to carry out a 'STAR' survey on our behalf. This was to help us understand what you think about your home and the services we provide, and what you would like us to do differently in the future.

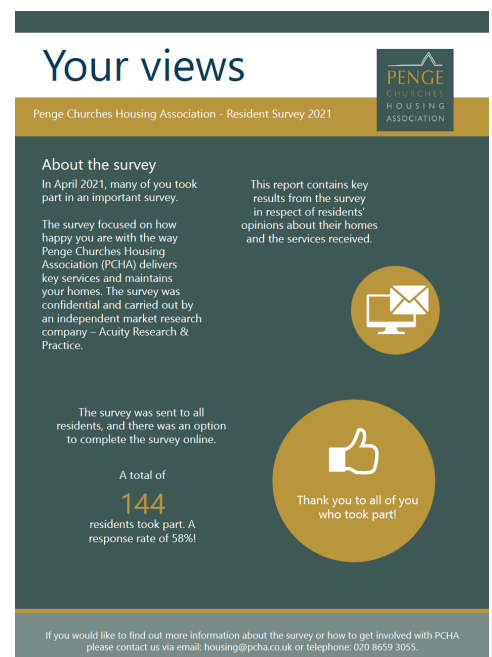
If you have received a print copy of this newsletter by post, you will see we have also sent you a separate summary report from Acuity 'Your views' detailing the outcome of the survey to all residents. You can also see a copy on PCHA's website.

## Results

We were delighted that so many residents responded (58%) and with the high levels of satisfaction recorded.

Over eight out of ten PCHA residents (84%) are happy with the service we provide. We were pleased with the higher ratings recorded for being easy to deal with, PCHA homes being safe and secure, the value for money of the rents we charge and PCHA staff being friendly and approachable and treating residents fairly.

We also noted the high levels of satisfaction in respect of our approach and communication during the pandemic.



# Resident Satisfaction Survey

## Action plan

The survey results were reported to PCHA's Board and an action plan established which included contacting residents where possible to understand any concerns raised and to put things right. Key areas identified for focus and exploration included:

- Damp/condensation issues
- Planned works and property condition
- Anti-social behaviour

We have listened to your feedback and already made changes to some of our procedures to address some of the concerns recorded.

## Consultation on Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Before the end of the year, the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) will launch a consultation on a new set of tenant satisfaction measures. The Regulator will be keen to know what you think and listen to your views. We will ensure that information about the consultation and how to submit your views is issued to all PCHA residents in due course, so watch this space!

## Tenant Satisfaction measures

Regulator of Social Housing  
2021



# Budgeting for Christmas

## Don't let debt ruin your New Year!

Christmas can be a challenging time for us all financially. After the disappointment of a lockdown Christmas last year and the continuing impact of the Covid pandemic, you may be tempted to spend more than you can afford this year. You may also be feeling under financial pressure due to rising food and energy costs.

Here are a few tips to avoid a festive season debt hangover.

### Pay your rent first – don't put your home at risk

Paying your rent should always be top of your Christmas list. It can be tempting to spend your money elsewhere, but rent is a priority debt so start 2022 off on the right foot and ensure your rent account is up to date. If you're struggling to pay your rent this Christmas, please call us on **020 8659 3055**.



### Set a Christmas budget – and stick to it

Remember, Christmas Day is just one day – don't ruin the whole of next year paying for it. Ask yourself, "What can I afford to spend on Christmas?", then budget accordingly.

### Don't forget the everyday bills

Rent, utility bills, food and other commitments still have to be paid for. Keeping warm can be expensive during the winter months. You may be eligible for support via Winter Fuel or Cold Weather Payments or Warm Home Discounts from your electricity supplier. Please contact us if you would like more information about these payments and benefits.



# Budgeting for Christmas

## **Don't bank on an overdraft**

If you need more money, don't go overdrawn at the bank without talking to them first – it will work out more expensive.

## **Keep it simple**

If you can afford to you should pay for your presents by cash or debit card. Try not to be persuaded to take out credit agreements or use credit cards as they will often work out more expensive and leave you with longer term debt.

## **Buy safe to be safe**

Whatever the deal is, don't buy from unauthorised traders and don't borrow from unauthorised lenders. You may be buying illegal counterfeit goods – or be paying extortionate rates of interest.

## **Help from SHINE London**

Remember if you are struggling with energy bills or heating your home, you could be eligible for free advice and an assessment from SHINE London. You can access free support and advice from SHINE if any of the following apply:

- You are over 60
- You are on a low income
- You have a disability or long-term illness
- You have children.



For more information, please visit their website at [www.shine-london.org.uk](http://www.shine-london.org.uk). To contact them, call 0300 555 0195 or 0207 527 2001 or email [contact@shine-london.org.uk](mailto:contact@shine-london.org.uk).

**Finally, don't just follow these tips for Christmas; keep following them and you will find it easier to manage your money throughout the year.**

# Policies Update

This autumn we reviewed several of PCHA's policies, some of which directly affect services we provide to residents. If you would like to read any of these policies in full, we can send you a copy; just let us know.

We always welcome feedback on PCHA's policies so please let us know if you think we need to make changes or improvements.

We also encourage you to join our **Armchair Club**. If you join, you will be asked to comment on PCHA policies, documents or other communications from the comfort of your armchair! As an Armchair Club member, you can pick and choose whether you want to comment (or not) at any stage. If you would like to find out more, please email us at [housing@pcha.co.uk](mailto:housing@pcha.co.uk) or give us a call.

Here is a summary of the key policies that we reviewed.

## Adults' Safeguarding Policy

PCHA takes safeguarding of our residents very seriously. We all have a responsibility to prevent, recognise and act on abuse and neglect quickly to keep adults at risk of abuse safe from harm.

Anyone raising a safeguarding alert or concern will always be listened to and concerns recorded and acted upon. We have a duty to tell the police and/or Social Services if there are any safeguarding concerns about any of our residents.

Wherever possible, we will seek consent to share information with other organisations to safeguard adults at risk. However, we cannot guarantee full confidentiality when a duty to safeguard adults at risk, vital interests or the public interest is greater than our responsibility to an individual.

If you have concerns regarding a safeguarding issue for yourself, a member of your family or neighbours, please contact us at [housing@pcha.co.uk](mailto:housing@pcha.co.uk) or call us on 020 8659 3055.





# Policies Update

## Harassment Policy

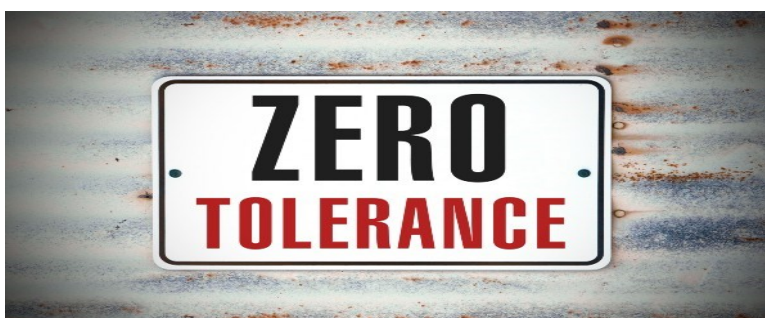
The Harassment Policy is focused on protecting our staff. Our staff have the right to be treated with dignity and respect at work. No member of staff should be made to feel unsafe or intimidated in any way whilst at work. Any harassment, victimisation or bullying of members of staff will not be tolerated.

Behaviour that is considered unacceptable and may constitute harassment includes (but is not limited to):

- Using abusive or foul language directed at staff
- Using language or behaviours directed at staff that are discriminatory or personally offensive
- Physical, verbal or psychological threats towards staff
- Making continued, unsubstantiated allegations about staff
- Harassment of staff using any communication method
- Making excessive or unreasonable demands on staff
- Excessive communication (in any format)
- Refusing to accept an answer and making repetitive demands



We will take whatever action is necessary to protect our staff first and foremost and in severe cases we will pursue eviction. Any incidents of physical threats or other bullying, harassing, victimising, or discriminatory behaviours which may be criminal will always be reported to the police.



# Policies Update

## Allocation and Lettings Policy

PCHA is committed to providing excellent homes and helping to build strong and sustainable communities where people want to live and work. We recognise our homes are a valuable resource that should be allocated in an efficient, fair, open and transparent way. We do not operate a waiting list for most of our homes as we work closely with Bromley Council to meet local housing needs. However, we do hold a waiting list for internal transfers and a separate waiting list for studio flats.

### Transfers and exchanges

We aim to enable mobility for our residents by facilitating transfers and exchanges. We operate a choice-based transfer scheme for those who want to move home. While any resident may apply for a transfer, priority over other applicants and the likelihood of an offer being made will depend on a priority-based banding system.



Residents must have held their tenancy for at least 12 months before they are eligible to apply for a transfer. Those on starter tenancies will not have the right to transfer.

We will not normally accept a transfer application from residents with rent arrears or from residents who have not looked after their property. All transfer applications will be assessed by a tenancy visit and property inspection.

We cannot always help residents to transfer as quickly as we would like, and so we also encourage residents who apply for a transfer to explore other ways of moving home. We will give information and advice on other options including mutual exchanges, mobility schemes, private rented and low-cost home ownership schemes. PCHA pays for Homeswapper to encourage resident mobility and choice. All transfer applicants will be expected to register with Homeswapper ([www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk)) for mutual exchange and encouraged to register with their local authority for housing. Please contact Jean or Nina for more details.

# Policies Update

## Pets Policy

PCHA aims to enable residents to enjoy their homes and to promote their wellbeing. Owning a pet can provide companionship and comfort.

We also recognise that in certain circumstances, pets may cause a nuisance and disturbance to other residents, or even a risk to others. We consider these factors, together with animal welfare concerns and the law, when considering whether to grant permission for pet ownership.

Our Pets Policy outlines conditions under which permission may be given for you to keep a pet, your responsibilities when owning a pet, and the action that may be taken by PCHA if the conditions for pet ownership are not met.

You must receive written permission from PCHA to keep a pet in your home **before** acquiring a pet, want to keep a pet on a temporary basis (e.g., to look after an animal while its owner is away) or if you already

have permission and are applying to transfer to another PCHA property.

If you are considering obtaining a pet, please contact us.



# Policies Update

## Eviction Policy

Our aim is always to ensure residents are given appropriate support and advice to help them sustain their tenancy. Eviction is always the last resort.

Where tenancy breaches occur, PCHA will do everything possible to support residents to address these and prevent eviction. We will always ensure that we have considered whether eviction is proportionate. In so doing we will also consider the effect of residents' behaviour on their neighbours, those in the locality and our staff and contractors.

When we become aware of any possible tenancy breaches, we will intervene quickly. We will consider individual circumstances before taking legal action. We will only take legal action if all reasonable attempts to achieve compliance with the tenancy or licence agreement have failed.

Tenancy breaches may include non-payment of rent resulting in rent arrears, anti-social behaviour, subletting without PCHA's permission or not occupying your home. Whilst eviction is a last resort, unfortunately it is not always possible to avoid this.

**If you have any concerns about the terms of your tenancy agreement or a possible breach, please contact us. Please remember that we are here to work with you to ensure you are able to maintain your tenancy with PCHA and will arrange support for this if appropriate.**





# Don't delay reporting repairs

At PCHA we want you to enjoy, feel safe in and feel proud of your PCHA home. We believe we have a shared responsibility with regards to looking after your home and tenancy; working together is key to our success.

## Report repairs promptly

It is important to us to carry out any repairs for which PCHA is responsible promptly. We know there has been media coverage recently about landlords failing to maintain their homes. We want to reassure you that we will always work with you to ensure that repairs are undertaken to a good standard and on a timely basis. It is important to us to have a good, open and honest relationship with our residents. We want you to feel confident that we listen and respond. If things go wrong, we want to put them right.



## Tell us!

Please tell us if there are any outstanding repairs in your home so that we can address them. If you are unsure about whether a repair is your responsibility or PCHA's please ask us about this too – we are here to help. Call us on 020 8659 3055 or email [repairs@pcha.co.uk](mailto:repairs@pcha.co.uk).



# Condensation, Damp & Mould

An area that can be a concern to both PCHA and residents is condensation, damp or mould (CDM). To improve residents' health and well-being and to protect our properties, it is important that we manage these problems proactively and effectively. We have reviewed our process for how we proactively manage issues of CDM as and when they occur.

Whilst we recognise that residents' lifestyles can have a significant impact, we will always investigate proactively any CDM issues.

During winter months and when the weather turns colder, condensation and mould can form more easily. Are you experiencing condensation and mould on windows, walls or ceilings? Are the window surrounds or bathroom ceiling going mouldy? If so, it is extremely unlikely to be caused by a defect with the property itself and more likely to be a result of the way you are using the property.

## What is condensation?

Condensation occurs when warm air collides with cold surfaces. It can also occur when there's too much humidity in your home and the moisture created collects as droplets on a cold surface when the humid air is in contact with it. This is especially common in winter,

when your central heating system comes on in the cooler hours of the mornings and evenings. When warm, moist air meets either a surface or air that is colder than it is, the warm air is unable to retain the same amount of moisture as it did and the water is released either into the cold air or onto the colder surface, causing condensation to form, quickly followed by mould.

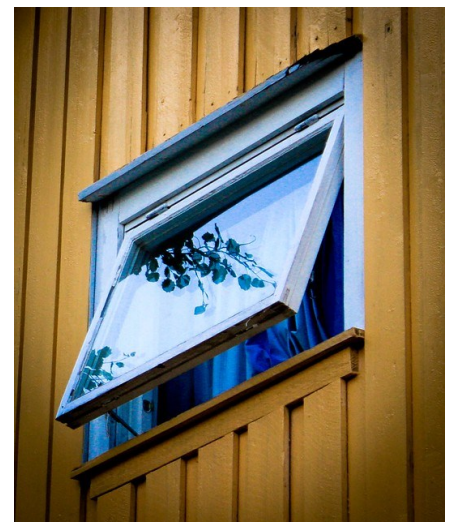


# Condensation, Damp & Mould

Condensation can release a huge amount of water and can be mistaken for a leak as walls become so wet.

## What can you do about it?

- Open the curtains and wipe dry your windows and windowsills every morning, as well as surfaces in the kitchen or bathroom that have become wet. Wring out the cloth in a sink rather than drying it on a radiator, or the water vapour goes straight back into the air in the property.
- When cooking, ensure that the door is shut, window open and extractor fan on. These actions should be taken during cooking and for 20–30 minutes afterwards.
- Hang your washing outside to dry if possible or hang it in the bathroom with the door closed and a window slightly open or extractor fan on. Do not be tempted to put it on radiators or in front of a radiator or heater.
- If using a tumble dryer, whether vented or with a condenser, the kitchen door should be shut and windows open. (Tumble dryers including those with condensers let off a lot of heat and moisture when in use.)
- When having baths or showers ensure the bathroom door is shut and extractor fan is on. If you have windows in your bathroom, keep them open. These actions should also be taken during your bath/shower and for 20 - 30 minutes after your bath / shower.
- Open windows slightly when the central heating system is on.



We have a leaflet on condensation providing more information that can be accessed through our website or we are happy to send a copy in the post if you don't have access to the internet.

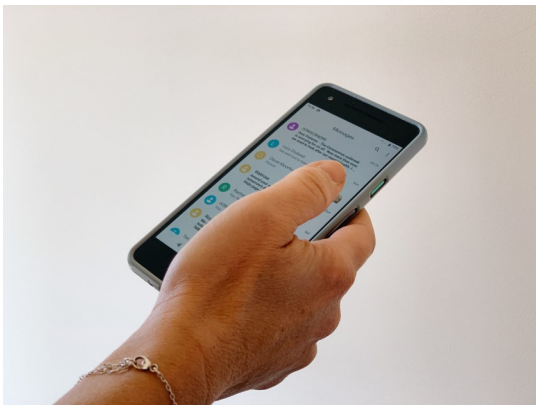
# Our exciting new tech!



We are delighted to say that we have recently commissioned a new IT package called Homemaster to support our finance, housing management and repairs services. This decision has been driven by our desire to improve our performance and customer service. This autumn the team at PCHA have all been working hard to update our data and set up the new system which will go live early in the new year.

Whilst there is a lot of work involved in the initial set up, we are excited about the benefits the new system will bring. These will have a direct impact on our communication with residents and there will be a resident portal/app where you can report repairs and check your rent account (and much more!). In particular, the new system will improve processes so we can more easily send

texts and emails to you when appropriate and seek your feedback. Some of the improvements will also address issues identified within the feedback and comments received in our STAR Satisfaction Survey earlier this year (more about this elsewhere).



When you contact us from February onwards, you may find that we take that opportunity to verify the data we hold for you such as email addresses, phone numbers or who lives in your home, all of which will improve our customer service. Thank you in advance for your assistance and patience during this set up process.





# Melvin Hall Christmas Meal



Melvin Hall  
Community Group

Registered Charity No. 1170089

Melvin Hall Community Group is holding a Boxing Day Christmas Meal on **Sunday 26th December 2021** at Melvin Hall Community Centre (in Melvin Road, Penge).

Doors open at 11:30 for hot drinks and dinner will be served at 12-12:30, with a close at 4pm.

The meal is free for anyone who would like to go along!

To find out more about Melvin Hall and the events they hold for the local community, visit their website at [www.melvinhall.org](http://www.melvinhall.org).

*Merry  
Christmas*

# Tips for a 'greener' Christmas

At Christmas most of us generate more recycling and waste, whether it be wrapping paper, packaging or food. At PCHA we want to encourage you to use less and recycle more this Christmas season.

## How could you make your Christmas 'greener'?



### Consider buying used

Instead of purchasing new gifts consider shopping used. Check out charity shops, antique shops, eBay or even Facebook marketplace. You'll save money and reduce your carbon footprint at the same time! Or even consider re-gifting; just don't give it back to the person who gave it to you originally!

### Shop local

Reduce your emissions and support small and local businesses. Check out local shops, farmer's markets, or family-owned businesses for unique finds.



### Minimise food waste

Buy only what you need and get creative with leftovers. If you have bought too much consider donating to a local food bank or use a food sharing or waste app. For all unavoidable food waste make sure to recycle this in your food waste bin.

### Donate or sell



With all the new toys or clothes that will be received over the Christmas period consider donating, recycling or even selling old or unwanted items. You can give these to a local charity shop, recycle clothes at clothes banks and through your recycling service or sell your items for a little extra money.

# Tips for a 'greener' Christmas

## Wrapping paper and Christmas cards

Avoid shiny, glittery or foil wrapping paper and Christmas cards as these cannot be recycled. Before recycling wrapping paper, do the scrunch test – if it stays scrunched then it can be recycled. Remember to remove all sticky tape, labels, or decorations.

## Save energy

Swap out incandescent lights for LED lights on your Christmas tree. Surprisingly, if every UK household did this, we could save more than £11 million or 29,000 tonnes of CO<sup>2</sup> just over the 12 days of Christmas! LED lights use up to 80% less energy than incandescent lights.



## Recycle your Christmas tree

In addition to recycling Christmas trees at the refuse sites at Waldo Road, Bromley and Churchfields Road, Beckenham, Bromley Council provides a free Christmas tree garden waste recycling service at temporary sites around



the borough. For details of the locations for January 2022 and their opening hours, search online for 'Bromley Christmas tree recycling' and this will lead you to the relevant page of the Bromley Council website (or if you are reading the online version of this newsletter, [click here](#)). Remember that for recycling, Christmas trees must not have soil, pots or decorations attached.

# Contact Us



**General:**

**020 8659 3055**

**[housing@pcha.co.uk](mailto:housing@pcha.co.uk)**



**To report a repair:**

**020 8659 3055**

**[repairs@pcha.co.uk](mailto:repairs@pcha.co.uk)**



**To report a health and safety issue:**

**020 8659 3055**

**[healthandsafety@pcha.co.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@pcha.co.uk)**

**To report a complaint:**

**020 8659 3055**

**[complaints@pcha.co.uk](mailto:complaints@pcha.co.uk)**

**Visit our website at [www.pcha.co.uk](http://www.pcha.co.uk)**

**Making a positive impact**

