

25th September 2020

Dear Resident

IMPORTANT INFORMATION – COVID-19 AND CHANGES TO OUR SERVICE

Firstly, I hope that you and your family and friends are safe and well in these difficult times. I am writing to update you on the current situation regarding Covid-19 along with some significant changes to our service offer going forward.

I don't suppose any of us back in March would have imagined that we would still be in a world living with Covid-19 by the autumn. It has been a challenging year so far and I know many of you have faced some very difficult times over the past six months. At PCHA we have been focusing on keeping services going and trying to make our office Covid-secure in the hope that we would be able to return to normal. Unfortunately, the reality is that we will be living with Covid-19 for the foreseeable future and so we can no longer think about everything that has happened over the past six months as being temporary. On this basis, we have reviewed our long-term service offer and I will outline what this means later in this letter.

However, in the meantime we live with the pandemic. On Tuesday night the Prime Minister introduced further measures to contain the virus in the face of a "second spike" and it is possible further measures will be announced over the coming weeks unless the infection rate slows down. It is also likely that the situation will be made worse by the winter months and all the general health risks that this season brings. The Prime Minister made it clear that these measures are likely to be in place for the next six months.

As you may remember our recovery plan, which we published in May, is linked to the Government alert levels. On Monday 21st September the alert level was raised from 3 to 4. However, this must be seen as a guide rather than a rigid plan as much has changed over the last few months. We know that the Government are doing everything they can to avoid another national hard lockdown in an attempt to protect the economy and, as a result, the guidance is much more complicated and confusing than it was in March. On this basis, we have adjusted our recovery plan and we will consider not just the alert level but the local infection data and other guidance as appropriate. Our priority remains to keep both staff and residents safe and continue to deliver a service to you, wherever we are working from! During lockdown we have realised that we can continue to deliver a service in spite of the challenges and we do have contingency plans to cope with the potential disruption to our service over the winter months. We have enclosed an updated recovery plan leaflet for your information.

In response to the latest announcement and increase in the alert level, here are some of the key steps we are currently taking to protect everyone in this ever-evolving situation:

- The office will remain closed to the public and essential meetings/visits will be by appointment only to ensure we can see you safely. We have adjusted to office to make it as Covid-secure as possible.
- Our staff will be working mainly from home to continue to deliver a service to you. However, we will be extending our service times as outlined later on in this letter.
- We will only be carrying out essential home visits so we will deal with most queries by email or phone. If we do visit, we will maintain a 2m distance where possible and we will wear a mask to protect you.
- We are monitoring the threat levels and the situation daily and will provide regular updates to you through our website and Facebook page.
- When any of our staff and/or contractors visit your home for an appointment, they will ask you at the door if anyone in your home is sick and/or self-isolating. If they are, they will not be able to enter your home.
- For those residents who may be vulnerable, we will keep in regular contact to check on their wellbeing.
- We have a contingency plan in place should our staff become sick which we will invoke if and when it becomes necessary. This is likely to mean we will only be able to deliver an emergency service at this stage.
- We will be continuing to deliver essential repairs and compliance work and all contractors will work in a Covid-secure way.

How you can help us:

- Please consider whether a repair is essential or if it can reasonably wait until things have settled down a little
- Please contact us by email at housing@pcha.co.uk or repairs@pcha.co.uk rather than phoning if at all possible
- Let us know if you self-isolating when you report a repair – in this case most repairs will be delayed until after you have recovered.
- Please let us have your up-to-date mobile number and email address so that we can keep you updated about the rapidly changing situation.

Our service offer / agile working

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way we live, work, socialise, travel and communicate. At PCHA we have seen an increased level of positive engagement with many of our residents in spite of not being in the office; this has challenged our thinking about service delivery and ways of working. We want to build on this increased engagement with you. As a result, we believe that we can improve our service offer to our residents going forward regardless of where we are working. We are committed to providing fantastic services for residents; services that are accessible, easy to use, responsive and reliable and we are currently working on achieving this.

Agile working offers us huge potential to work together differently yet effectively, and improve how we work for the benefit of all our residents.

The philosophy behind our agile working is that work is something we do, not somewhere we go – work is an activity, not a place. Staff will have the flexibility to work from a variety of places and therefore we can offer more flexibility in term of our accessibility for residents.



Our primary aim is to be more connected with you, as follows:

- We want to offer more ways for you to engage with us at a time that suits you; this may be by email, phone, chat, home visits and office meetings by appointment. (In the event of Covid restrictions, we may limit meetings in person but can also offer video meetings.)
- We have extended our service offer to starting at **8am every day**, with late nights **until 6pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays**. This means we will be accessible to residents as follows:
 - **Monday 8am–5pm**
 - **Tuesday 8am–6pm**
 - **Wednesday 8am–6pm**
 - **Thursday 8am–5pm**
 - **Friday 8am–4pm**
- We are upgrading our ICT systems to make it easy to access information from anywhere so that we can provide services to you in the right place, at the right time. We are also looking to improve our online services to you over the next year.
- We are soon to change our phone system and we will be updating you on these changes shortly.

We are continuing to monitor the situation and will take all appropriate measures necessary to protect our residents, staff, contractors and local communities. Keeping everyone safe and healthy is our main priority. We will however continue to need your

help and patience over the coming months to ensure we can still deliver the core functions.

Regular updates will be posted on the website and Facebook Page so please do keep checking these:

www.pcha.co.uk

<https://www.facebook.com/Penge-Churches-Housing-Association-102182784624161/>

We hope you and your families stay healthy and safe during this time.

Best wishes

Karen

Karen Cooper
Chief Executive