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Did you know...

...that a duty housing services officer and income services officer is available until 7pm every Thursday at our Willesden office?

See page 12 for more information on office opening times

What's happening

Welcome to your Spring newsletter

Hello and welcome to your Spring newsletter. In this edition you'll find news of what's been happening at PCHA over the last few months, including the appointment of a new interim Managing Director, results from our leaseholder survey and updates from the Income Services and Tenant Support team. You'll also find a new feature on page 9, called Your say, and on page 10, you'll find information on free training courses. On page 11, you can find out how to contact your Housing Services and Income Collection teams. We hope you enjoy your newsletter. If you have any comments about this edition, or ideas for future editions, please contact Angela Ellis on 020 8451 8080 or email angela.ellis@pcha.org.uk

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New DVD about how to get involved



Hearing your views is really important to us – we want our services to meet your needs and the best way to do this is for us to work with you to find out what you think. To let you know more about what it means to get involved at PCHA, we have a new DVD called 'You Can Make a Difference' in which



John Fleck, one of our residents, receives his 'Oscar' at the DVD launch

some of our residents talk about their experiences of being involved. The film has been translated into Gujarati, Bengali, Somali, Arabic and also British Sign Language.

If you would like a copy of the DVD, please contact the Resident Involvement team on **020 8451 8085** or email us at residentinvolvement@pcha.org.uk. Residents involved in the DVD were thanked for their help at an awards ceremony in Willesden Library, where they all received "Oscars".

The TCF needs you!

Tenants on the Tenant Consultative Forum (TCF) meet with PCHA managers every two months to review our policies, procedures and any new initiatives we're planning to introduce. There are spaces for 22 tenants on the forum. PCHA Board members also attend to keep in touch with residents' views, concerns and ideas.

At February's meeting, we discussed the new customer service delivery plan, our progress in meeting the government's Decent Homes standard and options for a new parking permit scheme.

If you are interested in joining the forum or would like to attend as an observer, please call Angela Ellis on 020 8451 8080.

Would you prefer to receive What's Happening by email?

If you would, please let us know by calling **020 7563 0037** or email info@ghg.org.uk



WELCOME TO OUR NEW INTERIM MANAGING DIRECTOR AT PCHA

Recently Pam Lockley, Managing Director, decided to leave PCHA and follow a new career path. Pam will be much missed by residents and staff alike and everyone wishes her well for the future. Until a permanent replacement is found, Owen Ingram (pictured) has been appointed on an interim basis.

“ I have received a very warm welcome from staff and also from the few residents whom I have already met. I have worked in housing and care for over 20 years and have in recent times specialised in the work of being an interim chief executive or director of housing associations. I know that it will be impossible to meet with all of you in my time here, but I wish to reassure you that we are doing all we can to continue to provide and improve our services to you. ”

Owen Ingram, Interim Managing Director

Do you want to make a difference?

Are you interested in becoming a tenant board member?

The PCHA board is responsible for overseeing the work and direction of the association. There are three tenant places on our board and each tenant serves for a period of three years. We have a vacancy for one tenant board member and are now welcoming applications.

Being a tenant board member brings responsibility but also many rewards. It's a great chance to develop your skills and experience whilst at the same time contributing to the improvement of residents' homes and the service they receive. We pay board members £3,250 each year as well as any out of pocket expenses such as childcare and transport costs.

Anyone who completes and returns an application form will be invited to an informal interview. If you are successful at the interview stage, you and other successful applicants will go forward to an election process. Board members will be asked to undergo a criminal records check.

If you would like to find out more or to request an application form, please contact **Angela Ellis, Resident Involvement Manager, on 020 8451 8080 or at angela.ellis@pcha.org.uk**. You can also download an application form from the PCHA website **www.pcha.org.uk/resident-involvement**.

Completed application forms must be sent to us by Monday 22 June. Interviews will take place in the evening on Monday 6 July at our office in Willesden.

Leaseholders' survey results

In December last year we sent a survey to all leaseholders. This was to see what you think of our services, to find out what we're doing well and where we need to do better. Thank you to everyone who responded to our survey. Your feedback was very useful and we are now working on an action plan to improve our services. Key services where we need to improve are: communication; service charges; repairs; cleaning and gardening.

In March we held a meeting for leaseholders who had told us they'd like to be involved with decision-making. We discussed how we're improving our services and future plans for consulting with you. We'll soon be contacting all leaseholders with the results of the survey and our action plan for making service improvements.

Using your feedback, we are already working on improving our services. Some of the things we have done include the following:

- Putting up notice boards on estates – this has already been done on many of our estates and we are working to put notice boards up on all estates within the next few months. These notice boards will contain information on whom to contact, updates about our scheme or estate and PCHA performance information.

- Creating a new leaseholder section on our website – log on to www.pcha.org.uk
- Keeping you informed of our contact details – including regular updates in this newsletter, on our website and in the leaseholder handbook.
- Improving our email communication, to ensure that responses are sent within our service commitment of 10 working days and that the response answers all of the queries asked.

Please contact Angela Ellis, Resident Involvement Manager on 020 8451 8080 if you would like more information on how to get involved with decision-making at PCHA.



Changes to how we manage reports of repairs

You may have read in the last edition of *What's happening*, that some of our contact centre staff are going to be based in the offices of our maintenance contractors. This has now happened, which has already improved communication between our staff and the maintenance contractors – which means a better service for you.

This new arrangement doesn't mean you have to dial a new number to report your repair – you still call us on **020 8451 8000**. When you press **1** for repairs, you will now be presented with a second options menu asking you to press either **1** if you live in NW2 or NW6, or **2** for all other areas. This is to help us direct your call to the correct office as residents in NW2 and NW6 are served by Pathmeads Property Services, with all other areas served by Morrison.



A day in the life



John Anderson

Have you ever wanted to know more about what your housing services officer does on an average day at work?

John Anderson, Housing Services Officer, tells us about a day in his life at PCHA.

9.20am I arrive at our office at 192 Willesden High Road. I was on training yesterday so I have a lot of emails and phone calls to return. As I have a busy day ahead I hurry to get them done to meet our service commitment targets.

10.15am One of my tenants has come into the office to see me about assigning her tenancy to her son, so I go down to the interview room to see her and give her some advice on what information she needs to provide.

11am I get in the car and leave the office to inspect some work that has been done at one of the schemes that I manage. We were

getting problems with vandalism and unauthorised people in the communal area so we replaced the old doors with new security doors.

12pm I make another visit to a scheme where we spent some money on improving the communal areas through some landscaping and planting. The new foliage looks good and I speak to a resident who lives on the scheme who says she is happy with her new environment. Good news!

1pm I break for lunch at a local café.

2pm I attend a local Civic Watch meeting, a monthly meeting that I attend. The Civic Watch group identifies crime trends in one of the wards that I manage and through partnership working we try to come up with solutions to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in the area.

4pm I am back in the office and I catch up on emails and work that I have missed while I was out. I also answer the phone for colleagues who are out of the office and I respond to some correspondence from a local MP enquiring about the housing situation in one of her constituencies.

5.30pm I am finished after a hectic but rewarding day and make my way home.

MAKING IMPROVEMENTS TO YOUR COMMUNITY

We have been making improvements to your estates through our Special Minor Improvement Budget, known as SMIB.

A panel of residents decides which properties receive funding from SMIB, after being presented with applications by Housing Services Officers. We are now progressing with the improvement works. At St Josephs Close, landscaping and planting has been completed. At Fermoy Road, we have installed a new pedestrian gate and metal bars to stop people climbing over the car park gates.

Further improvements being funded by SMIB include new doors and lights at Marble Drive, new steel doors at Caesar House and new doors at Rogerstone Court and Rutland Park Mansions.

If you'd like to know more about SMIB, or are interested in getting involved, please contact John Phelan on 020 8451 8084.



New gates at Fermoy Road



New plants at St. Joseph's Place

Margaret Fitzgerald,
the first Your Reward
member, receives a
bouquet of flowers

YOUR REWARD Launch Success!

In January we launched our tenant incentive scheme, 'Your reward'. By joining the scheme, if you keep to the terms of your tenancy agreement, you can earn points that can be used at Argos or Homebase. It's our way of saying thank you for being a responsible tenant.

The launch proved to be a great success and we have received lots of applications for membership. Margaret Fitzgerald, a sheltered scheme tenant and the first tenant to become a 'Your reward' member, was presented with a bouquet of flowers to congratulate her. Margaret said 'It's nice to be rewarded for a change and I look forward to using my points in Argos.'

Myth buster

You may think that you cannot join 'Your reward' if you are on Housing Benefit. Not true! Tenants receiving full Housing Benefit will be welcomed into the scheme, as long as all the other eligibility criteria are met.

Changes to the 'Your reward' application form

It's now even quicker and easier to apply to 'Your reward.' We no longer require your housing services officer to counter-sign the Community Pledge section on the application form, following feedback from you that this was delaying the application process.

Where can I find out more about joining 'Your reward'?

To find out more, or to pick up an application form, please contact us in one of the following ways:

- Contact **Janet Wishart, Your Reward Manager**, on **020 8451 8219**.
- Pick up an application form from any PCHA reception.
- Log onto our website: **www.pcha.org.uk** and select the 'Your place' option.

At the moment, Your reward is only available for PCHA tenants. The scheme will be available to Springboard tenants within the next 12 months.

“It's nice to be rewarded for a change and I look forward to using my points in Argos”

Your reward
incentives for tenants

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE INCOME SERVICES TEAM?

The Income Services team are responsible for managing your rent account. They deal with things like:

- making arrangements for you to pay your rent;
- giving advice on claiming benefits;
- keeping you informed about your rent account;
- agreeing arrangements to pay off arrears; and
- taking action if you do not pay off your arrears.

In September last year, we sent a survey to all tenants living in Brent to find out what you think of the services offered by the Income Services team. We received 334 responses, with 81% of those who had used the service being very or fairly satisfied with our services overall.

How we contact you

From our survey, we found that 74% of you preferred to be contacted about your rent in writing and 15% preferred a phone call.

You also requested that we notify you of any arrears as early as possible. We know it is really important to contact you as soon

as you are in arrears, as any missed payment, no matter how small, can result in serious financial problems. This means if you are in arrears, we will contact you by phone, letter or email, or will arrange a home visit. This is to help identify and tackle the causes of your arrears and to make an affordable payment agreement. We will also tell you where you can get specialist welfare benefits advice or debt counselling if you need it.

How you can pay

We offer a variety of ways to pay your rent and services charges. Of those who responded to our survey, just over half of you pay your rent either at the Post Office using your rent payment swipe card or as a direct deduction from your Housing Benefit. Direct debit is also popular, with 37% of people surveyed choosing to pay this way. You can also pay by standing order, over the telephone or online at www.pcha.org.uk. If you would like any further information about ways you can pay your rent, or to request a direct debit form, please contact your **Income Services Officer**. You can find their details on your last rent statement or on page 11 of this newsletter.

Viewing information online

Of those who responded to our survey, 20% of you said you'd like to see your account information online. Did you know you can now do this? Log on to our website, www.pcha.org.uk and click on tenants services online. Then select 'See My Data.' You can read more about our website in your Get Connected leaflet which you should have received with this newsletter.

Improving our services

In our survey, we received lots of comments about how you got into arrears and the difficulties that you are experiencing. We will use this feedback to shape our services and the assistance we offer in future. Please be aware that all responses have remained confidential.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete our survey, and for your feedback and comments which will help us improve our service. And congratulations to Mrs V Savina of Donnington Court, who won our prize draw!

To find out the contact details for your Income Services Officer, turn to page 11.

NEWS FROM THE TENANT SUPPORT TEAM

Come along to our focus group meetings!

Every three months, we hold a meeting at our offices at 192 High Road, Willesden, for residents receiving support from the Tenant Support team. Topics for discussion include policies and procedures, training, social events and how to get more involved in decision-making at PCHA.

We will be having meetings on:

- 23 April
- 30 July
- 29 October
- 10 December.

The meetings will start at 12.30pm. We hope to see you there!

Residents on their visit to Soho Theatre



A successful visit to Soho Theatre

Thirteen residents receiving support from the Tenant Support team went on a trip to the Soho Theatre in March. Residents saw the play *This isn't a Romance*, a love story by British-Korean writer In-Sook Chappell. The play had a British Sign Language interpreter and visual aids for the partially sighted. The Tenant Support team worked with Genesis Community to organise the visit. Everyone had an excellent time, and gave really positive feedback.

If you would like to attend future trips or need further information regarding the Tenancy Support team please, contact Paul Evans on 020 8451 8136.

English lessons in your own home

Do you live in North Westminster, and in the post code areas of W9, NW8, W2 or W10? Do you want to get better at speaking or writing English, but are unable to get to English language classes?

English Lessons At Home is a new charity for adults from ethnic minorities who feel isolated because they can't speak or write English well

enough, and who are unable to leave their home to attend courses. The charity can provide a specially trained teaching volunteer to come to your home to teach you English on a one-to-one basis for free. For more information please contact Evelyn Cantor, who runs the course, on 020 8960 0548.

Protect the contents of your home

As a resident of PCHA, you can insure your home contents through a low cost scheme from the Royal and Sun Alliance. This scheme will cover most household items, including televisions, DVD players and hi-fi equipment.

For more information, call the Royal and Sun Alliance on 0845 671 8172 or pick up a leaflet at our office at 192 High Road, Willesden.

Our housing regulator has changed

In December last year the government's regulatory organisation, The Housing Corporation, was replaced by a new organisation called the Tenants Services Authority (TSA). The TSA's role is to make sure housing associations, like PCHA, are providing a good service to their residents. Their goal is to raise the standard of services offered. To help them do this they carried out a 'National Conversation' with tenants, shared owners and potential tenants across the country to ask what they think of the services offered by their landlords.

We held a 'Local Conversation' for residents on 4 March, and the views of those who took part have been sent to the TSA. The TSA's new service standards will be published in December this year.



YOUR SAY!

Would you like to report back on a subject that interests you? This is a new page, which is your space for telling us about an issue that interests you. You could let us know about a project in your local community, a hobby or pastime you think other people would like to know more about, or an issue that you'd like to share with other residents. If you'd like to suggest an article, please contact the Resident Involvement team on 020 8451 8085 or email us at residentinvolvement@pcha.org.uk



This edition, we hear from Schuylla Van Dyke de Curtis, a PCHA resident and member of PCHA's

Maintenance Action Group (MAG). Schuylla also volunteers for OCD Action, a charity which promotes the awareness, understanding and treatment of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and other associated anxiety disorders. Her article is about a new national campaign to help end the discrimination faced by people with mental health problems.

Time to change

Time to Change is England's latest and most ambitious campaign to help end the discrimination faced by people with mental health problems. It is a collective of 35 projects led

by Mental Health Media, Mind and Rethink, and is funded with £16m from the Big Lottery Fund and £2m from Comic Relief.

It is estimated that at least 25% of the population will experience a mental health problem at some time in their lives. War time prime minister Winston Churchill, actor Stephen Fry, politician Alistair Campbell and model Jordan/Katie Price have all written about their experiences with mental health issues.

There is still a social stigma attached to mental illness and its treatment. Despite the fact that most sufferers are able to make complete recoveries and lead full and productive lives, more than 8 out of 10 people affected by mental health problems have encountered discrimination. Just think how many lives would improve with a more enlightened public attitude.

Backed by international evidence of what has worked to target and tackle discrimination, Time to Change includes several projects including training for student doctors and teachers, television and media advertisements and local community projects. The challenge is to raise the profile and de-mystify public perception of mental health problems.

To find out about campaign activities in your area, to access the campaign forum and get involved in the campaign or to find out more about mental health, visit the Time to Change website at www.time-to-change.org.uk

Together we can promote mental health and challenge the misconceptions of mental illness.

time to change
let's end mental health discrimination

New FREE training courses for all PCHA residents. Don't miss out!



Energy efficiency training

Date: Monday 20 April

Time: 2pm – 5pm

Venue: 192 Willesden High Road,
London NW10 2PB

This course will look at how you can save money on your energy bills, including how to calculate your bills and how to become more energy efficient.

Funding applications training

Date: Thursday 23 April

Time: 10am – 1pm

Venue: 192 Willesden High Road,
London NW10 2PB

This course is aimed at community groups, resident associations and individuals wanting to obtain funding for various activities. It will look at how to fill in funding applications and will give advice on funding available.

Pest control training

Date: Tuesday 28 April

Time: 5.30pm – 7pm

Venue: 192 Willesden High Road,
London NW10 2PB

This training gives you the chance to find out all you ever wanted to know about rats, mice and squirrels and how good hygiene can eliminate many unwanted visitors.

Anti-social behaviour training

Date: Thursday 30 April

Time: 10am – 3pm

Venue: 192 Willesden High Road,
London NW10 2PB

This course will look at what anti-social behaviour is, how it's dealt with by PCHA, the role of other agencies and an outline of legal remedies. It will also cover how to report anti-social behaviour and how residents can be involved in any action.

How to manage your money training

Date: Thursday 30 April

Time: 4pm – 6pm

Venue: 192 Willesden High Road,
London NW10 2PB

This training will help you to manage your finance and avoid falling into debt.

Committee skills and tenant association responsibilities training

Date: Thursday 7 May

Time: 10am – 3.30pm

Venue: 192 Willesden High Road,
London NW10 2PB

The training will focus on roles and responsibilities of tenants associations and action groups. This training is recommended for newly formed tenants associations, groups or committees or any individual seeking to be more active within a group or committee.

First aid training

Date: Friday 8 May

Time: 10.30am – 5pm

Venue: Vale Centre, Pentland Road,
London NW6 5RT

Attend this full day course and you will receive a certificate in basic first aid training. You will learn:

- mouth to mouth resuscitation
- how to help someone who has had an accident
- how to treat burns
- what to do if someone is choking.

Making the most of yourself - communication and assertiveness skills training

Date: Tuesday 12 May

Time: 10.30am – 5pm

Venue: 324 Harrow Road,
London W9 2HP

This is a practical communication and assertiveness training course, which will leave participants feeling more confident in their ability to handle others, feeling more confident about public speaking and feeling better about themselves.

For further information, or to book a place on a course, contact Paula Forrester or John Phelan on 0208 451 8083 or 0208 451 8084 or email paula.forrester@pcha.org.uk or john.phelan@pcha.org.uk Places on these courses are limited, so book early to avoid disappointment!

How to contact your housing management and income services teams

The phone numbers and names for the area teams are as follows:

If you live in Camden or Barnet
Telephone:
020 8451 8283

West Hampstead
Olufikemi Faroun
Housing Services Officer
Olugh Chukwu
Income Services Officer

Barnet
Simon McAnulty
Housing Services Officer
Donna Higgins
Income Services Officer

King's Cross
Andrew Lay
Housing Services Officer
Shirin Najm-Zadeh
Income Services Officer

If you live in Brent, Harrow or Hillingdon
Telephone:
020 8451 8282

Kilburn
Lavern Richards
Housing Services Officer
Salma Shah
Income Services Officer

Wemby
Dan Mooroooven
Housing Services Officer
Carmen Gayle
Income Services Officer

Harlesden
Alistair Ogilvie
Housing Services Officer

Jenny Adekanmi
Income Services Officer

Willesden
Gershwin Theron
Housing Services Officer
Yvonne Powell
Income Services Officer

Queens Park
Post Vacant
Housing Services Officer
Post Vacant
Income Services Officer

Harrow and Hillingdon
Sade Adenaiké
Housing Services Officer
Palu Vedd
Income Services Officer

If you live in Westminster, Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea, Lambeth or Wandsworth
Telephone:
0208 451 8281

Maida Vale
Karine Sarafian
Housing Services Officer
Jo Omoya
Income Services Officer

Harrow Road
Post Vacant
Housing Services Officer
Ruth Atkinson
Income Services Officer

Bayswater
Clayton Maponga
Housing Services Officer
Post Vacant
Income Services Officers

If you live in an East London borough or Haringey

Kemi Oduguwa
Housing Services Officer
020 8548 2574

Olugh Chukwu
Income Services Officer
020 8451 8023

If you live in East London in a Springboard property

Havering, Barking and Dagenham and part of Redbridge
Stephen Harley
020 8548 2135

Newham, Waltham Forest and part of Redbridge
Brenda Malcolm
020 8548 2136

Tower Hamlets
Sophia Burley
020 8548 2137

You have one officer who manages both housing services and income collection.

If you are a leaseholder

We have a small team dealing with income collection.

Telephone:
020 8451 8103 or 020 8451 8106.

Carl Jansen, Charmaine Dale and Chris Ashton
Leasehold Income Services Officers.

Email addresses:

Income collection: incomeservices@pcha.org.uk

Leasehold queries: leaseholdmanagement@pcha.org.uk

General queries: info@pcha.org.uk

We will acknowledge your email and send you a full response within 10 working days.

If you do not know who to contact please call the switchboard on **020 8451 8100**.

