


PENGE
CHURCHES
HOUSING
ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2021



Welcome from the Chief Exec

Welcome to our Summer Newsletter



It's hard to believe that we are half way through 2021 and still living with the pandemic. It has been a difficult year for all of us and the reality is that we will never go back to how life was in 2019, before Covid-19! Nevertheless we are hoping to resume most of our services whilst keeping everyone safe.

Covid aside, there has also been a lot going on in the sector with some significant changes on the horizon following on from the White Paper. The government are looking at electrical safety, the Decent Homes Standard, Tenant Satisfaction Measures and much more! We will be bringing you announcements as they happen.

During the spring we carried out a residents' survey and the results will be published very shortly. A BIG thank you to the 144 of you that responded — this really will help us develop our services going forward. We have been following up some individual comments where possible and we will be producing an action plan shortly, so watch this space! Please do get in touch if you would like to be involved in monitoring this action plan or would like to help us improve our services.

Best wishes,

Karen



Thank
You!

Covid-19 update – our services

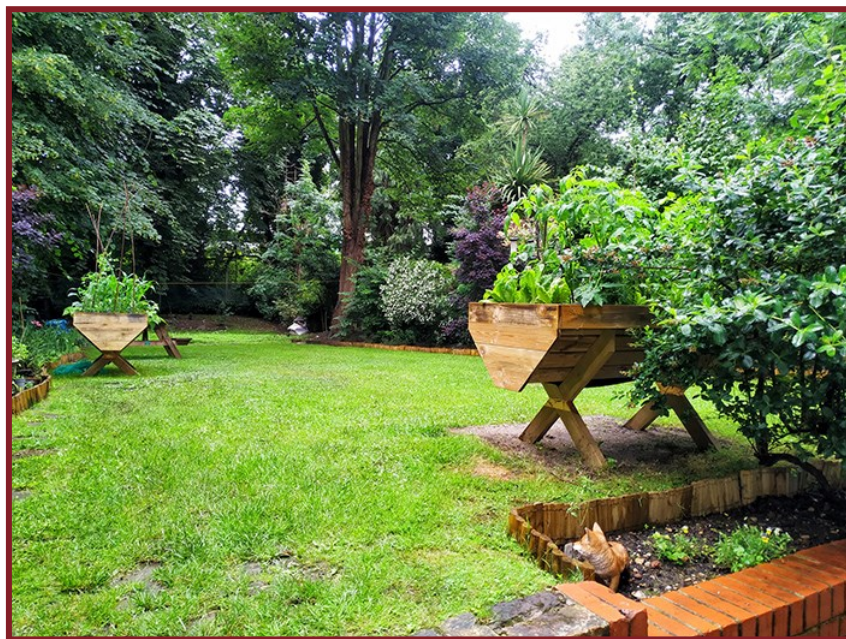
Throughout the Covid 19 pandemic we have kept you updated on changes to our procedures. On 19th July, in line with Stage 4 of the Government's "four-step roadmap out of lockdown", we made some further changes, relaxing our Covid measures while retaining an element of caution to keep you and our staff safe.



Here are our current measures:

- Contractors working in PCHA properties or internal communal areas will still be required to wear a mask if requested to do so by residents, and to keep their distance from residents where practically possible (2 metres minimum). They will also be required to inform us if there is any coronavirus amongst their staff or close contacts and isolate immediately.
- PCHA staff will carry out home visits by appointment. Staff will continue to carry masks, gloves and hand sanitiser. They will use hand sanitiser upon entering and leaving residents' homes, and will wear a mask and/or gloves during the visit if requested to do so by the resident. They will continue to wear masks when carrying out inspections of internal communal areas.
- The office will be open to visitors by pre-booked appointment only. Appointments can be made by phone on 020 8659 3055 or by email at housing@pcha.co.uk. Our office arrangements for managing the risk of infection remain in place and we ask all visitors to use the hand sanitiser provided as they enter the building. The protective glass screen in reception fitted last year as part of our package of health and safety measures remains in place. Staff will always have masks available to use if requested to do so.
- We are now operating our full range of both housing and repairs services. However, it should be noted that many contractors are struggling with the supply of materials and this, alongside staffing issues due to self-isolating etc, may cause some continued delays to works.

Gardening Competition Winners!



**Communal
Garden Winner:**
74 Thicket Road



Back in the spring edition we announced the details of our gardening competition. We included five categories to give everyone an opportunity to take part. We weren't inundated with entries, however, and the only category that our board member panel had to judge was the communal garden category.

You may well be familiar with the winning garden as we reported on the work that was going on at 74 Thicket Road last year when residents Trish, Tracey and John decided that lockdown was the ideal time to turn their communal space into a haven of colour, scents and delicious produce. Work continued well after the first lockdown and when new residents Patricia and her son Raymond moved into the garden flat there followed further work to the courtyard area and storage sheds.

Gardening Competition Winners!

It's fair to say that Trish and Tracey have led the way but everyone has played a part. From humble beginnings, no tools and an area full of old brambles and weeds, they have transformed the garden beyond what anyone would have expected.

23 Hamlet Road

Another garden worthy of a mention is the communal garden at 23 Hamlet Road. Congratulations and thanks to resident Mourad who has been a regular contributor over the years to the maintenance of the garden, ensuring there is colour through early spring to the end of the summer.



Terry Boyce / 1 Anerley Park

Finally, a mention and a big thank you to a long-term resident of PCHA and keen gardener Terry Boyce, who managed the communal garden at 1 Anerley Park for many years. Terry and his wife Jean have been residents with PCHA since 1978 and it was a little disappointing when Terry contacted us recently to tell us that it was time for him to hang up his clippers. On behalf of everyone at PCHA we would like to thank Terry for his hard work over the years.



There are vouchers on their way to all three worthy recipients mentioned and a very big congratulations to Trish and the residents at 74 Thicket Road for bagging the top prize. The additional prize of a garden bench to enable you to sit take a well earned break during those lengthy summer days is on its way!

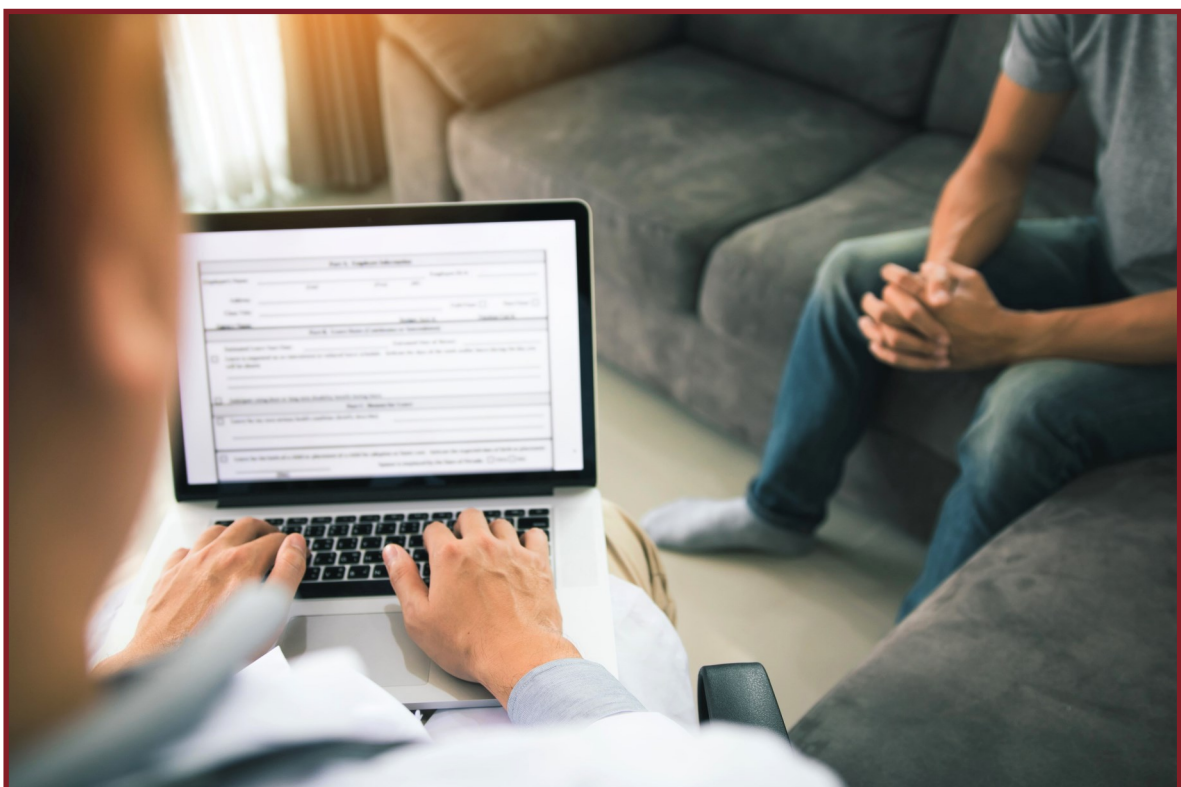
Tenancy Audits

Every few years we carry out routine tenancy audit visits with all our residents. Now the lockdown restrictions have eased, we are able to start visiting your homes again to carry out these checks. Over the coming 24 months we plan to visit every home.

The purpose of tenancy audits includes the following:

- To ensure we have all relevant up-to-date information on our residents and all household members e.g., contact numbers, email addresses, disabilities
- Allowing you to raise any concerns, repairs or ask questions about your tenancy
- Allowing us to identify any tenancy concerns/breaches or health and safety issues.

We will contact you to book a suitable time to visit, although we may also call around to see if you are available for an audit visit when visiting other homes in your area.



Tenancy Audits

It is important that the person who holds the tenancy is in attendance when we carry out the tenancy audit visit. We will have our PCHA identification to confirm who we are, and we will also ask you to provide **one form of photographic ID** e.g. driving licence or passport, and any **two of the following supporting documents for tenancy holders (including both parties on a joint tenancy) and each household member:**

- Bank statement (dated within the last 3 months)
- Electoral register
- Payslip (dated within the last 3 months)
- Utility bill (dated within the last 3 months)
- Any other document from a government agency e.g. benefit letter, tax return.





British Gas
Looking after your world



HEAD OFFICE
ANOTHER PLC
10 EXAMPLE STREET
ANYTOWN
COUNTYSHIRE
AB12 3CD



Bill date: 31 Mar 2014
Bill number: 000000000
This is a VAT invoice
VAT registration number: 000000000

Account number
600485895

Any questions?
 0000 000 0000
Mon-Fri 9am to 5pm
Sat 9am to 1pm
 britishgas.co.uk/business

Your business electricity bill

Head Office, Another Plc, 10 Example Street, Anytown,
Countyshire AB12 3CD

27 February 2014 - 27 March 2014

Your account

Since your previous bill

Outstanding balance on 10 February 2014	£61.14
Cheque received - 20 February 2014	£61.14 cr
Balance from last bill	£0.00

New charges this bill (see over for details)

Electricity charges	£23.51
Standing charge	£35.45
Total charges exc VAT	£58.96
VAT	£2.95
Total new charges this bill inc VAT	£61.91

Your Fixed Price Energy Plan
will renew on 16/07/15

Your new Fixed Price Energy Plan will end on 16/07/15. We'll write to you around 60 days before this date to tell you about your options, including how to end your plan. To discuss your energy account with us, please call us on 0330 100 0000.

Your charges this month are based on estimated readings

To keep your charges accurate, go to britishgas.co.uk/business/meter-read with your latest reading.

We value your business

We can help explain any element of your bill or support your business in reducing bills, please contact us.

Total amount now due

£61.91

Please pay this by 10 April 2014

We will also be taking photos of all residents if we do not currently have them on file, as well as carrying out brief inspections and taking photos of the outside of your property.

Please think of any questions or suggestions you might have for us as and we look forward to meeting you all.

If you have any concerns about this process please contact the team at housing@pcha.co.uk.

Tenancy/Housing Fraud

What is tenancy fraud?

Tenancy fraud is often referred to as social housing fraud as it covers a wide-reaching number of offences and possible scenarios. One of these is subletting, which PCHA experienced 18 months ago when we discovered one of our properties was being sublet. This resulted in immediate eviction of the tenant.



Every year, hundreds of millions of pounds is lost across the housing sector to fraudsters and more importantly, valuable housing that should be available to those who need it ends up in the wrong hands.



The impact of Covid

Since Covid hit, analysis by housing providers and reference agencies suggests that housing fraud is on the increase. This may be due to the impact on people's jobs and incomes, increasing the temptation to take a risk in order to make money.

Tenancy/Housing Fraud

Tenancy audits

As a small community housing association we have to make the best use of the homes we own and ensure that the people living there are legally entitled to be there. With that in mind and with the Covid restrictions now lifted, we are in the process of resuming our tenancy audit programme, as described on the previous pages. These audits form part of a wider set of housing management measures that we use to ensure that the right people are living in our properties.

If you are contacted for an audit there is no need to worry—this is a routine procedure and you are not being investigated or targeted.

What can you do to help?

Here are some other ways that you can assist us in managing tenancy fraud.

- Have you noticed that one of your neighbours has been absent from their home for a long time?
- Are there different people going in and out of a neighbouring property?
- Is there a build-up of mail in a communal area for occupants of another flat?
- Has the original tenant moved out but others in the property remain?
This happens quite often when a parent moves out to live with a new partner leaving adult children to remain in the home.

All of these scenarios are potentially housing fraud and we would urge everyone to report such occurrences to us in confidence. You can e-mail the team at housing@pcha.co.uk or call us on 020 8659 3055. **Any information you give us will be treated in the strictest confidence and your identity will be protected.** You can report the suspected fraud anonymously but please give us as much information as possible to help our investigations. The more information that we have the better the chance we have of stopping it.

Electrical Safety



Electricity is something most of us take for granted and as technology moves forward we fill our homes with more and more gadgets. Because we take it for granted, we often overlook the dangers posed by electricity and faulty appliances. Every year, around 70 deaths and 350,000 injuries in UK homes are caused by faulty electrics and electrical equipment. Over half of all accidental house fires are caused by electricity.

As your landlord, we are required by law to ensure your home's electrical installation and wiring are safe when you move in and that they are maintained in a safe condition throughout your tenancy.

We test and inspect all the homes and communal areas that we own and manage at least once every five years. We also test and inspect properties before re-letting them to new residents. Generally we don't provide electrical appliances but where we do, we ensure any appliances we supply are safe to use and are annually tested.

Electrical Safety

So what can you do to stay safe?

Firstly, you must inform us of any electrical problems as soon as they occur and we will arrange for an electrician to come to your home. You can do this by emailing repairs@pcha.co.uk or by calling us on 020 8659 3055. If the issue occurs out of office hours, call our team at BAS on 0208 854 8700.

Never carry out electrical repairs yourself.

Here are some handy tips to keep you, your family and your home safe:

- Make sure you know where your fuse box is, so you can turn the mains switch off in an emergency
- Never overload sockets or plug extension leads into other extension leads
- Maintain any electrical items you bring into your home and if you start to see frayed cords or exposed wires on an item, DO NOT USE IT!
- Ensure plugs and sockets are not visibly damaged and replace if necessary
- Check visible leads and cables are in good condition and replace if necessary
- Check light fittings are not visibly damaged and in good condition; contact us if you think they need repairing or replacing
- Always buy electrical appliances from a reputable place. While we may be tempted to save money buying online, if it looks too good to be true, it probably is!
- Always use an RCD (residual current device) on outdoor electrical equipment (this instantly turns off the power if there is a fault and can be found in any DIY store)
- Never store combustible materials near the fuse box or the electricity meter
- Never store anything on top of a microwave
- Never run cables under carpets or rugs
- Never take mains-powered electrical items into the bathroom
- Always switch off electrical items when you are not using them.

There's plenty of further advice available on the internet and a particularly helpful website is www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/guidance/safety-around-the-home.

Stay safe!

Damp & Condensation



In our winter newsletter we included an article on condensation and provided advice about what to do if it was a problem in your home. Whilst condensation is generally less prevalent in the summer, we continue to receive reports about this from residents.

We are currently reviewing how we manage reports of condensation and we will share this with residents once finalised. Meanwhile, remember there are some simple things you can do to manage condensation. These include:

- 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 to prevent water vapour going straight back into the air in the property.
- When cooking, ensure that the kitchen door is shut, window open and extractor fan on. These actions should be taken during cooking and for 20–30 minutes afterwards.
- Cook with lids on saucepans.
- Make sure you have not covered over any trickle vents, air bricks or ventilation holes in your property.



Damp & Condensation

- 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 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.)
- Open windows slightly when the central heating system is on.
- Leave a gap between furniture and outside walls to improve air circulation.



If after taking these actions you continue to experience excessive condensation in your home that is affecting the way you live, please contact the team at repairs@pcha.co.uk. We will arrange for an inspection of your home and make recommendations to remedy the situation. If maintenance work is required such as the fitting of vents or fans, we will carry out this work without delay.

We do have a leaflet on condensation that is currently under review but can still 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.

LFB's Home Fire Safety Checker



Not a day goes by without a mention of fire safety on the news or in the papers. Since the sad events at Grenfell Tower, housing associations and local authorities have been working hard to ensure homes and buildings are safe for residents. At PCHA that remains a priority for us.

With this in mind we are excited to inform residents of a new initiative and service being offered by the London Fire Brigade—their new Home Fire Safety Checker tool (HFSC). This online tool enables residents to carry out a fire risk assessment in their own homes. This service compliments, but does not replace, their free Home Fire Safety Visit programme.

The HFSC allows you to receive tailored fire safety advice based on the type of property you live in, as well as behaviours associated with fire risk. It will guide you around your home to help you identify any potential fire risks and hazards, then provides advice as to how you can take steps to reduce those risks.

LFB will continue to offer free in-person Home Fire Safety Visits but will be focusing those visits on the most vulnerable in the community.

The link to carry out your own online risk assessment is:

www.london-fire.gov.uk/safety/the-home/home-fire-safety

Meet our New Staff

Since March 2021 we have gained two wonderful new members of staff. Many of you will have spoken to them as they are our Customer Services Officers, so are often first to pick up the phone when residents call in.

Leonie



Leonie joined PCHA in March 2021. This is her first role in housing, but she has over six years' experience in customer-facing roles. Leonie really enjoys working with, helping and getting to know different types of people. The environments she has worked in have been very different, but she believes you must live outside your comfort zone to have the best experiences and broaden your perspective by speaking to people from all walks of life.

Leonie is very happy to be a part of the PCHA team. She feels like she can really make a change here and will be able to directly help people change their situation, even if it is just a dodgy light bulb!

Outside the office, Leonie loves all things creative. She is also a trained mentor for young ladies who struggle mentally or emotionally. She really enjoys catching up with her mentee each week and watching them grow into their skin.

Alex



Alex joined PCHA in May 2021. This is her first role in social housing, having spent six years as an assistant manager for a florist and over 10 years in other customer-facing roles. She has a real love for working with people and delivering a dedicated and caring customer experience. Motivated by problem solving and service providing, Alex is thrilled to be able to put her passion to good use in helping the residents of PCHA.

When not running around after her two year old daughter, Alex loves gardening, anything Arts-and-Craftsy and exploring English countryside and beaches.

Crime, county lines & cuckooing...

Many of you will have heard the term 'county lines' in the media, but what does it mean? It's a term used when drug gangs from big cities expand their operations to smaller towns. Unfortunately it is a growing phenomenon, particularly in outer London and suburban towns.

Also on the increase is an activity known as 'cuckooing'. This is where drug dealers take over the use of someone's home to be able to sell drugs 'out of sight' and continue undetected. Initial offers of free drugs quickly lead to drug debts. The dealers are very specific in who they select and those most at risk include individuals struggling with drug and alcohol addictions, those with poor mental or physical health problems, and single parents who are isolated with no apparent support network.



Tell-tale signs of cuckooing can include:

- An increase in people entering and leaving a property
- An increase in cars or bikes outside
- Possible increase in anti-social behaviour
- Increased litter outside
- Signs of drugs use
- Lack of healthcare visitors
- Curtains or blinds closed all the time.

What are we doing to combat county lines crime and cuckooing?

PCHA is committed to building safer communities where our residents feel safe and where criminals know they are not welcome. We cooperate with the Safer Neighbourhood Team to report areas where residents may feel at risk or exploited in some way, and engage in active neighbourhood reporting to help map out trends and stamp out the unwanted guests.

...what's it all about?

What can you do?

We would encourage residents to report any unusual behaviour direct to Crimestoppers. You can do so without any fear of being found out.

CrimeStoppers.
0800 555 111
100% anonymous. Always.

The number is free to call and Crimestoppers offer a guarantee that:

- You will not be asked to reveal your name or any personal details.
- They will listen to any information you have on a crime.
- Your call will not be recorded.
- They have no caller line display, no 1471 facility and have never traced a call.
- Online reports have the same level of anonymity as phone calls.
- Their specially trained call agents will support you through the process and make sure your report contains no information that could identify you.
- They do not make a note of gender, accents, apparent age or ethnicity of any caller.
- Even if you give personal details, they will not be recorded, and they will pass information to the relevant authority without revealing your identity.

You can also use the online reporting system to report a crime at <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/>.

If you prefer, you can report concerns directly to the Police by calling 101. If you believe you may be a victim of cuckooing or feel at immediate risk of harm, always call 999 and ask for the police.



If you believe that the perpetrator is a PCHA resident, you can contact us confidentially on 0208 659 3055 or email the team at housing@pcha.co.uk.

Unacceptable Behaviour

PCHA is a community association with a small but committed team. We are proud of the open and honest relationship we have with our residents and work very hard to be proactive and responsive to residents' queries and/or complaints. However, there are rare occasions where residents behave or act in ways that make it very challenging for us to provide an effective service, either to them or to other residents. We are a small team with limited resources that we need to allocate wisely and fairly. We also have a legal duty to protect our staff.

Our primary aim is to deal fairly, honestly, consistently and appropriately with all residents, including those whose actions we consider unacceptable. We believe that everyone who approaches us has the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, there are occasions when someone's behaviour may have such an adverse impact on our staff, our service or the organisation that we need to take clear and robust action to manage the impact of this behaviour.

The kind of behaviour that may be deemed unacceptable is:

- Using abusive or foul language directed at staff
- Using language or behaviours directed at staff that are discriminatory
- 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.



To manage this type of behaviour, we may occasionally deem it necessary to invoke our Unacceptable Behaviour Policy. This includes restricting a resident's contact with us. This is very much a last resort. However, we also have a responsibility to protect the safety and mental wellbeing of our staff and we will take a zero tolerance approach to abuse or harassment.

Muriel the Montrave Mermaid!

Many of you will be aware of the amazing street art that's popping up all over Penge. There seems to be a new piece every week!

A while ago we were contacted by **London Calling Blog**, a group that facilitates street art in south-east London, as they wanted to use the wall of one of our properties in Penge for a new piece of art. We were keen to get in on the action, and got approval from the residents who live in the building to go ahead.

The work was completed a couple of weeks ago, and here it is.



We love how colourful this beautiful mermaid is. The locals seem to love her too, giving her the nickname 'Muriel the Montrave Mermaid Mural'! We also love how the BT box has been incorporated into the image as a treasure chest.



The artists are known as Peachzz and Morgasmik (on Instagram as [@_.peachzz._](#) and [@morgasmik](#)). Here they are hard at work (left) — a nice 'work in progress' photo.

If you want to visit Muriel, you'll find her at the corner of Montrave Road and St. John's Road in Penge, near Penge East station.

Contact Us



General:

020 8659 3055

housing@pcha.co.uk



To report a repair:

020 8659 3055

repairs@pcha.co.uk



To report a health and safety issue:

020 8659 3055

healthandsafety@pcha.co.uk

www.pcha.co.uk

Making a positive impact

