

Changing lives

introducing Genesis Community

Genesis
Community

PCHA is part of the Genesis Housing Group. Another part of the Group is our charitable foundation, Genesis Community.

Our mission at Genesis Community is to make a real difference to people's lives and the communities where they live. We do this by promoting and developing community programmes over the wide area in which Genesis provides housing – across London and into Essex and Hertfordshire.

One way we do this is by **helping people get into work** – you may have read about this in the Spring edition of What's Happening. We are currently working in parts of Brent, supporting residents who are not working and would like to find out how they can go about getting a job. Some residents would like to volunteer while others want paid work and we are helping turn those hopes into a reality. We are now also working with residents in Hackney and will soon be working in Westminster.

We also do lots of **work with young people** in Brent, Westminster, Hackney and east London and in Rochford in Essex. We work with young people through school programmes and also with young people who are not at school, in employment or training. Projects include football and other sports, youth forums and training and employment advice.

Then there is our **work with elderly and vulnerable people**. We have given computer training to over 300 older people living in sheltered housing, which has meant participants are now able to keep in touch with family and friends though the internet. The oldest learner is 94! We also run social and activity events for older residents.

As well as all this, we offer free and confidential advice on benefits, managing your finances and how you may be able to increase your income.

We also support community projects through our Small Grants Programme



and the Knowles Trust Fund, which provides grants for people improving the quality of life for older people.

If you want to find out more about the work Genesis Community is doing in your area, or if you have any questions, please contact us on 0208 150 4301.

If you would like more information on the Knowles Trust fund, or an application pack for this grant, contact Vitolina Samu, Grants and Support Officer at Genesis Community, on 020 8150 4256 or at vitolina.samu@ghg.org.uk

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Prize draw winners!

Earlier this year, we sent you our Annual Report 2007, which told you some of the things we did in 2006/07 and gave you some facts and figures on how we are performing.

Thank you to all residents who gave us feedback on the report and congratulations to Bonnie Harris and Zohra Siddiqui who each won £50 in the prize draw.

Your chance to challenge PCHA on service improvement

A company called Housing Quality Network recently carried out a mock inspection of PCHA's services, to see how we are performing and where we could do better. The results of this inspection have given us a clear picture of areas which need to be improved. Since receiving the results, we have been working hard to produce service improvement plans setting out how we intend to meet the recommendations made by the inspectors.

We have now finished drafting our service improvement plans and would like to hear your views. We have set up a series of 'Challenge Panels' where managers and our residents can meet and review the plans for each area of our services. The panels will be held every 4-6 months, allowing anyone interested to find out what we are doing to help make our services better.

If you are interested in getting involved please contact Catherine Stone, Service Improvement Manager on **0208 150 4317** or by email at catherine.stone@pcha.org.uk

Service charges

All PCHA tenants have now moved from fixed to variable services charges following a lengthy consultation process.

If you live in a property which has service charges, you would have received a letter from us back in March notifying you of your new charges. You must now make sure that you are paying the correct service charge otherwise you will fall into arrears. If you are claiming Housing Benefit you should take the letter to the Housing Benefit Office so that they can assess your claim. You should do this as soon as possible so that you do not fall into arrears.

If you are not sure how much service charge you should be paying or if you have any queries, then please contact your income officer. If you are not sure who your income officer is, please contact our switch board on **0208 150 4200** and they should be able to help you.

If you have phoned us up since April to inform us that we are charging you for services that you don't receive, we may not have been able to change these on our computer system yet due to a technical problem. We would like to apologise for this delay.

We hope to have resolved this problem by the end of July and we will adjust your accounts accordingly to make sure that you have not paid more than you should have done. We will write to you to confirm your correct charges once we have made these changes. If you have any queries about this then please contact Rena Khazanchi on **0208 150 4260** or John Anderson on **0208 150 4562**.

Working together to tackle abuse

We have adopted two new policies which seek to protect our most vulnerable residents. The 'Protecting children and young people from abuse' and 'Safeguarding adults from abuse' policies both state our commitment to actively prevent abuse.

Knowing what to do when we suspect something is wrong is a concern for everyone. We work closely with other organisations including local councils, police and specialist agencies. You can help too. If you have any concerns about children or residents in your community it is better to speak to someone. Contact your local council or one of the national organisations listed below for advice.

Here are some useful telephone numbers and websites.

NSPCC Child protection helpline
0808 800 5000 (24 hour free helpline) www.nspcc.org.uk also has useful information, available in several languages.

Childline 0800 1111 (24 hour free, confidential, helpline for children)

Action on Elder Abuse helpline
0808 808 8141 (free, confidential helpline) www.elderabuse.org.uk

Age Concern Information Line
0800 00 99 66 (8am – 7pm, free advice and information)
www.ageconcern.org.uk

If you would like to see a copy of these policies please contact the **Policy Team** on **0208 150 4112** or email us at info@ghg.org.uk.

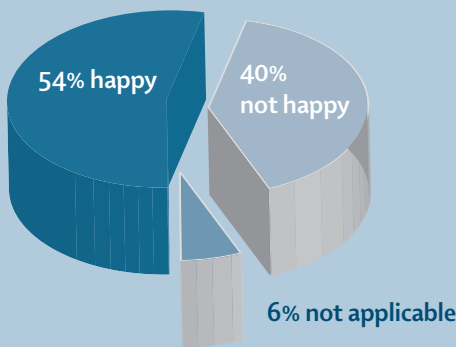
Estates services updates

Cleaning and gardening satisfaction surveys

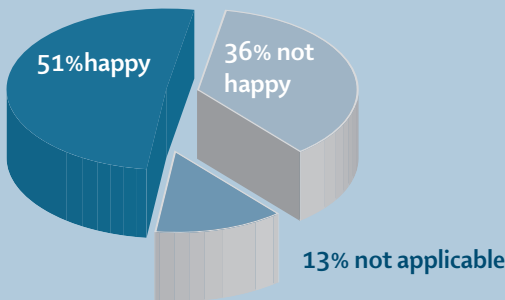
We are carrying out a programme of satisfaction surveys on our estates which receive a cleaning and/or gardening service to find out what you think of our service. Our first survey was carried out in February. We will be carrying out further surveys over the coming months.

265 residents responded to our February survey. The results were as follows.

Are you happy with the performance of your cleaning contractor?



Are you happy with the performance of your gardening contractor?



We have been working with our contractors to improve the services we deliver on these estates. We are continuing to consult with residents who said they were not happy with the service to see whether they feel it is now improving. In a follow-up survey carried out in June, satisfaction had improved amongst these residents

Thank you to all residents who responded to the surveys.

Remember if you are not happy with the cleaning or gardening service you are receiving, or if you have any queries about the service, you can contact your housing officer. If you do not know their direct contact details, call the switchboard on **0208 150 4200** and they will be able to help you.



Parking

We have also surveyed residents in our estates which have parking control, to see what they think of our service. 94 residents responded. 62% said they were not happy with the current contractor and 63% said they would like us to re-tender.

We will now be working with the Estates Services Panel who will help us to select a new contractor and to formulate a new contract.

Estates Services Panel

As part of our February satisfaction survey and in the last edition of What's Happening, we asked you if you would be interested in participating in an Estates Services Panel. Over twenty residents have now agreed to take part. They will be involved with the process for selecting contractors and monitoring and improving estates services.

There is still time for you to get involved - if you would like to be part of the panel, or if you have any queries about the surveys we are carrying out, please contact **Kamran Mirza**, Contracts and Compliance Manager on **0208 150 4363**.

Notice boards

We are putting up notice boards in communal areas of estates or blocks where we provide a cleaning and gardening service. Look out for information on the new boards including cleaning/gardening contractor details, the contractors' time sheet and a time table of when your housing officer will be coming to inspect your estate or block.





Jackie Thomas

Meet PCHA's new Deputy Director

Jackie Thomas has recently been appointed as the new Deputy Director of PCHA. She spent three years at Lambeth Council and has twenty years experience in housing including 16 years at PCHA as a housing services manager.

Schuyla Van Dyke de Curtis, a PCHA tenant of over 20 years was able to interview her and see how she is settling in.

Q: Welcome to PCHA and congratulations on your new position.

A: It is great to be back and working with so many familiar faces again.

Q: What exactly will your remit be as Deputy Director of PCHA?

A: I will be responsible for the delivery of the housing management service, including income collection, tenancy and leasehold management services as well as the contact centre.

Q: How will your previous experience impact on your present position at PCHA?

A: I have had the opportunity, particularly in the last three years, to work on a number of projects that will benefit PCHA. Many of these have included improving performance and access to services. I will be using this previous experience to review and work with tenants on how PCHA can improve the delivery of services to tenants.

Q: Do you live in or personally know the London boroughs covered by PCHA?

A: I am familiar with many of the areas - I live in the London borough of Ealing and have also lived in a number of other boroughs where PCHA works.

Q: What are your thoughts about social housing in the 21st century?

A: It is important that social housing in the 21st century does not only deliver good quality, affordable and sustainable homes but also looks at how social landlords engage with tenants to get a better understanding of what and how services are to be delivered.

Q: Have your first few weeks at PCHA clarified and informed any thoughts you might have on your personal 'To Do' list?

A: PCHA is part of the Genesis Housing Group, which has grown in the last three years. I am getting to know the different subsidiaries and departments in the Group to get a better understanding of how Genesis works.

In relation to PCHA I have been meeting with the Senior Management Team to see how we can improve our internal communications within PCHA and to tenants. I have met with the Housing Management Teams to review whether the services are structured to deliver the services effectively to tenants.



Schuyla Van Dyke

A new rent payment policy on its way

We are developing a new rent payment policy and we would like to hear your views.

We must maintain an efficient rent collection service in order to provide a wide range of services to our residents. We are currently drafting a new policy. The main points are:

- We will promote a rent payment culture, encouraging early payment and preventing residents from falling into arrears with their rent.
- If arrears do arise, we will contact the resident quickly and sympathetically work with them to tackle the causes of the arrears.
- Legal action will only commence when all other steps have been taken and all the options to tackle the debt have been attempted.



We would like to know what you think of our draft policy. If you have any comments to make (or if you would like a copy of the draft policy) please contact the **Policy Team** on **0208 150 4112** or email us at **info@ghg.org.uk**.

Remember: It is a condition of your tenancy agreement that you must pay your rent and service charges on time. If you are having problems paying your rent contact your income officer for advice. If you do not have their direct contact details, contact our switchboard on **0208 150 4200**.

Get your finances on track with Camden Plus Credit Union



A new financial solution has been launched in Camden to help you take charge of your money.

Anyone living or working in Camden or the three South Kilburn wards of Brent can join.

Camden Plus is owned and controlled by its members. This means all profits go back to each member, keeping money within the local community. As with banks and building societies, it is regulated by the Financial Services Authority (FSA), providing strict guidelines and ensuring that your money is 100% secure.

They offer a great way to save and borrow affordably and have a range of great benefits, including:

- safe and convenient saving accounts that allow you to save as much or as little as you like with competitive returns;
- low-cost loans that are open to everyone, no matter what your circumstances, including instant access loans for new members;
- free life insurance for members on your savings and loans (subject to conditions);

- opportunities to have your benefits and cheques paid directly to your credit union account – if you do not have a bank account;
- PayPoint cards for each member to enable you to make deposits across the borough at any local shop or post office offering the service;
- access to free debt management advice if you're having money trouble (through our partners such as Camden CAB and Mary Ward Centre); and
- knowledge that becoming a member is helping your local community as well as yourself.

Sherine McFarlane (pictured), Community Development Manager at Genesis



Community, explains "Genesis Community has supported the development of Camden Plus from a very early stage. We see this as a fantastic way for our residents to improve their household finances by building up savings for a rainy day."

It's simple to join – to find out more or to become a member, please contact **James Richards** (CU Manager) on **0207 372 5878**, email: **james@camdenplus.co.uk** or visit **www.camdenplus.co.uk**.

Stepping up our action to tackle anti-social behaviour

We are developing a new anti-social behaviour policy and we would like to hear your views.

We are committed to tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) in a responsive and robust manner. We recognise that if allowed to persist, ASB can significantly affect quality of life for our residents.

We are currently writing a new policy. The main points are:

- We will take a resident focused approach to tackling ASB, working with the complainant and the alleged perpetrator, aiming to reach agreed actions, timescales and ultimately closure.
- We will balance legal action and intervention with programmes which aim to tackle the causes of ASB and to prevent ASB from happening.
- We will take the necessary action to deal with perpetrators of ASB. We will support perpetrators to change their behaviour where this is a reasonable remedy to address the ASB concerned.
- We aim to build an environment within our neighbourhoods where victims of ASB and witnesses feel secure and safe in coming forward to report ASB. We will deal sympathetically and confidentially with complainants and witnesses.



- We will, where they exist, join and work positively with local partnerships and external agencies to tackle ASB.

We would like to know what you think of our draft policy. If you have any comments to make (or if you would like a copy of the draft policy) please contact the **Policy Team** on **0208 150 4112** or email us at **info@ghg.org.uk**.

If you are experiencing anti-social behaviour, you can report this to any member of staff at PCHA. You can report this to your housing officer by contacting them directly, or if you do not know their direct contact details, contact our switchboard on **0208 150 4200**. You should report any criminal behaviour to the police.

Your questions answered...

There are some questions residents frequently ask us about our services. We would like to respond to some of these questions as a regular feature of this newsletter.

If you have a question you would like us to answer here, please contact Noella Mulamba, Resident Involvement Team Coordinator on 0208 150 4512 or at noella.mulamba@pcha.org.uk

I need to get a level access shower put into my bathroom. How can I get this adaptation carried out?

If you need an adaptation carrying out, you should contact your housing officer.

If you need a major adaptation such as a level access shower, your housing officer will send you a referral form to complete and return to us. We will then send this to social services for an occupational therapy assessment. Once the assessment has been completed, your occupational therapist will send us recommendations for the adaptation. We will request two quotes for the works requested and the best value quote will be sent to the occupational therapist

for their approval. Once the quote has been approved the works will be carried out.

If the adaptation you need is a smaller job, for example if you need grab rails or kitchen lever taps, we would be able to carry out this work without a referral to social services.

We carry out adaptations to our properties to enable elderly people, disabled people, people with sensory impairments and children with disabilities to achieve and maintain independent living.

How can I get help to form a tenants group?

PCHA have a resident involvement team who offer a wide range of opportunities for residents to participate in influencing the decisions which are made about their homes and neighbourhoods. They can help set up and support residents associations and groups. If you would like to set up a residents association or group in your neighbourhood, find out if there is an existing group, or if you have any queries, please contact **Angela Ellis**, Resident Involvement Manager, on **0208 1504595** or e-mail angela.ellis@pcha.org.uk

Summer activities for elderly and vulnerable residents

The Tenant Support Team provides support to tenants living in standard PCHA flats and houses (general needs accommodation). The team are planning a number of activities over the summer, including a visit to the seaside and a family day out to London Zoo. The team is also arranging an all day event later in the summer for vulnerable tenants to explore ways of getting more involved in organising trips, training activities, policy consultation and opportunities to interview PCHA staff.

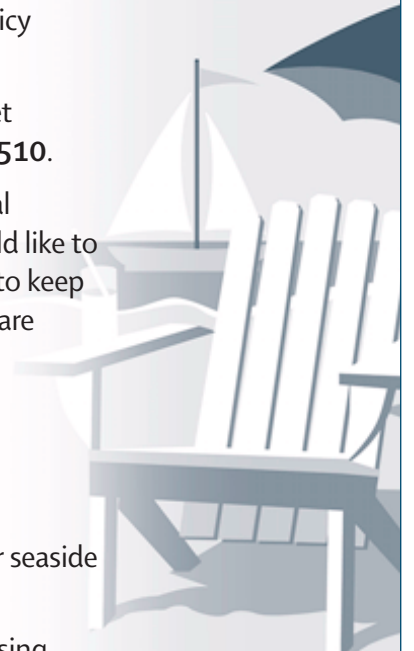
If you are interested in any of these activities or have any ideas about ways to get involved, please call **Paul Evans**, Floating Support Team Leader, on **0208 150 4510**.

Over the coming months, the Tenant Support Team will also be organising social activities and day trips for tenants aged 60 and over. If you are over 60 and would like to know more, we would like to hear from you. We can put you on our mailing list to keep you informed of what's happening and invite you along to future events. If you are interested, please contact **Peter Crowley** or **Les Pilgrim**, Support Coordinators for Older People on **0208 150 4569** or **0208 150 4285**.

Summer seaside trip for residents in sheltered housing

Following the success of the summer trip in 2007, we will be organising another seaside trip for our residents living in sheltered housing during August 2008.

If you are interested in coming along, please contact **Helen Gray**, Sheltered Housing Officer on **0208 150 4684**. Helen will then take your details so she can send you further details on the trip nearer the time.



Problems with our telephones

Many of you will be aware of ongoing problems with our phones, where some callers have been subject to cut-outs and error messages. We would like to offer our apologies to all residents who have experienced these problems. We are working closely with our service provider and engineers to identify the cause of these faults and ensure that these problems are resolved.

We would also like to apologise for recent problems with our voicemail service in our maintenance contact

centre. Due to a fault on the system, we have been unable to retrieve some of the messages left using this service. If you have left a message but have not received a call back from us, please call us on 0208 150 4000.

We have now stopped using voicemail and instead will answer every call. During busy periods this may mean that you will have to wait in a queue before you get through to one of our call centre staff. We are currently working hard to improve the service you receive from our contact centre and we hope that you will soon notice improvements.

Half price bus fares for people on income support

Did you know that Londoners on income support can travel half price on London buses? In order to qualify for the cheaper fares, you must be aged 18-59 and not receiving any other concessionary tickets, e.g. freedom passes. If you would like to know more, please contact **Bob Butler** on **0208 548 2164**. Alternatively, please visit the Transport for London website www.tfl.gov.uk.



Office addresses

The registered address for PCHA is

Genesis Housing Group Head Office

Capital House, 25 Chapel Street, London NW1 5DT

☎ 020 8150 4100 or for hearing impaired callers

☎ (minicom) 020 8150 4181

✉ info@ghg.org.uk 🌐 www.ghg.org.uk

PCHA Head Office

192-196 High Road, Willesden, London NW10 2PB

☎ 020 8150 4200

✉ info@pcha.org.uk

Other offices

324 Harrow Road, London W9 2HP

336 Park Road, Bushey, Herts WD23 2BJ

✉ HertsTeam@pcha.org.uk

Contact centre ☎ 020 8150 4000

Gas heating and hot water repairs

- contact the gas contractor for your area

Sheltered housing ☎ 020 8367 4401

Brent and Harrow ☎ 0800 980 4796

Brunswick Park and Stepney Green ☎ 020 8367 4401

Westminster, Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington

& Chelsea ☎ 0800 328 7304

Former West Hampstead properties ☎ 020 8367 4401

All other areas ☎ 0800 542 1275

General repairs (8.30 am – 5 pm)

☎ 020 8150 4000

✉ callcentre@pcha.org.uk

Emergency repairs (outside office hours)

☎ 020 8150 4000

English

This document gives information about housing news, events and local information. If you need any part of this information in large print, Braille, on audio-tape or explained in your own language please contact us on the number below.

Somali

Dokumentigan wuxuu ku saabsan yahay warka cusub oo guriyo, dhacdooyin iyo gobol ah. Haddaad u baahan tahay warkan afkaaga-hooyo, afka loogu talagalay dadka aan arki karaan – afka faraha ama CD-ga ama ajeladda rekorka nala xirir. Namberkan isticmaal.

Gujarati

આ દસ્તાવેજ ઘરના સમાચારો, પ્રસંગો અને સ્થાનિક માહિતી વિશે માહિતી આપે છે. જો તમારે કોઈ પણ ભાગની આ માહિતી શ્રેણી, સીડી ઉપર, ઓડિયો ટેપ અથવા તમારી પોતાની ભાષામાં સમજી શકો તેની જરૂર હોય તો નીચે જણાવેલ નંબર ઉપર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.

Portuguese

Este documento proporciona-lhe informações sobre notícias sobre habitação, factos e informação local. Se necessitar de parte desta informação em caracteres aumentados, em Braille, em CD, cassete áudio ou apresentada no seu idioma, por favor contacte-nos, através do telefone abaixo indicado.

Arabic

تمدك هذه الوثيقة بالمعلومات اللازمة عن أخبار الإسكان والأحداث والأخبار المحلية. إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على أي جزء من هذه المعلومات مطبوعاً بأحرف كبيرة أو بطريقة برايل أو مسجلاً على اسطوانة مدمجة أو شريط صوتي أو مشروحاً باللغة التي تتحدثها، يرجى الاتصال بنا على الرقم الموضح أدناه.

Spanish

Este documento proporciona información sobre alojamiento, eventos e información local. Si necesita esta información en fuentes grandes, Braille, en CD, cinta o en su propio idioma, póngase en contacto con nosotros en el teléfono siguiente.

Bengali

এই দস্তাবেজটি বাসস্থান সম্বন্ধীয় খবর, ঘটনা ও স্থানীয় তথ্য সম্বন্ধে তথ্য সরবরাহ করবে। যদি আপনি এই তথ্যগুলোর যে কোন একটির সম্বন্ধে বিস্তারিত জানতে চান, অথবা আপনার নিজের ভাষাতে ব্রেল, সিডি, অডিও টেপ-এ পেতে চান তাহলে নিম্নলিখিত নম্বরে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।

If you would like a copy of this newsletter (or certain pages) in large print or on audio cassette or CD, please telephone 020 8150 4112.

French

Ce document contient des informations sur les nouveautés et les événements relatifs à la cité ainsi que des informations locales. Si vous souhaitez obtenir une partie de ces informations en gros caractères, en Braille, sur CD, cassette audio ou expliqué dans votre langue, veuillez nous contacter au numéro indiqué ci-dessous.