

What's Happening

PCHA TENANT NEWSLETTER
www.pcha.org.uk

PCHA
Part of the Genesis Housing Group
Summer 2007

We're on the up!

Earlier this year we carried out a survey of over 2,500 tenants, to find out your views on the service that we provide and which of our activities are most important to you.

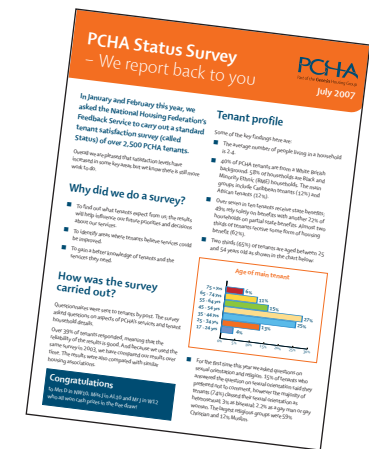
We now have the survey results and are pleased to learn that there have been a number of improvements since the last survey we carried out in 2003. Almost two-thirds (64%) of those who responded are satisfied overall. This is an increase of 4% from 2003.

You can read more about the results in the special feedback report that we

have included with this edition of *What's Happening*.

Pam Lockley, PCHA's Managing Director said, "We are pleased with the overall improvement in all areas the survey covered and in particular, the involvement of residents.

However we are not complacent and recognise the need to improve on



repairs and making it easier for tenants to contact us".

Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete and return the survey. We tell you more about what we plan to do with the results in the feedback report inside.



Tenants' conference - A date for the diary

Our Resident Involvement team are busy making plans for the annual tenants' conference. This year the theme will be *Building a Better Future Together*.

At the conference we plan to discuss the results of the recent Status survey and look at how we can improve our performance. We'll be reviewing the Tenants' Quality Promise and asking for feedback about how tenants think it is working. There'll also be an opportunity to find out more about our Neighbourhood Planning process and learn how we have responded to tenants' suggestions over the past year.

We'll be holding a number of workshops at the conference too on topics including 'Harassment Awareness' and 'You said...We did', which is an opportunity for us to let you know how we have responded to your feedback and suggestions.

The conference will be held at a central London location on **Saturday 27th October** from 10am until 4pm. Lunch will be provided and childcare costs can be reimbursed.

If you'd like to go to the conference, contact Asif Chisty for an application form on ☎ 020 8150 4512 or ✉ email asif.chisty@pcha.org.uk. Places are limited and will be given out on a first come, first served basis. The closing date for applications is Monday 3 September.

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As always, comments and suggestions about the newsletter are very welcome! Contact Jane McCorry, Quality & Research Officer on ☎ 020 8150 4103, or ✉ email jane.mccorry@ghg.org.uk

Included in this newsletter: Status survey feedback report & Resident involvement newsletter

Smokefree England

Over recent months there has been a great deal of publicity about changes to the law on smoking in public places.

As of 1 July 2007 it is illegal for anyone to smoke in an enclosed public space. An enclosed public space includes all common parts of premises owned or managed by the Genesis Housing Group, of which PCHA is a part. Examples of enclosed public spaces include:

- lifts;
- stairwells;
- corridors;
- lobby areas;
- communal lounges or other communal meeting or waiting areas;
- laundries or other shared facilities within any building;

- storage or refuse areas; and
- areas used for underground parking or areas where parking otherwise within a building.

The law makes it an offence for anyone to smoke in any of these areas.

Anyone who doesn't comply will be committing a criminal offence and could be fined up to £1,000. The law also requires us to put up signs in these areas.

We could also be fined if we fail to prevent smoking in what should be a smoke free place. We expect residents and their visitors to fully support smoke free places. Where someone continues to smoke in these areas, we will approach this in the same way as

we treat anti-social behaviour, i.e. by offering advice and giving warnings when necessary. If all else fails, we may take legal action to make sure that we comply with the new law.

For more information about the new law go to: www.smokefreeengland.co.uk or contact their information line on 0800 169 1697. If you need help to stop smoking contact the NHS Smoking Helpline on 0800 169 0 169 (open 7am - 11pm daily) or go to their website at: www.gosmokefree.co.uk

Community Champions

If you have an idea for a community project, we want to hear from you.

In Partnership with The Scarman Trust, Genesis Community is offering awards of £1,500 - £2,000. Along with the money, Scarman Trust also offers on-going support, training, guidance and coaching.

The closing date for applications is Monday 3 September 2007. For more information or for an application pack, contact Vitolina Samu on 020 8150 4256 or email vitolina.samu@ghg.org.uk

Official scheme opening



At the beginning of May we celebrated the completion of one of our new schemes - Donnington Court in Willesden.

Peter Dixon, the Chair of the Housing Corporation and Councillor Bertha Joseph, former Mayor of Brent were present to officially open the new homes. Local councillors and many tenants from Donnington Court also joined us on the day.

Pictured from left to right are Sarah Teather MP, Peter Dixon, Chair of Housing Corporation, Anu Vedi, Genesis Chief Executive, and Cllr Bertha Joseph

Get involved in governance at PCHA

We currently have a vacancy for a tenant board member. Does this interest you?

Read on and find out more.

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 tenants' homes and the service they receive. Some of the things board members are involved in include:

- agreeing PCHA's budget and business plan;
- approving new policies;
- ensuring that PCHA provides effective services to tenants; and
- receiving performance reports from staff.

Our board meets four times a year and all meetings are in the evening. Board members are also invited to other meetings during the year including six Tenants Consultative Forum

meetings. We pay board members £3,250 each year as well as any out of pocket expenses such as childcare and transport costs. There is space for three tenants on our board and they serve for a period of three years. At the moment we have a vacancy for one tenant board member and are now welcoming applications.

Anyone who completes and returns a nomination form will be invited to an informal interview. This will be with other PCHA tenants and some existing board members. The interview is designed to let you find out more about what's expected of PCHA board members and to make sure that you have the skills for the job. Having successfully completed the interview, you would then go forward to an election process.

If you'd like to find out more about

becoming a tenant board member or to request a form, please contact Angela Ellis, Resident Involvement Manager, on ☎ 020 8150 4595 or email angela.ellis@pcha.org.uk. And why not read about tenant board member, Patricia Otaru (pictured) and her experiences in the enclosed Resident Involvement newsletter.



The deadline for completed application forms is noon on Monday 6 August. Daytime and evening interviews will take place on Monday 13 August at PCHA's office in High Road, Willesden.

Latest repairs survey results

We regularly survey all tenants who report urgent and routine repairs. The survey aims to find out what you think about the service you received.

We are pleased that results have improved recently and tenants are happy with the service we provide them. However we are aware that we can do more.

Some of the key findings from the survey include:

- ▲ 86% of tenants said the contractor was polite;
- ▲ 75% were happy with the quality of the repair;
- ▲ 74% of you said you were happy with the overall repair;
- ▲ 75% of tenants said that the contractor kept the appointment they made;
- ▲ 65% said the work was completed in one visit.

We'll continue to let you know how we are progressing through future editions of *What's Happening*.

Tenant Support Focus Group

A Tenant Support Focus Group has been set up to help the Tenant Support team determine the way our services should be provided. The group helps to review new procedures and contributes to articles for the quarterly tenant support newsletter as well as taking part in activities, such as trips to the theatre and the seaside.

The group meets every three months at our office in High Road, Willesden. If you'd like more information, or are interested in coming along to the meetings, then contact Paul Evans on ☎ 020 8150 4510 or ✉ email paul.evans@pcha.org.uk

First tenant moves under new scheme!

In the last edition of the newsletter we told you about a new initiative where we give cash and other incentives to tenants if they move from a property that is too big for their needs, to a smaller home.

Mr Colley (pictured) did just that. Changes to Mr Colley's family over the past few years meant that he was living in a three bedroom flat that was much too big for him. He'd been thinking about moving to a smaller flat so when PCHA introduced their new under-occupation scheme, he thought he'd find out more.

Mr Colley is now settling in to his new one bed flat in Kilburn. He considers the

scheme very worthwhile and says: "It's only right that a family who needs a bigger home should have it, and the fact that there was an incentive for me to move to a smaller place was a bonus". Mr Colley is now enjoying some garden space which he never had before, "that was a pleasant surprise" he said.

Are living in a property that is too big for you? If so, by moving to a smaller more manageable home, you could receive a cash incentive plus financial and other help with your move.



If you'd like to find out more, contact Sandra Richardson on ☎ 020 8150 4509 or ☎ 07738 458 633, or ✉ email sandra.richardson@pcha.org.uk. You are under no obligation to move.

House exchange scheme

We are now members of the House Exchange scheme and expect to go live by mid-July. House Exchange is a *free* service for existing council and housing association tenants. It is designed to help you find a suitable match to swap homes with by using a database of information given by tenants that would like to move home by way of an exchange.

It's easy and straightforward to use. You can log on and search the database to find properties that match your requirements. If you don't have access to the internet you can ask for a postal application form and House Exchange will register your details.

If you need help we'll be setting up fortnightly surgeries at our office in Willesden High Road – for more information contact a member of the Re-housing team on ☎ 020 8150 4000. You can find the House Exchange website at: 🌐 www.houseexchange.org.uk



Interested in good quality low cost furniture? Need a fridge, cooker or freezer but can't afford high street prices?

If you're a PCHA tenant on a low income or benefits then we can give you information on how to access your local furniture re-use project.

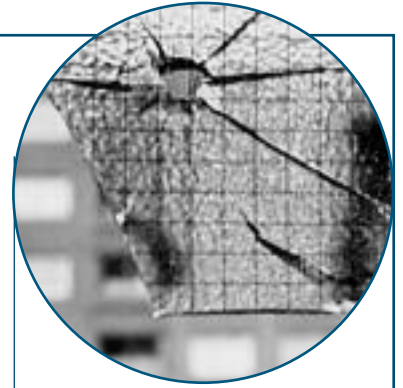
Contact Bob Butler on ☎ 020 8548 2164 or ✉ email rbutler@springboardha.org.uk

ASB news

The Neighbourhood Liaison team has successfully obtained a 12 month Anti-Social Behaviour Injunction (ASBI) against a resident at a scheme in Willesden. We did this because he threatened a member of our staff with a knife, and acted aggressively.

The injunction prevents the resident from doing anything to intimidate any member of our staff, contractors or anyone carrying out business on our behalf. The court also ordered the resident to pay over £700 legal costs as a result of his actions.

This shows that we take issues of anti-social behaviour very seriously and are committed to tackling incidents whenever and wherever they occur. We won't tolerate anti-social behaviour towards other tenants or towards members of our staff.



If you're experiencing problems with anti-social behaviour contact the Neighbourhood Liaison Team on ☎ 020 8150 4505.

Tenancy audits

Helping to bring homes back into use

Last year the neighbourhood housing team completed over 700 tenancy audits. A tenancy audit allows us to check that the information we hold about you is up-to-date, for example that we have current phone numbers. The audits also help to identify residents that need to communicate with us in another language, if they have support needs, or are in need of a transfer etc.

Importantly, the audits also help us to identify tenants who no longer live in their home, for example if they have

abandoned or illegally sub-let it. Last year we recovered a total of 28 properties. These had either been sub-let or were at risk of being squatted. These homes have now been re-let to families and individuals who need them. In some cases we went to court to get possession of the property. In other cases, tenants voluntarily handed back their keys when they knew we were investigating.

If you think that someone living near you may not be the legal tenant, then please contact your Neighbourhood Housing Officer on ☎ 020 8150 4000. Your call will be treated in the strictest confidence and your name will not be disclosed.



Housing
Ombudsman
Service

Ombudsman service has moved

The Independent Housing Ombudsman Service (IHOS) has moved. The Ombudsman can examine complaints if you have completed our complaints procedure and are still dissatisfied with the outcome. Their new details are:

Address	Housing Ombudsman Service 81 Aldwych, London, WC2B 4HN
Tel	020 7421 3800
Lo-Call	0845 7125 973
Email	ihol@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Website	www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

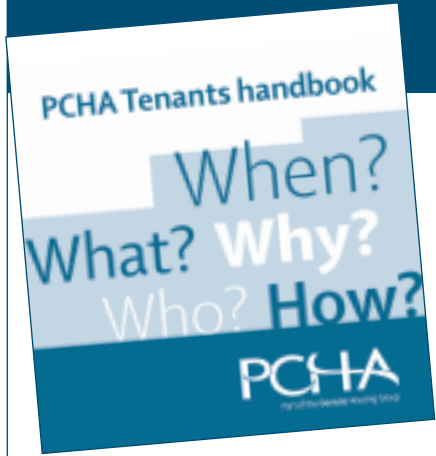
Overcrowding

In the 'Moving on', booklet of the tenant handbook that we sent you recently (booklet no.11), we said on page 4 that you could be awarded Band B within the choice based lettings system, if your home is overcrowded.

This is incorrect - we should have said that you could be awarded Band B if your home is statutory overcrowded. Apologies for this omission, there is an important difference.

To meet the statutory overcrowded standard, certain conditions must be met as defined by law. If you would like more information about this, please do contact a member of the Re-housing team on ☎ 020 8150 4000.

New publications – what you thought



We included a feedback card with your copy of the new tenant handbook and the 2006 annual report to tenants so you could let us know what you thought of them. Congratulations to Mrs B in NW10 and Mr B in NW6 who both won £50 in the free prize draw!

We were pleased to learn that:

- 90% found the report interesting;
- 93% thought the features were easy to read and understand; and
- 90% considered the facts and figures were easy to read and understand.

In contrast, there was almost an even split between whether we should provide more or the same amount of information next year – 48% each.

We asked you what other information you'd like to see in the next annual report and some of the suggestions included:

- contact numbers for staff
- information on buying a home
- environmental issues
- information on transfers

In terms of the new tenant handbook, again we were pleased to learn that:

- 97% considered that it was easy to read and understand; and
- 93% thought that the booklets were useful.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond. Your feedback will help to shape the information we put in future publications.

Changes to service charges

By now you should have received your copy of a special newsletter telling you about our plans to move from fixed to variable service charges. The newsletter contains important information so please do read it if you haven't already. Remember to complete and return the reply paid postcard. We look forward to getting your feedback!



Up to standard?

We've been carrying out more mystery shopping across the Genesis Housing Group, of which PCHA is a part. It lets us know how well we are performing against our service commitment, which sets out our customer care standards.



Overall the results show improvements in some key areas, including up to date voicemail messages. Some of the results include:

	Oct 06	Jan 07	May 07	
Calls answered	93%	93%	91%	↓
Calls answered within 4 rings	77%	90%	73%	↓
Answered in a pleasant & polite manner	90%	94%	96% *	↑
Giving name and company name	84%	91%	87%	↓
	76%	91%	98% *	↑
Query dealt with in a satisfactory way	84%	71%	91% *	↑

*Best performance to date

We've praised staff for their efforts and given guidance to those who aren't meeting the standards. We'll continue to carry out regular mystery shopping so that we can look independently at how we are doing. We have also trained some tenants to be mystery shoppers. If you are interested then please contact Jane Mc Corry, Quality & Research Officer on ☎ 020 8150 4103 or ✉ email jane.mccorry@ghg.org.uk

Local Information and activities



Westminster

Form filling project comes to an end

Over the past six years the Westminster Form Filling Project has helped over 1,000 residents to make the most of their income by raising awareness about benefit entitlement, helping to complete complex benefit forms and claiming backdated benefits.

To provide residents with a more comprehensive service, the project will be replaced by a **Money Advice Service** that will deal with welfare benefits, debt and money management. The form filling project ends on 25 September so look out for information on the new service coming soon.

Brent

Active citizens 50+

Active Citizens 50+ is for residents living in south Brent. The project aims to raise awareness of the services and activities that are available in your community and gives you a chance to get together and meet other people.

If you're interested in getting involved then come and join us at Perrin House, Malvern Road, London, NW6, every Tuesday from 1.30pm – 3.30pm. For more information contact Suzanne Blenman from Genesis Community on ☎ 020 8150 4354, or Sandy Mills from Open Age on ☎ 020 8964 1900.

Money advice surgery

Unfortunately the Brent money advice surgery project will end on 27 September. We are however looking into other services, so look out for more information in the near future.

The Vale Community Centre

The Vale Community Centre summer newsletter is out now! It lets you know what's happening in the centre over the coming months. If you'd like a copy contact Mona Carr on ☎ 0207 604 4965 or Sarah Connelly on ☎ 020 8150 4242.

South Kilburn community facilities

If you're interested in knowing what's going on at local venues in the south Kilburn area, the Hyde Group has produced a Community Venues guide. You can get a copy by ringing ☎ 0800 023 2490 or email hydesk@hyde-housing.co.uk

Hertsmere

'Be There Do It'

Hertsmere Youth Service provides a summer activities programme aimed at 11-19 year olds. It includes things like nail art, drama, football and fishing.

The programme runs from 23 July - 2 September. Activities take place across all of the wards in Hertsmere and are available at a low cost, some are free.

For more information contact Viraj Laxman, Youth Development Worker, on ☎ 07738 458 643.

Interested in a youth work qualification?

Genesis Community is running a course on the 'Essentials of Working with Young People'. It's an introductory level course that aims to equip young people with the basic concepts and knowledge to carry out supervised youth work safely. The course provides the perfect springboard to further training and qualifications such as NVQ/VRQ level 2.

It's free of charge; you only need to be 16 years or over and working or volunteering within a youth setting. We're running three courses; one at the end of July in Brent, one in October for young people in Camden and one next February in Hackney.

For more information contact Mike Stuart, Community Development Officer on ☎ 020 8150 4360 or ✉ mike.stuart@ghg.org.uk

Interested in working with us?

There are regularly job vacancies across the Genesis Housing Group. For more information on what's available go to our website at: ☎ www.ghg.org.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

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 press 1 for gas, or 2 for repairs

✉ callcentre@pcha.org.uk

Emergency repairs (outside office hours)

☎ 020 8150 4000

Information in Braille, large print or on audio tape available

We aim to provide clear information to all our tenants. This includes letters, newsletters and forms. If you don't understand this newsletter, please contact the Quality and Research Team on ☎ 020 8150 4112 or email: ✉ info@ghg.org.uk. If you need help with reading any document, please tell a member of staff.

We can provide copies of documents in Braille, large print or on audio tape.

Please contact your local PCHA office or telephone ☎ 020 8150 4000.

For a copy of the tenants' newsletter in Gujarati or large print, please telephone ☎ 020 8150 4112.

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, ઑડિયો 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, cassette áudio ou apresentada no seu idioma, por favor contacte-nos, através do telefone abaixo indicado.

Arabic

تمتلك 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 সংক্রান্ত খবর, ঘটনা ও স্থানীয় তথ্য সম্বন্ধে তথ্য সরবরাহ করবে। যদি আপনি এই তথ্যগুলোর বে কোন একাংশ সম্বন্ধে বিস্তারিত জানতে চান, অথবা আপনার নিজের ভাষাতে ব্রেল, সিডি, অডিও টেপ এ পেতে চান তহলে 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.