

December | Winter 2023



Newsletter





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THAT THE DOOR IS
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Welcome to PCHA's winter newsletter!

As we approach the end of the year, it is time to reflect on the year that has gone and the year to come. It has been a hectic year for PCHA as we brought BECHA into PCHA. Things are settling down and so the real work starts next year!

The Resident Satisfaction Survey and Stock Condition Survey have both given us lots to do in 2024 and we will keep you informed of our plans throughout.

In the meantime I hope you enjoy this newsletter and find it useful. If you would like to get more involved in shaping our work over the next year or so (see page 6 for more details) please get in touch with myself or Mary.

Wishing you all a very merry Xmas and a fantastic New Year.

Karen

Christmas Opening Times

Here are our opening hours over the festive period.

Friday 22nd Dec: **Open 8am–4pm**

Monday 25th Dec: **CLOSED**

Tuesday 26th Dec: **CLOSED**

Wednesday 27th Dec: **CLOSED**

Thursday 28th Dec: **Open 10am–4pm**

Friday 29th Dec: **CLOSED**

Monday 1st Jan 2024: **CLOSED**

Tuesday 2nd Jan onwards: **Hours return to normal**



Emergency Repairs

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

For gas heating or boiler repairs, call Clairglow on **01892 531421**



For all other repairs, call BAS on **020 8854 8700**



Resident Satisfaction Survey

Thank you again to everyone who took part in our Satisfaction Survey undertaken by Acuity in the summer. We now have their report and you will find a summary of the results accompanying this newsletter.

It's really important to us to know what you think of our services, as this is a key way for us to improve.

Your comments

A number of respondents submitted additional comments during the survey – both positive and critical. We have contacted each person who commented and are working on an action plan to improve some of our key service areas. These include our provision of communal cleaning and gardening services. We will also be looking at the way we record and respond to complaints to see how we can improve.

If you would like more information about the results or to discuss our next steps please contact our Tenancy Services Manager, Jean, or Tenancy Services Officer, Alex.

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

Your Views



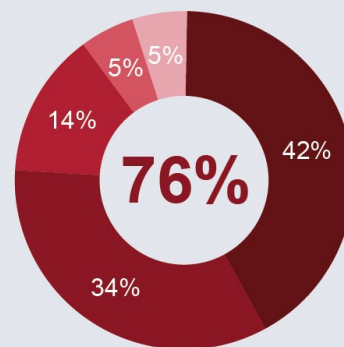
Resident Satisfaction Survey Report 2023



Overall Services



Three-quarters of respondents are satisfied with the overall service provided by PCHA (76%).



- Very satisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Neither
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied



Resident Engagement Update

At PCHA we want to create homes and communities we can all be proud of. This is really important to us. To help us to do that, we offer a range of opportunities for you to get involved. All our residents can play a role in evaluating and improving our services.



We were delighted that during our Resident Satisfaction Survey lots of our residents expressed an interest in getting more involved with PCHA. We are contacting everyone who did so to discuss this further.

In the meantime, here are some of the ways you can get involved.

Join our Armchair Club

If you join the Armchair Club you will be asked to comment on policies, documents, or other communications from the comfort of your armchair (or wherever you choose!). You can pick and choose whether you want to comment at any stage of the consultation process, and do not have to be involved in all consultations.

Be a Scheme Champion

Help us monitor cleaning or gardening services at your scheme. You can join us on our regular inspections and/or let us know when problems arise.

You will see an update on forthcoming scheme inspections on page 15 – why not join the team on their next visit?

Join our Partnership Board

The Partnership Board is made up of residents and PCHA staff. Its goal is to scrutinise performance, develop new services and ideas, and shape the future of PCHA. We are really pleased to have started a programme of introductory meetings and are looking for new members to join.

If you are interested in joining our Partnership Board or any of the other ways of engaging with PCHA, please contact our Head of Customer Services, **Mary Loftus**. Mary can be reached on 020 8659 3055 or by email at housing@pcha.co.uk.





Stock Condition Survey

As you are aware, in the summer we carried out a stock condition survey to assess the condition of our homes. This will allow us to plan works over the next few years.

We managed to get into over 75% of homes so a big thanks to all of you who allowed the FFT surveyor into your home.

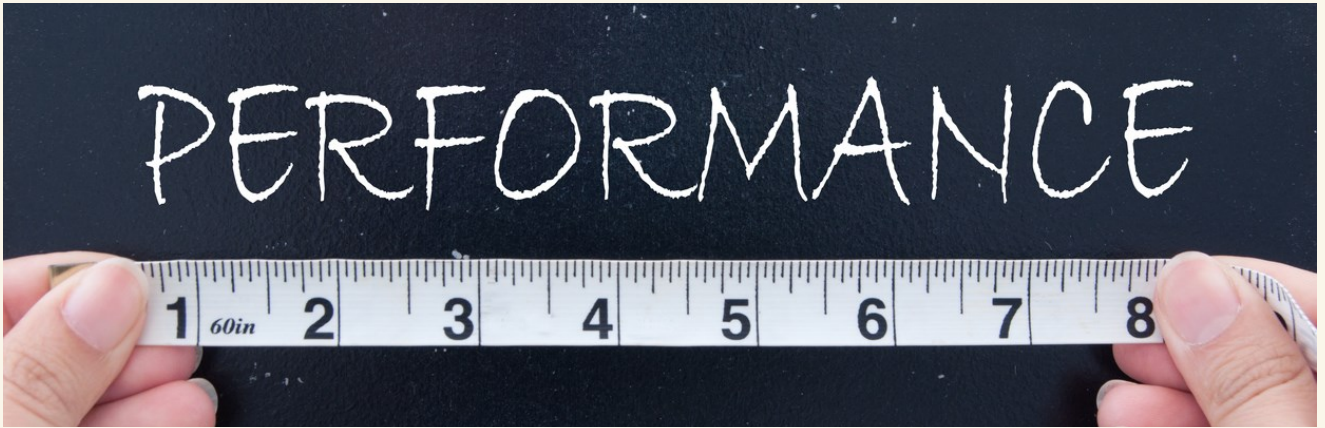
The survey showed we have to spend £19 million on our existing homes over the next 30 years, which is an eye-watering amount of money! As rents are our only income, we have to ensure this can cover these costs each year. Obviously we can't produce a plan for 30 years so we are currently looking at the breakdown for the next three years so we can agree a programme of planned

improvements, including things like new kitchens, bathrooms, windows, boilers and roofs.

Once we have done this we will publish a provisional programme of works so you can see if and when we will carry out improvement works in your home.

If you did not have a surveyor from FFT inspect your home, please contact us as soon as possible to arrange an inspection with our in-house surveyor, Rob.

Most importantly, if you have any outstanding repairs or issues that need looking at please contact us as soon as possible and we will arrange a visit.



Our Performance – April to September 2023

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 April to September 2023, *after the merger with Bexley Community Housing Association.*

Repairs performance



From April to September, **86%** of all repairs reported by residents were completed within target times. This is an improvement compared to the period we reported in our last

newsletter (January to March), when 78% of repairs were resolved on time.

This is a positive direction to be moving but we know there is still work to do. Our Head of Property Services is working hard with the team to further improve our processes and reduce the time taken to complete repairs.

Repairs satisfaction surveys

In the 12 months to the end of September, 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 slightly lower than in March, and shows that we need to continue to focus on the quality of our repairs as well as getting them done quickly.

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.

Complaints

We received a total of three formal complaints across all our services in the 6 months from April to September. Two complaints were regarding repair issues and one regarding the management of rent arrears. All three were investigated and resolved.

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 as quickly as possible. For more information about complaints, see our 'Making a Complaint' leaflet in your Resident Handbook or on our website at www.pcha.co.uk.



ASB

We had 6 new ASB (anti-social behaviour) cases between April and September. We are working to address all open ASB cases with the residents involved.

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 September was £90,539. Although this was higher than it was in March, this now includes our Bexley tenancies too. Our *percentage* arrears (i.e. as a percentage of total rent charged) was actually lower: 3.2% compared with 3.9% in March. This is great news as it means we are getting more of our rent paid on time, which we can then invest straight back into our homes and services.

Thank you to all our residents who keep up their regular payments, or who are paying off any arrears.

Voids

At the end of September we had 8 void properties across Bromley and Bexley. These are empty properties that are either undergoing repairs to prepare for new residents, or are ready to relet. While we only had 5 voids at the end of March, that was *before* we took on all the Bexley properties (of which there are 134 in total). We let a total of 7 homes to new residents between April and September.

Our average 'void loss' was 1.8% over these 6 months, compared to 2.1% from January to March. (This is the percentage of our total income that was lost because properties were empty.) Lower is better, as losing money impacts how much we can invest back into our homes and services.

Fire Safety Update

The safety of you and others living in your property is very important to us. Please ensure that you have read the Fire Safety guidance in your Resident Handbook or on our website and contact us if you have any queries or concerns. In the meantime, please read this information about fire doors and their importance in keeping you safe.



Important Fire Door Information

Key facts for residents about the importance of fire doors

What are fire doors?

Fire doors are specifically made to reduce the spread of fire and toxic smoke within a building. A 'fire door' is made up of the door, its frame and all the fittings like locks, handles, closers and hinges. All of these things are designed to resist fire for a certain length of time.

Why are fire doors so important?

Fire doors are important as they protect residents from the spread of fire and smoke. Fire doors are fitted at strategic points throughout your building to ensure that residents have the best level of protection in the event of a fire. If the fire door has been damaged or altered in any way, it may not be able to stop fire and smoke from spreading and could put lives at risk.



Who is responsible for fire doors in my building?

By law, your building will have a 'Responsible Person' for fire safety. For PCHA, this is **Head of Property Services, Steve Fox**. This person must inspect all fire doors in common areas and flat entrance doors. They must make sure fire doors are maintained to the required standard. If you spot any problems with fire doors in your building, you should tell your Responsible Person.

Never prop, wedge or tie open a fire door

- Fire doors cannot stop the spread of fire if they are propped, wedged or tied open.
- Keep fire doors shut at all times unless they are fitted with an approved 'fire door retainer'.
- A fire door retainer (pictured below) will hold fire doors open, automatically closing them when the fire alarm sounds.



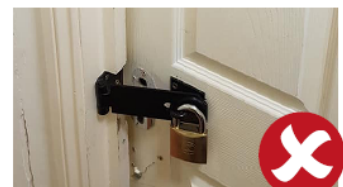
Never tamper with the fire door closer

- Fire doors have to be fitted with a working fire door closer so it automatically closes after use.
- If the fire door was left open, fire and smoke would spread quickly through the building.
- Fire doors can be heavy to operate but never be tempted to tamper with the closer - it could save your life.



Never alter the fire doors in any way

- If any changes are made to the fire door after it is fitted, it may not be able to stop the spread of fire and smoke.
- Never screw or drill into a fire door.
- Don't add letterboxes, handles, locks or door viewers without consulting your Responsible Person.



This advice has been adapted from a document provided by **Safelincs Fire & Safety Solutions**

How to Spot Issues with Fire Doors

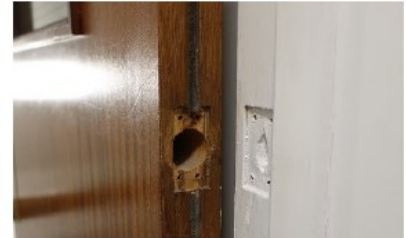
The Responsible Person for your building should check fire doors in common areas and flat entrance doors regularly. But, there are also some checks you can do yourself to see if there are any obvious issues with your fire doors. The following pictures represent common issues with fire doors. If you find any of these issues, report them to your Responsible Person as soon as possible.



Door closer is broken or does not shut the fire door.



Fire door does not close properly or there is a large gap at the edges or underneath.



Door handles, closers, locks or hinges are missing or damaged.



The fire door frame is damaged or poorly fitted.



Fire door is damaged or has a hole in.



There is damage to the glass panel.



The seals around the edge of the door or frame are damaged, missing or have been painted over.



There are less than 3 door hinges or the hinges are missing screws.



The fire door has had changes made to it after it was fitted, for example a ventilation grill has been added.

This advice has been adapted from a document provided by **Safelincs Fire & Safety Solutions**

If you notice a problem with your fire door, please report it to us as soon as possible.

The Responsible Person for fire safety at PCHA is **Steve Fox**, our **Head of Property Services**. Contact Steve or speak to any member of staff on 020 8659 3055, or email our dedicated Health & Safety email address healthandsafety@pcha.co.uk.

A Referral to Pocket Power Can Save You Money

We aim to ensure all our residents have access to up-to-date information and support around the best deals and savings for household bills and expenses. This is where Pocket Power comes in!

Pocket Power is a social enterprise scheme that PCHA started working with a year ago. We have just renewed our subscription for a further year, meaning that even more residents can make significant savings (often in the £100s) off their bills and expenses.

The service is offered via a phone call with the Pocket Power team.

It has saved people an average of **£386 a time**, all by helping residents to apply for discounts such as social tariffs or water discounts, to wipe debt, and to switch phone, broadband, car insurance or bank accounts.

Pocket Power is set up to be simple and supportive to their customers. The initial call lasts around 30 minutes, and after this they can follow up to help people apply for new discounts, or make a switch when contracts run out.

We are urging all residents to make use of this excellent service, to find out where you could be making savings or be connected to financial support.



Pocket Power

Pay less, save more

One of our residents, Mark, was delighted to make savings of £739. Pocket Power helped him save on his water bills and a water debt payment matching scheme, as well as helping with a switch to Sky Social Tariff and providing support to obtain a household appliance.

Helen, Managing Director at Pocket Power, said: *"We've really enjoyed working with PCHA over the last year. On average we saved every resident we spoke to almost £400 which is so needed, especially during this very difficult cost of living crisis. We're really looking forward to strengthening our partnership over the next year and building on the successes we've achieved so far."*

If you would like to find out more about Pocket Power or would like to be referred to the scheme, please email us at housing@pcha.co.uk or call **020 8659 3055**.



Free and Discounted Food

Here are a couple of ways you can get free and discounted food for you and your family.

Martin Lewis's Money Saving Expert site (www.moneysavingexpert.com) is a brilliant resource detailing all the latest deals, guides, tips and tricks to save money.

The site lists numerous websites and apps that allow you to access free food or discounted food locally. Here are two of the biggest.

Olio

Olio is an app that originally started out as a free food and drink sharing app. As well as food and drink, you can now use it to get (and give away) other household items too, such as books, clothes and toys. The idea is that instead of binning surplus food, people sign up to Olio and offer it to their local community – think Freecycle for food. Simply download it from Apple's App Store or the Google Play store.



Olio app

Too Good To Go

Too Good To Go aims to reduce food waste and save you money at the same time. It hooks you up with local cafés, supermarkets, bakeries and restaurants which have leftover food at the end of the day, and lets you buy it at a discounted rate.

You can buy a 'magic bag' of food via the app, which usually costs between £2 and £5. Too Good To Go says the food will be worth at least three times as much if you'd bought it at full price. Simply download the app for free from Apple's App Store or Google Play. You'll need to create a free account or log in via Facebook to browse locations near you.



Too Good To Go app

For more information about local support services, check out our 'Support Hub' on the PCHA website at www.pcha.co.uk or see the Support Services leaflet in your Resident Handbook. You can also contact us on 0208 659 3055.

Remember to Pay Your Rent

Don't be tempted to miss your rent payments or to pay less rent over the Christmas period. It could put your home at risk. Your rent needs to be treated as a priority bill.

If you are experiencing difficulties or worried about paying your rent or other bills, you may be eligible for help. We are here to help and want to work with you to avoid falling into arrears or breaching repayment arrangements.

Please contact us to discuss this on **020 8659 3055**.



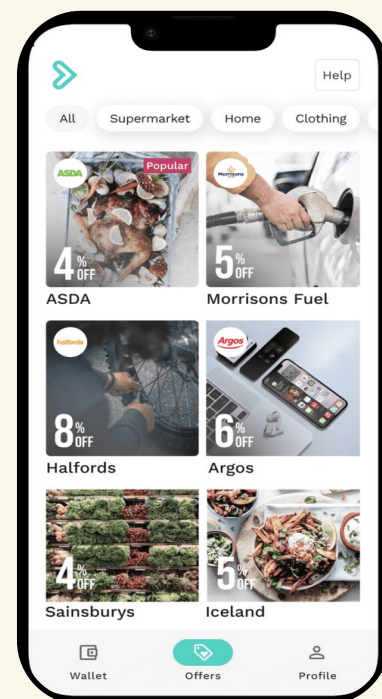
Coming Soon!... Housing Perks app

Housing Perks is an invitation-only discounts app for housing association residents.

It is a mobile app that saves you money on everyday items with discount codes, vouchers, cashback and free items. It can help you save money on the essentials and things you already buy.

The mobile app is free to use for residents and gives you access to immediate discounts with over 100 national retailers, both in store and online. Discounts are generally between 4% and 10%. Housing Perks say that residents typically save £6-£12 per week on their essentials.

We are in the process of subscribing to the service and will send you more details via post and email when it is ready to use, with instructions to access the app.





Estate Walkabouts

Every six weeks we conduct an inspection of the exterior and interior communal grounds of our estates.

The aim is to ensure a good standard of overall maintenance is being met and to identify any issues such as with the upkeep of gardens, the bin storage areas, or cleaning, and making sure internal communal areas are kept clean and tidy.

We always look to make improvements where possible and ensure that our estates are not only being well maintained but are pleasant places to live. This includes looking at functionality (how the spaces 'work' for you) and what can be done to make things better.

We welcome residents to join us on these walks. This gives you a chance to work alongside tenancy and maintenance services in improving our communal spaces. We welcome the opportunity to hear your thoughts and opinions and have your creative input. Last spring, we were met by residents at South Penge Park and as a result improvements were made to the communal lighting, parking and landscaping.

Below is a list of the dates and times that the inspections will take place over the coming months. Please do join us! For more information, please contact the team.

Garden Walk Regina House South Penge Park Mike Young House	23 Hamlet Road 27 Belvedere Road 173 Anerley Road Stafford House	Alliance Court
8 th December 2023 11am-12:30pm	6 th December 2023 1pm-3.30pm	9 th January 2024 11am-12pm
19 th January 2024 11am-12:30pm	17 th January 2024 1pm-3.30pm	20 th February 2024 11am-12pm
1 st March 2024 11am-12:30pm	28 th February 2024 1pm-3.30pm	2 nd April 2024 11am-12pm
12 th April 2024 11am-12:30pm	10 th April 2024 1pm-3.30pm	14 th May 2024 11am-12pm



Celebrating Our Merger!

In September we moved into new offices at the rear of our previous Bexley office at 21 Bourne Road.

The new space gives us more flexibility – we can welcome residents to the office and provide more opportunities for you to join us for activities and information sessions.

Just after the move we hosted a party for residents to mark the merger between PCHA and BECHA. We were delighted that so many residents from Bexley and Penge were able to join staff, contractors and other stakeholders in PCHA. It was a glorious hot Saturday afternoon, and we all enjoyed ice creams, Caribbean punches and dancing to the Juma Brothers steel band.

The kids had a great time playing games, crafting and having their faces painted. Thank you to everyone who came for making the afternoon such a fun event.

We are keen to use our office spaces as hubs for more resident activities and will notify for you of dates for these throughout the year. Most recently, we hosted Macmillan Coffee Mornings at our Penge and Bexley offices to raise money for a great cause (over £100); our new surveyor Rob made some yummy fairy cakes! Thank you to everyone who came along.

If you have suggestions for any activities you would like us to host, please let us know by contacting our Tenancy Services Officers Alex and Jean on 020 8659 3055 or email housing@pcha.co.uk.

New Homes in Bexley

We are really excited to announce that we have just acquired nine new flats at Wrotham Road in Welling, Bexley.

The flats are a mix of one and two-bedroom homes forming part of redevelopment of the former Lord Kitchener Pub. The flats will be allocated via the London Borough of Bexley Choice-Based Lettings scheme

and we anticipate that the new residents will move in during early January 2024.

These new flats deliver good-quality energy-efficient homes and are well served by local amenities.

We are delighted to be able to offer more homes for people in housing need in Bexley.



Nitrous Oxide – No Laughing Matter

Police forces have got tougher on flagrant drug taking in local communities. You may have seen in the press that possession of nitrous oxide is now illegal where a person intends to wrongly inhale it for a psychoactive effect.

Use of nitrous oxide has been linked to anti-social behaviour such as intimidating gatherings on high streets and children's parks, as well as leaving empty cannisters scattered in public places.

The gas causes the user to feel relaxed and giggly, but it can also affect hearing and make users dizzy, anxious, paranoid and cause headaches.

Why is this dangerous?

It is very dangerous to inhale nitrous oxide directly from the canister as it comes out at sub-zero temperature and can cause freeze burns to the users' lungs. Heavy, regular abuse of the drug also poses significant health risks for users including anaemia and in more severe cases, nerve damage or paralysis. It has been identified as having potentially fatal consequences on roads from incidents of drug driving.

If you are concerned about nitrous oxide use in your local area you can report this to your local neighbourhood policing team or the police, or call Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**.





Ask the CSOs – Tip no.5: Christmas Rubbish

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.

It's easy to generate additional rubbish during the Christmas season so it's important that we ensure that rubbish is disposed of safely and responsibly.

To do this you should:

- Always ensure that your non-recyclable rubbish and food waste are bagged up securely, as otherwise you risk attracting vermin to your home.
- Only put recycling and rubbish bags out on the appropriate days for collection, and inside the designated bins so the lids can be closed and the area kept tidy.
- Double check that everything put in the recycling is actually recyclable, as non-recyclable items can prevent the refuse collectors from taking it away. Examples are tags, bows, ribbons and sticky tape on wrapping paper – these need to be removed.

Quick tip: to find out if your wrapping paper is recyclable, try the 'scrunch test'. If it stays in a ball once scrunched, and it doesn't have any glitter or foil decoration, it can go in the recycling! Remember to remove any sticky tape, bows and tags.



Remember that during the festive season, collection days may change. For details of Christmas collections in Bromley, call **0300 303 8658** or see www.bromley.gov.uk/recycling-rubbish-waste/bank-holiday-waste-recycling-collections. For Bexley borough, see www.bexley.gov.uk/services/rubbish-and-recycling.



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**

