

**We would like to wish you all a  
very Merry Christmas and a  
Happy New Year!**



# Christmas Opening Times



Please note our Christmas opening times:



**Monday 23rd December: 9am – 2pm**

**Tuesday 24th to Friday 27th December: CLOSED**

**Monday 30th December: 9am – 5pm (normal hours)**

**Tuesday 31st December: 9am – 1pm**

**Wednesday 1st January: CLOSED**

We reopen as usual at 9am on Thursday 2nd January 2020.

## URGENT REPAIRS

If you need to report an emergency repair while the office is closed, please call:

BAS on **020 8854 8700**

or

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



# Introduction from Karen

## Welcome to our Winter Newsletter!

It's been an exciting year for PCHA as we celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and launched our video at the House of Commons. Our 50<sup>th</sup> booklet telling some of our residents' stories is a wonderful record of our 50-year history and the impact social housing can make (page 10). I would like to thank all the residents who shared their stories. Our residents' picnic in September was great fun and it was wonderful to see some of you there (page 8).

In the next few pages you will see that we have restructured our team, saying goodbye to a few old faces and welcoming a number of new ones! Having considered the challenges faced by PCHA, alongside our desire to improve our service to our residents, we decided we needed to review our structure and make some positive changes to the team. See overleaf for more details.

During 2020, we have lots of new ideas to implement and we would welcome your input to help us shape the future; one way of doing this would be to join our new Partnership Board (see page 15). We are excited about 2020 and we hope you will see a positive difference in the service you receive.

Lastly, all of us at PCHA would like to wish you all a wonderful Christmas and New Year.

*Karen*





# PCHA Team Update

As well as celebrating the past 50 years, we've been very much looking to the future and how we can work better to improve the services we deliver.



Over the last 50 years there have been substantial improvements within the housing sector, but there is still much to do. The housing crisis is just as acute as ever (see pages 12–13). The current political and economic environment provides unknown challenges and the recent Green paper and Hackitt review require us to think differently, especially about health and safety. We need to ensure that we have the resources in place to manage these challenges and stay ahead of the game. In addition, we want to improve the services we provide to our residents, increase resident engagement, and better support residents to sustain their tenancies. We also have a clear ambition to continue developing new homes for local people.

So with all this in mind, we have spent part of the year reviewing the way we deliver services, and restructuring our team to better deliver those services. We are excited to share with you details of our new team to take us forward to 2020 and beyond! We hope you will start to see the difference over the coming months.

See overleaf for a full organisational chart (with pictures!) of our new team, so you can see who's who and put faces to names.

In addition to some changes to job titles, new team members and changes to how we will be delivering services, there are some exciting additions to the team that we know will be welcome.

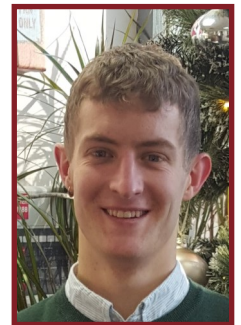
# PCHA Team Update

First to mention is the new role of **Resident Support Officer**. We recognise the current challenges posed by changes to welfare reform and the stress this brings to residents, many of whom are vulnerable. We know that this, along with other housing-related and lifestyle issues can impact upon an person's mental health and/or their ability to sustain their tenancies. The role of Resident Support Officer has been developed to respond to these needs and, in the coming months, Sam will be promoting the service to residents.



*Sam*

We also recognise that the housing sector needs bright, new, young talent. Individuals who continue to promote the original values and vision of our early social housing pioneers but with the benefit of modern ideas and technology. We are therefore pleased to be able to provide an opportunity to a local graduate by offering a one-year placement within the frontline Operations team. As our **Housing Graduate**, Danny will be raising his profile in the New Year to lead on a number of projects and will be seeking your assistance, so keep an eye on our website!



*Danny*

Finally, to ensure a continued focus on customer service and delivery we have introduced the new role of **Director of Operations**. Some of you will already have met Steve, who is heading up our frontline day-to-day services and assisting Karen in the delivery of our corporate ambitions and strategy.



*Steve*

During the coming year we will continue to hold events to enable residents to meet the new team and share ideas for the future.

# Our New Team

“I am delighted to introduce you all to the new PCHA Team. Great things are not achieved by one person, they are achieved by a team of people!” Karen



CEO  
Karen Cooper



Exec Asst/ Corporate  
Services Officer  
Cassandra Barns



Director of Operations  
Steve Thorn



Housing Graduate  
Danny Yates



Tenancy  
Services Officer  
TEMP - Maryan Hassan



Maintenance and Estate  
Services Officer  
Natalie Ions



Maintenance Operative  
Mick Mendham

# Our New Team



Finance Manager  
Naomi Rainford

**Karen:** karen@pcha.co.uk  
**Cassandra:** cassandra@pcha.co.uk  
**Steve:** steve@pcha.co.uk  
**Naomi:** naomi@pcha.co.uk  
**Danny:** danny@pcha.co.uk  
**Maryan:** maryan@pcha.co.uk  
**Natalie:** natalie@pcha.co.uk  
**Samantha:** samantha@pcha.co.uk  
**Danuta:** danuta@pcha.co.uk  
**Nina:** nina@pcha.co.uk  
**Mick:** mick@pcha.co.uk



Resident Support Officer  
Samantha Mason Evans



Customer Services Officers  
Danuta Evans & Nina Nash

"NEVER DOUBT THAT A SMALL GROUP OF  
THOUGHTFUL, COMMITTED PEOPLE CAN  
CHANGE THE WORLD. INDEED. IT IS THE  
ONLY THING THAT EVER HAS."

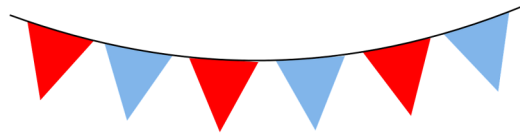


# PCHA's 50th Celebrations

As you're probably aware, 2019 is PCHA's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. In 1969 a group of local church members in and around Penge came together with a desire and the commitment to do something about local homelessness, and together they formed Penge Churches Housing Association. We've been proudly providing affordable homes for local people ever since!

To celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup>, we held two fantastic events this year and created a special 50<sup>th</sup> booklet and short film.

## Residents' picnic



Our first event was a residents' picnic in Crystal Palace Park on the 14<sup>th</sup> September. We had a great afternoon with our residents, learning how to juggle and spin plates! The weather was lovely and lots of fun was had by all.





# PCHA's 50th Celebrations

## Stakeholder event

On the 24<sup>th</sup> October we held a special event for our partners and stakeholders at the House of Commons. The event was hosted by Bromley MP Bob Neill, who gave a speech about the difference community associations like PCHA can make. Our Chief Exec, Karen, spoke about our achievements over the last 50 years, as well as PCHA's goals for providing more and better housing for the local community in the future. Kate Henderson, Chief Exec of the National Housing Federation, talked about our focus on people and the impact the work we do can have on people's lives.



MP Bob Neill



# PCHA's 50th Celebrations (cont.)

## 50th booklet

Our residents are at the heart of everything we do and we recognise that people's stories and journeys are all unique.

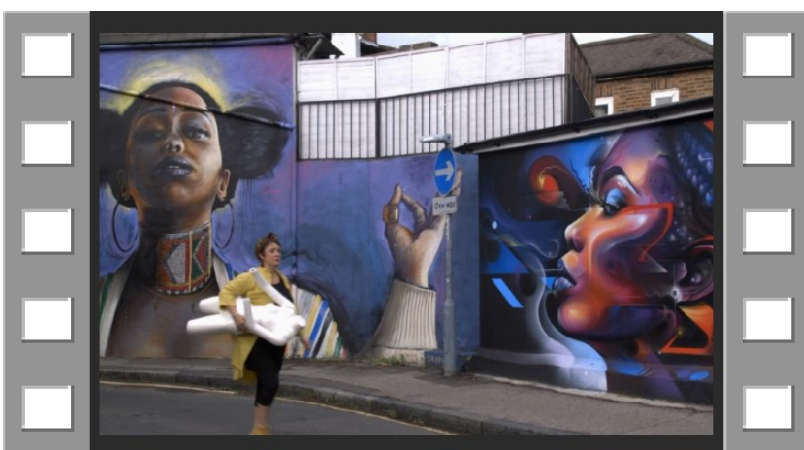
Our 50th booklet celebrates some of our residents' individual stories, their experiences of living in a PCHA home, and what home means

to them. All our residents should have received a copy of the booklet in the post, but if you would like an additional copy, please get in touch!



## Video

Last but certainly not least, one of our residents, Felicity, has shared her journey in a short film about the positive impact being a PCHA resident has had on her life. More importantly, her story illustrates that the housing crisis is not all about rough sleeping, but also about the challenges of living on a low income in London. You can view the film on our website at [www.pcha.co.uk](http://www.pcha.co.uk) –



we currently have a link to the video at the top of the home page, or go to 'Our Publications' in the menu at the top of the page and 'PCHA's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Video'.

# New Repairs Technology



A new year brings new beginnings and encourages us to think about the way we do things. And so as well as changing our team structure, we've been looking at the way we deliver our responsive repairs service.

As you may remember, last year we took the step to bring our repairs service back in house. Our feedback indicates that as a result, the number of repairs completed on time has increased by 3%. In addition, resident satisfaction has improved by 14%. This is great news, but we feel we can do even better.

## **New technology!**

So, from mid-December and into the New Year we will be carrying out a three month pilot using new technology to assist us in managing our repairs service. You don't need to worry about these changes and you can report repairs to us in the usual way. We believe this new technology will result in even faster response times and lower costs to PCHA, which will in turn enable us to invest in additional services and our communities. We also hope that the changes will encourage more local contractors to work with us. This means you will potentially see some new contractors coming to carry out your repairs.

## **Give us lots of detail when reporting repairs**

Where we need your help is at the first stage of the repair process. When reporting a repair, please provide as much detail as possible. Even better, if you can send us a photo by text or email, this will help ensure the correct information gets through to the contractor. You can also help by completing our satisfaction survey once the job is completed as this will assist us in our review of the service at the end of the pilot.

We will update you further in our Spring Newsletter. Meanwhile, if you would like to know more or wish to provide feedback on your experience with the service, please contact Steve Thorn, Director of Operations on 020 8659 3055.



# The Housing Crisis – Update

PCHA is one of the many housing associations that were born on the back of *Cathy Come Home*, a 1960s Ken Loach docu-drama that described the plight of an ordinary family and their harrowing journey through homelessness. *Cathy Come Home* was a portrayal of the growing housing crisis at the time and showed just how easily life can change and things can spiral out of control.



*Cathy Come Home*

Fifty years on much has changed, however sadly much has not. The housing crisis in 2019 is as harrowing as it was in *Cathy Come Home* and many people are in unsafe, unsuitable and unaffordable housing, while many others simply cannot find a home at all. In London and the South-East, the shortage of affordable homes is acute and the reality is that for many on low incomes, private renting and/or buying a home is simply an unachievable dream.

At PCHA, we know the impact social housing can have on people's lives. I am certainly living proof of this. I found myself homeless when I was 21 and seven months pregnant with my daughter. Three weeks before I had Lauren, I was given a flat by Norwich City Council and I will never forget the Housing Officer – Julie Driver – who saved our lives in April 1987. In that rather damp and cold flat I completed my degree with my daughter in one arm and a pen in the other (no computers or automatic baby rockers then)! The rest, as they say, is history. Without social housing, our lives may have been very different and I would almost certainly not be here today as the Chief Exec of PCHA.



*Karen and Lauren*

# The Housing Crisis – Update

## Our commitment

Understanding the impact social housing can have on people's lives is why at PCHA we are passionate about providing excellent homes and services, and making a positive impact in all that we do. This vision was born in 1969 and is every bit as strong in 2019.

As well as quality, quantity matters too. London needs more social housing! PCHA has a clear ambition to deliver new homes for local people: at our recent Board away day, we agreed a plan to deliver 60 new homes over the next five years.

## NHF campaign

Following the recent election announcement, the NHF (National Housing Federation) launched a campaign calling for the next government to work with housing associations to fix the housing crisis for good – no matter who the next government is.

We're supporting the NHF's campaign by committing to five housing priorities:

1. Building new social housing
2. Making sure everyone can feel safe in their home
3. Investing in places to bring the country together
4. Delivering a new deal for social housing with residents at the heart
5. Developing a fair and effective support and welfare system

We now know the election results and the Conservative manifesto pledged to continue to support the supply of new social homes so we shall see! *Karen*

**NATIONAL  
HOUSING  
FEDERATION**



# STAR Survey



Every few years we carry out a comprehensive resident survey called **STAR** – ‘Survey of Tenants and Residents’. This time around, we’ve had to delay running the survey due to proposed changes in the format of the survey, as well as in expectation of a new set of customer satisfaction standards from our regulator. We now hope to carry out the STAR survey during 2020.

As part of their work to improve the STAR survey, HouseMark (who run it) have been asking residents what format they think the survey should take and how they would like landlords to use the information collected. They found the following:

1. Residents want their voices heard and want landlords to be transparent around what they do with the feedback provided.
2. Different residents prefer to be surveyed in different ways
3. Residents want surveys to be kept short and focused on what matters to them
4. Residents are particularly keen to see how their own landlord is improving over time
5. Residents want to quickly and simply see results in an accessible format.

These results will hopefully feed back into a new and improved STAR survey!

Given the delay in running the survey, we will be asking for additional resident feedback in a number of ways over the next few months, so watch this space.





# Partnership Board

We are keen to listen to residents at all times, in particular residents we may not usually hear from. You can get involved by applying to join our Partnership Board (more information below), or if you would simply like to speak to us more informally about our services or improvements you would like to see, please do contact us at any time.

## Partnership Board

We are keen to work collaboratively with residents to improve our services. Consequently, we are hoping to form a **Partnership Board** made up of both residents and staff to look at our performance and shape how we improve services going forward.

The Partnership Board will be focused on making positive change, and therefore we want to invite residents who feel they can make a positive contribution to apply to join the Partnership Board. The intention would be to meet two to three times per year, with ongoing consultation with members in-between.

If you would like to make a real difference to the way PCHA works, please contact Karen to register your interest ([karen@pcha.co.uk](mailto:karen@pcha.co.uk)).



# Domestic Abuse – Make a Stand

## We're making a stand!

Every year, millions of people experience domestic abuse and in the UK two women are killed by their partner or ex-partner every week.

Domestic violence or abuse can happen to anyone. It may include physical, emotional and sexual abuse in couple relationships or between family members and can happen against women, men or children. Anybody can be an abuser and sadly abuse usually goes on behind closed doors where no one can see what is happening. It can take place in a number of ways, such as:

- Controlling behaviour
- Threatening behaviour
- Violent and abusive behaviour.



At PCHA we're committed to providing homes and communities where people want to live and where they feel safe. We take a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse and that's why we've signed up to the **Make a Stand** pledge to ensure we're taking the right approach to tackling this problem for our customers, staff and partners.

Make a Stand was launched in June 2018 as part of the Chartered Institute of Housing's (CIH) appeal to tackle domestic abuse in association with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA).



# Domestic Abuse – Make a Stand

To demonstrate our commitment to tackling this serious issue we are taking the following steps:

1. Putting in place a policy to support residents who are affected by domestic abuse
2. Developing an information leaflet about national and local domestic abuse support services that will be easily available to residents and staff on our website
3. Ensuring we a HR policy in place to support members of staff who may be experiencing domestic abuse
4. Appointing a dedicated champion in the organisation to own the activity and ensure we are well placed to support people experiencing domestic abuse.

If you would like to know more about the work we are doing to tackle domestic abuse, or if you would like to speak to someone about your own experience, please contact **Samantha Mason-Evans**, our Resident Support Officer and domestic abuse champion. You can contact her on our main number – 020 8659 3055 – or email [samantha@pcha.co.uk](mailto:samantha@pcha.co.uk).





# Rent Increases in 2020

As you may be aware, the Government implemented a four-year rent decrease from 2016. April 2019–20 was the last year of this regime. From 2020–21 the Government has announced that there will be a five-year period of rent increases up to CPI (Consumer Price Index) plus 1% per year. Therefore, from April 2020, rents are able to increase by up to 2.7% (CPI plus 1%).



We understand that for residents rent decreases seem like a good thing. However, in the long term, this would simply not be sustainable for PCHA. Rents are our only real income and over the last four years, our income has decreased while costs have continued to increase in line with or above inflation. If this were to continue, we would be unable to carry out our responsibilities as a landlord, invest in the long-term maintenance of our homes, or indeed build new homes. In other words, this would threaten our ability to survive and provide services to you, our residents. Consequently, the Board of PCHA has now agreed that the rents *will* increase in April by the permitted 2.7%. Of course, this only applies to the core rent; service charges are calculated separately based on our expenditure for this year and an estimate of costs for next year.

You will receive official rent increase letters by the beginning of March and new rents will be effective from the 6th April 2020.

**We understand that keeping up with rent payments can be challenging, especially at this time of year. If you're struggling with debt and need advice please give us a call.**

# Paying Your Rent at Christmas



Remember... pay your rent  
before it's spent!

Don't put your home at risk! If you're  
struggling with debt this Christmas, please  
call us on **020 8659 3055**.



# Love your Neighbour this Winter

Winter is associated with cosy nights in and the fun of Christmas festivities. However, it can be a difficult time for older and more vulnerable people, especially those living alone. The darker nights and cold weather can make it harder to get out and about, and isolation and loneliness are all too common.

This is a time when it's important to keep an eye on the more vulnerable people around us, particularly our neighbours. If you know someone who may be alone or vulnerable, you could make a real difference by:

1. Calling in for a chat or asking them in for a cuppa
2. Sending a card in the post or a text message to let someone know you're thinking about them
3. Asking neighbours if they have everything they need. When bad weather makes it harder to get out, popping out to run a few errands or helping someone do an online shop could be a big help.



If you are concerned about one of our residents, please contact Sam, our Resident Support Officer here at PCHA, and she will do her best to help.

## Mental Health at Christmas

Christmas in particular can be a difficult time for many people – especially for those who are vulnerable or alone and may not have family or friends to come and visit. Even for those who *do* have family around, the pressure for Christmas to be “perfect” can be enormous – life is rarely like an advert with a perfect family laughing in front of the fire!



According to mental health charity MIND:

- Three quarters (76%) of people have had problems sleeping at Christmas
- Nearly 60% of people have experienced panic attacks over the festive period.

So again, if you don't already do this, talk to your neighbours and check they are OK. If you don't save a life, you may make a friend!



# Winter Weather / Gritting



## Winter Weather

While long-range weather forecasts are notoriously unreliable, there are some predictions that this could be a very cold winter.

To cope with icy or snowy weather, we advise the following:

- Stock up with non-perishable food in advance of any anticipated bad weather
- Ensure that you have enough electricity/gas on your meters.
- Cancel any unnecessary journeys
- Speak to neighbours about clubbing together if you need to order shopping etc.
- Ensure that you have snow boots or wellies if you do need to go out
- STAY INDOORS where possible!



**Unfortunately, although we do provide gritting bins at some of our schemes for use by residents, for a number of reasons we are not able to offer a gritting service ourselves.** Therefore, it is even more important to take care when you are out and about around your property in icy or snowy weather.

Many people struggle with heating bills in winter, and latest figures show that around 1 million people aged over 60 in the UK live in fuel poverty, meaning they can't afford to heat their homes properly. Another reason why vulnerable people are at special risk over the winter months – and the need to check on our neighbours!

If you or another resident are vulnerable or alone and struggling with the cold weather, please ring us and we will help if possible.

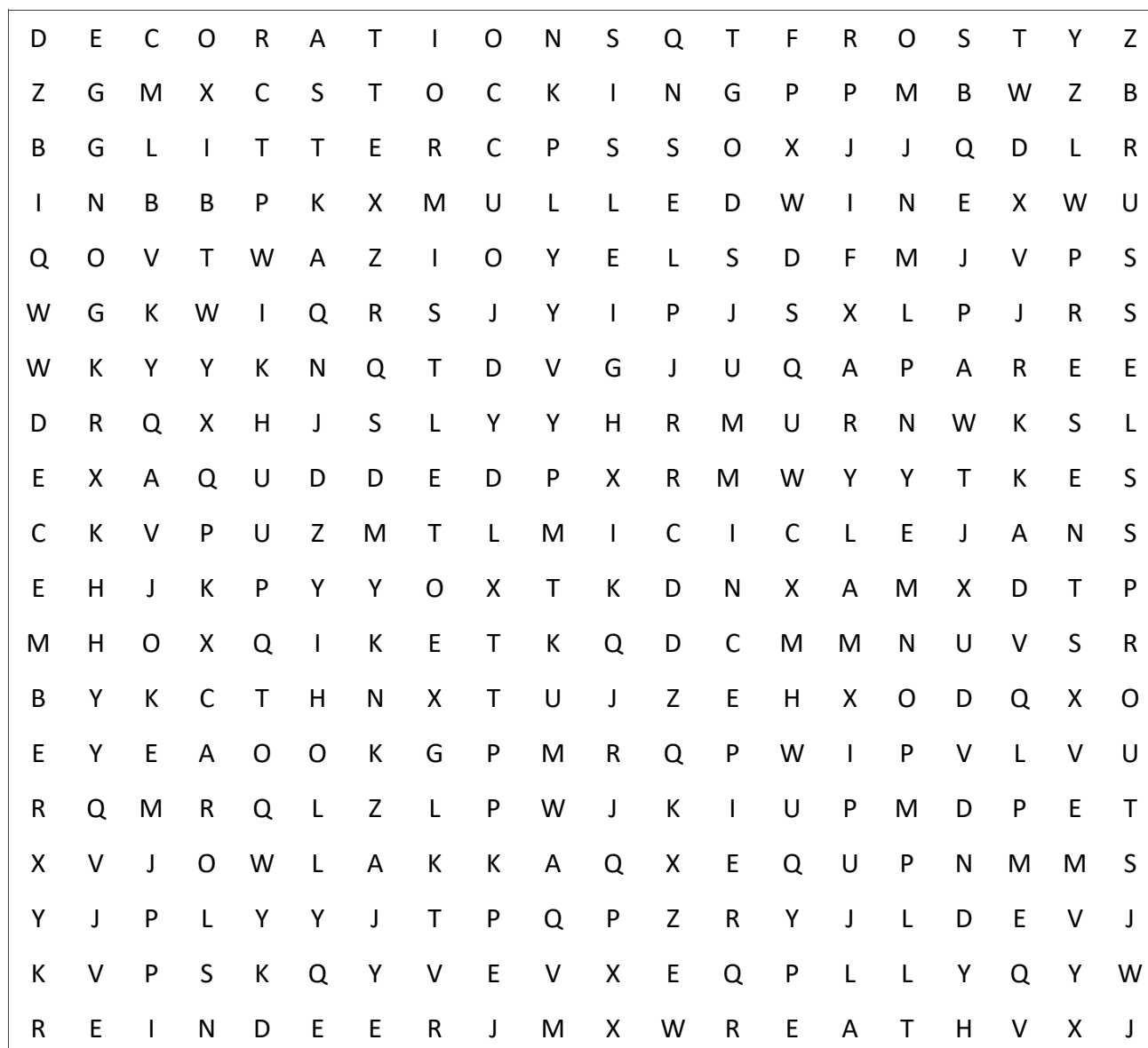
**Don't forget, for problems or faults with hot water or heating gas appliances, call our partner Clairglow for a speedy response on 0800 074 8055.**





# Christmas Wordsearch

Have a go at our wordsearch! Can you find all the Christmas-related words listed below? They can be found running horizontally, vertically or diagonally.



Brussels sprouts

Candles

Carols

Chimney

Chocolate

December

Decorations

Eggnog

Frosty

Glitter

Holly

Icicle

Mince pie

Mistletoe

Mulled wine

Party

Presents

Reindeer

Santa

Sleigh

Snowflakes

Stocking

Tinsel

Turkey

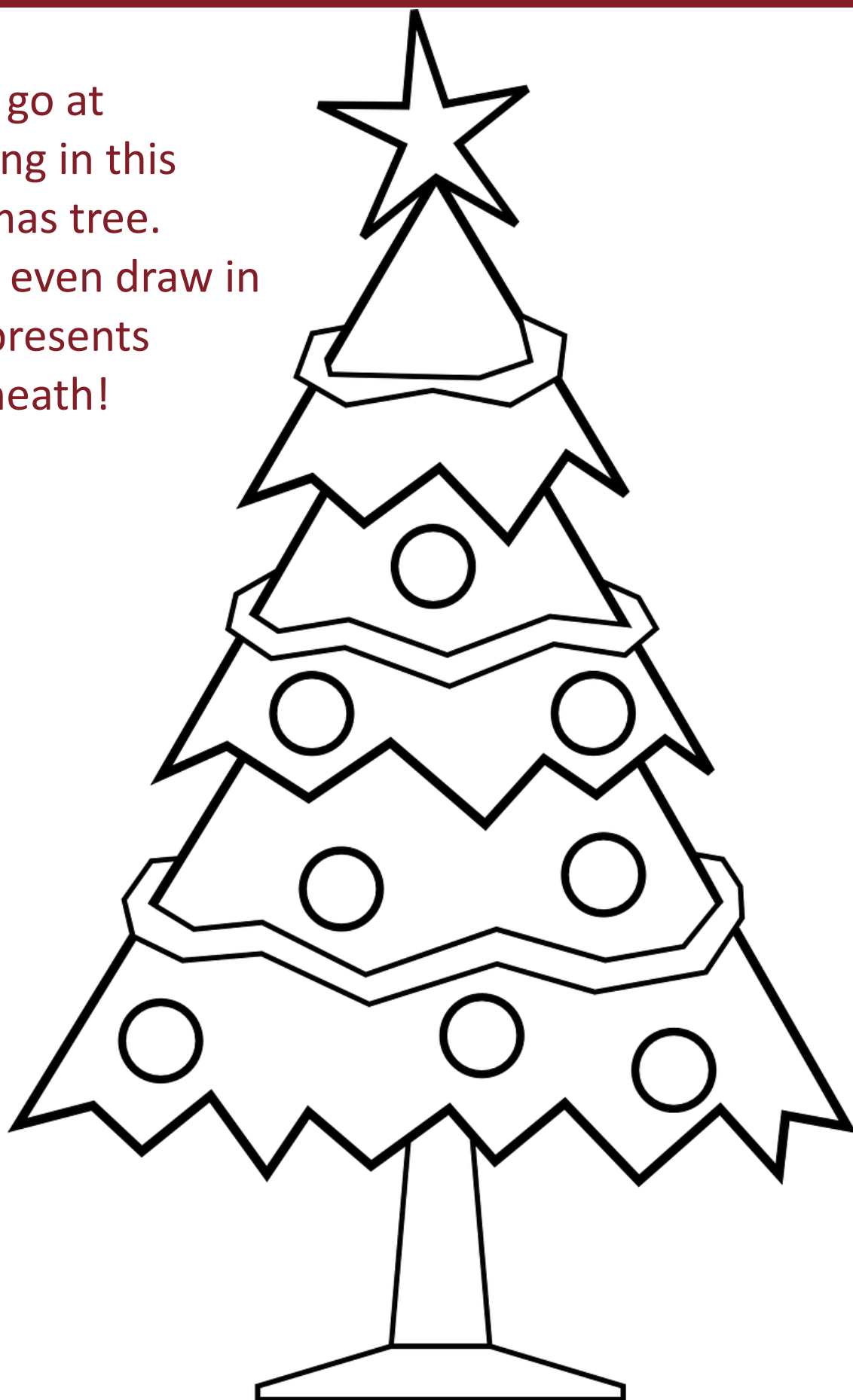
Wrapping paper

Wreath



# For the Kids (or Adults!)

Have a go at  
colouring in this  
Christmas tree.  
Maybe even draw in  
some presents  
underneath!



# Contact Us



## General:

020 8659 3055

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



## Repairs:

020 3434 6789

[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)

# [www.pcha.co.uk](http://www.pcha.co.uk)

Making a positive impact

