

chatterbox



www.phahomes.co.uk



Dear Tenants and Residents

As you read the PHA Homes Autumn newsletter, the country will be enduring its second lockdown. This is likely to have a significant impact on society, people's jobs, and the mental wellbeing of many. PHA Homes aim to offer support and guidance, wherever possible, to our tenants and residents to help them through this period.

PHA Homes along with many other businesses has followed the Government guidance and again asked all staff members to work from home during this time with the hope that we will be able to return to the office on 3rd December. We will continue to be available to our tenants and residents on the phone and via email.

If you have any queries or concerns during this time you can either contact us on 01730 263589 or send us an email via our main email account admin@phahomes.co.uk Alternatively you can visit our website which we aim to keep regularly updated <http://www.phahomes.co.uk>

PHA Homes responsive repairs service will continue to operate during this second lockdown period, and we will continue to deal with any repairs that you raise with us as quickly as possible. We would ask anybody phoning in with a repair to notify us if anybody in the household has any Covid-19 symptoms so that we can inform our contractors. In some cases, it may not be possible to carry out the repair until your household is clear of Covid-19 symptoms or the household have finished self-isolating, if that is the case, we will endeavor to carry out the repair once you have confirmed it is safe to do so.

We would like to thank all our tenants and residents for their continued support during these difficult times.



Brownfield House

Following the internal refurbishment of Brownfield House earlier this year, it was decided to upgrade the outside of the building also during 2020. We decided that rather than repaint the outside we would use a coloured cement board cladding which looks more attractive and also reduces the need for ongoing future maintenance.

This coloured cement cladding is determined to be safe to use on the external areas of buildings.

This project has recently been completed and has vastly improved the look of the building.

Feedback from tenants living in Brownfield House has been complimentary.

PHA Homes have also used this coloured cement board cladding on a small section at another block of flats that we own and will decide if we will do other areas in future years.

Before



After



Foodbank Vouchers



During lockdown, PHA Homes saw a large increase in foodbank vouchers being issued. We are pleased to see that as our tenants and residents' lives get back to the new 'normal', the request for foodbank vouchers has reduced again.

Please note that due to our Data Sharing Agreement with the foodbank, anytime a tenant now requests a foodbank voucher they will be asked to sign a disclaimer by us. This will be to confirm that you give us permission to pass on your personal details to the foodbank. They require this information to be able to process your foodbank voucher request.

If you find yourself in financial difficulty due to a change of circumstances at any point, then please do not hesitate to contact the office on 01730 263589, and we would be more than happy to issue you with a voucher for your household.

Tenant & Resident Engagement

Our tenant and resident engagement got off to a great start in 2020 with the first meeting held in February. It was a great opportunity for all members of the panel to meet each other and to understand what is required from them to help PHA Homes improve our services and customer experience.

Unfortunately, we have not been able to hold any more face-to-face meetings due to Covid-19 restrictions. However, the panel have still successfully helped to review the 5 processes planned for 2020 via email, post, or telephone. The panel have been split into the areas that they preferred to be most involved in (housing management or maintenance)

The processes which have been reviewed this year are:

Housing Management

- Tenant and Resident Engagement Strategy
- Tenant and Resident Engagement Members Panel
- Mutual Exchange Our Service Commitments to our tenants and residents

Maintenance

- Maintenance Standards
- Managing the Repairs Service

Once the panel have approved the processes, a report is compiled and sent to PHA Homes senior management team who then ensure our Board members are updated with the progress being made. We continue to have our tenant Board member representing our tenants and residents on the Board.

We would like to say a big thankyou to our current members for being adaptable during this difficult time and remaining engaged and committed to continuing to help us improve. We plan to continue with face-to-face meetings with small groups as and when the Covid-19 restrictions are lifted.

We currently have a panel of 8 members; however, we are still looking for more tenants and residents to be involved and can be flexible with accommodating you. If you would be interested in this, please contact Lauren Parrett, Housing Manager, on 01730 263589.

NATIONAL
HOUSING
FEDERATION

together
with tenants

early
adopter



Rent Arrears

Unlike many businesses, the financial year for PHA Homes runs from January to December. We appreciate that this has been an extremely difficult year for many people, and this has caused some tenants and residents to fall into arrears.

However, unless you have a separate payment arrangement with our housing team, we would ask that you have a clear rent account by 31st December 2020.

To do this, we recommend prioritising your rent payments, reducing any unnecessary spending, and budgeting accordingly. Christmas is a difficult time but try to avoid feeling pressured to buy expensive gifts if they do not fall within your budget.

Your tenancy agreement states that all your payments must be made in advance. If your account is in arrears, PHA are very happy to make an arrangement with you to bring your account into credit.

There are many ways in which you can pay your rent. We offer Direct Debit, Standing Order, AllPay, cash or cheque through our office door clearly labelled or by debit card over the telephone.

For help and advice regarding your rent account, or if you are in financial difficulty please contact our housing team to discuss your situation on 01730 263589.

Welfare Reform Update

Universal Credit (UC) claims increased significantly when lockdown hit and claims understandably took longer than usual to be processed. However, claims have now plateaued, and UC now seem to have this under control.

Third party payments were stopped due to Covid-19; however, these are now back in place. We ask that if you are in receipt of UC you let us know and advise us what date you are paid so we are aware when to expect your payment.

Alternative Payment Arrangements (APAs) will be requested by PHA Homes in certain circumstances, such as if you had previously been in temporary accommodation, had a history of rent arrears or your current rent arrears are at a high level, or if you are unable to manage the payments yourself.

It is essential whether you are paid UC or if you are in receipt of Housing Benefit (HB), that you update UC/HB with any change of circumstances and provide them with any evidence requested as soon as possible. This will ensure the impact on your rent account is kept to a minimum.

PHA strongly advise having one month's credit on your account so that your account does not fall into arrears immediately if there is a change in your circumstances or benefits.

For further advice on UC or HB please do not hesitate to contact the housing team on 01730 263589.

Alternatively, you could contact your Local Authority Housing Benefit Department, Citizen's Advice Bureau on 01730 264887 or Universal Credit via your journal or on 0800 328 5644.



For further advice you can also contact:

Citizen Advice Bureau
01730 264887

National Debtline
0808 8084000
www.nationaldebtline.co.uk

Universal Credit
0800 328 5644

Winter Wordsearch Competition

For your chance to win a £25 voucher of your choice, complete the word search and return it to us at 32 Dragon Street, Petersfield, GU31 4JJ, or by email to admin@phahomes.co.uk by Friday 11th December 2020.

(Words can be spelled forwards, backwards, diagonally, up, or down).

Name _____

Address _____

L	O	V	Z	I	Y	P	E	J	C	F	N	R	F	M
N	P	N	M	N	O	I	T	A	R	G	I	M	U	A
S	U	X	L	X	O	V	W	L	C	M	X	F	O	G
L	O	T	I	N	F	H	A	T	E	R	F	F	S	K
A	S	Q	S	N	O	W	M	A	N	L	O	F	H	U
V	T	T	D	R	S	I	E	M	E	O	U	C	O	T
I	U	X	K	S	M	U	S	R	T	A	C	R	V	W
N	K	D	T	V	Z	E	E	P	E	D	E	S	E	A
R	L	E	C	E	R	D	R	W	J	L	H	I	L	A
A	M	V	H	L	K	I	X	U	X	Z	N	G	Q	Z
C	T	L	L	N	N	N	Y	R	A	U	R	B	E	F
C	O	S	Y	T	S	H	A	R	V	Z	Q	M	X	A
K	K	X	S	A	W	E	E	L	D	E	R	G	W	M
Z	G	A	K	M	C	H	M	Q	B	T	F	C	J	K
L	S	B	X	R	E	B	M	E	C	E	D	H	V	L

BLANKET

FEBRUARY

MUFFLER

CARNIVALS

FOOTPRINTS

SHOVEL

COSY

HAT

SNOWMAN

DECEMBER

MIGRATION

SOUP

CONGRATULATIONS!

The Summer newsletter winner was Mr and Mrs M from Petersfield who won a £25 Tesco voucher.

Good News Stories

1.

This has not been an easy year due to Covid-19 and lockdown. It caused a lot more tenants and residents to fall into rent arrears, some extremely high.

However most tenants in arrears appreciated the support and advice that was provided to them by our housing team and have made a real effort to reduce the arrears on their account as quickly as possible. They stayed in regular contact and provided updates on their benefits and payments. Payment arrangements were put in place, and tenants have worked hard to ensure their arrears have been cleared, or significantly reduced.

So, a massive thank you and well done to those that are keeping to their arrangements, maintaining regular contact with us, budgeting and prioritising their bills, and being focussed on getting things back to 'normal'.



2.

During Covid-19 PHA Homes made regular phone calls to our most vulnerable tenants and residents, and we have received a large amount of positive feedback regarding this initiative.

The calls reduced as social distancing restrictions were eased and have since stopped, however, those that received calls were extremely grateful.



Estate Walkabouts

This year's Estate Walkabouts were delayed from the Spring to September due to Covid-19 restrictions. The Director of Operations, Housing Manager and Maintenance Manager at PHA Homes visited some of our estates to ensure that any problems found could be dealt with swiftly e.g. issues with paving, grounds maintenance, graffiti, abandoned vehicles, parking, overhanging trees or untidy properties.

All tenants on the estate are invited to join us and given the opportunity to voice any concerns they may have and share new ideas with us. Overall, we were extremely impressed with the high standard of our estates and the very few issues that were found.

Tenants are also provided with a feedback form in case they wanted to have some input but were not able to physically join us on the walkabout. We would like to thank those that took the time to join us or completed a feedback form.

Please see the 'You said, we did' on this page to see what actions PHA took as a result of this year's walkabout. This includes what was reported to us by our residents and what we noticed on our annual estate walkabout.



You said, we did...

Paddock Way – some maintenance issues were noted including minor tree works, knee rail fence repairs, repairs around a number of drain covers and replacement of some small pieces of aco drain. All these works orders have been raised with our contractors. Some of the knee rail fencing needs to be replaced and this will be considered for completion in 2021, budget permitting.

Fern Close – there were no issues found at Fern Close. The outside of the fence panels near both parking areas have recently been painted, repairs were carried out to all the knee rail fencing and this was also painted which has given the estate a lift and improved the appearance in general.

Rushes Farm – the replacement of the remaining tarmac pathways together with painting the communal fence panels and replacing the fencing around the bin store around 5-15 is under consideration for 2021, budget permitting.

Ramshill – we will be reviewing the sheds in the communal gardens at 1-4 and 21-24 Charlton Drive during 2021. It was noted that the fence outside block 21-24 is leaning over and our maintenance manager is trying to determine who owns the fence and arrange for repairs to be carried out.

Deans Dell – there are a couple of tree maintenance jobs which have been ordered with our contractors. The car park areas have recently been sprayed against weeds and tidied up and a loose piece of brick wall outside one of the houses has been removed. There are a couple of driveways which will be considered for works in 2021, budget permitting.

Tanners Reach – there were no issues noted at Tanners Reach.

We would like to thank all tenants and residents that completed the feedback forms as it helps us better manage our estates and improve your living environment. We would encourage you to complete our feedback forms if you are unable to join us for the walkabout in the future.

There are some things that are out of PHA Homes control and which need to be directly reported to other agencies, such as Petersfield Town Council, Hampshire Highways, East Hampshire District Council, the Police, or the utility provider. PHA Homes do contact other agencies on your behalf to report any problems, but you should also contact these agencies directly yourself to report any issues that you notice.

We would like to thank all our tenants and residents for your continued support in keeping our estates clean and tidy and ensuring the environment in which you live is a pleasant one. We look forward to seeing you in 2021!

Electrical safety in your home

PHA Homes carry out 5 yearly electrical inspections in all our homes to ensure that all installations and fixed wiring are safe for use. These safety inspections are also repeated every time a property is vacant or a mutual exchange is being completed. Following the inspection, an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) is submitted to us by our electricians.

Our tenants and residents are not permitted to make any alterations to the fixed electrical installations or wiring in their homes without written permission from PHA Homes. If permission is given then any work must be carried out by an NICEIC qualified electrician and an electrical certificate has to be provided to PHA Homes to prove that the changes have been carried out to the required standard. These changes include changing power socket face plates or installing additional sockets.

Common issues that can occur within a home and should be reported to us so that we can arrange a repair include:

- **Broken power socket face plates**
- **Power sockets that spark when used or don't work**
- **Exposed wires**
- **Dark yellow or brown marks around power sockets or light switches**

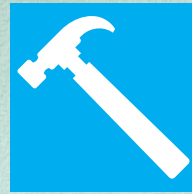


Light bulbs that don't work or blink frequently – light bulbs are the responsibility of the tenant and need to be checked/changed before a fault is reported to PHA Homes. If you are elderly or vulnerable with no-one to help you then please get in touch with PHA Homes who may be able to help.

Tripped fuses in the fuse box – if this should happen, the most likely cause is one of your own appliances. If you are unable to reset the fuse, you need to unplug everything that is plugged into a power socket and reset the fuse. Then plug each item back in one by one, checking the fuse between each one, if the fuse trips again after plugging in one of the electrical items, that item is at fault and will need to be repaired or changed. We ask for this to be checked before we send out our electricians as you will be recharged for the cost of the call if it is found that the fault is because of one of your own appliances or items.

The festive season will shortly be upon us and homes across the country will be twinkling with fairy lights and Christmas cheer. Highlighted below are some common activities that may be putting you and your family in danger at this time of year and there are some simple tips to help you stay safe.





Maintenance Service Update

2020 has certainly proved to be an interesting and challenging year for everyone. Following the first lockdown due to coronavirus, we have been able to catch up on our repairs and carry out some planned works.

However, some repair jobs were unable to be completed within our usual timescales due to the backlog and number of repairs reported since the first lockdown ended. We apologise for any delays that you have suffered in getting a repair carried out during this time.

At the time of writing the Government have announced another national lockdown.

PHA Homes has already taken the decision to put any planned works for the remainder of 2020 on hold due to the recent rise in the number of coronavirus cases across the UK and to prioritise our repair service during this time.

This will inevitably have caused disappointment to those of you who were due to have work such as replacement kitchens and bathrooms carried out during the final quarter of the year. We have moved these works into next year and budget permitting, will be hoping to complete these works during 2021.





Update from Fire Risk Assessments

We will shortly be carrying out works in our blocks as recommended on the recent fire risk assessments. On recent visits it has been noticed that there are still some issues that we need our tenants and residents to assist with:

Door mats outside front doors in communal areas/corridors. These need to be removed and placed inside your home as they could cause a hazard in the event of an emergency.

Rubbish left around bin areas and in shared or communal gardens, please make sure all normal household waste is placed within the correct bin. All large and bulky personal items are not to be left in the bin store area and are to be disposed of by the tenant at the local waste tip.

Other items stored in communal areas/corridors such as pushchairs, bikes and children's toys are not permitted and these items need to be removed and kept inside your home.

Fire doors should not be wedged open at any time. Communal front doors should always be closed and not wedged open; these are closed for your security.

If any of these apply to you, please can you help us to keep our blocks and bin stores as safe as possible by removing items from the communal areas and helping to keep our blocks, grounds and bin areas tidy.

Regular Smoke Detector and CO Detector Checks



Smoke Alarm Testing:

Please remember to test your smoke alarm on a regular basis to ensure that they are working correctly. If you have any concerns regarding your smoke alarms, please report them to us as soon as possible.

CO Detector Testing:

If you have a CO detector installed in your home, please remember that it needs to be tested regularly in the same way as your smoke alarms. If you have any concerns about your CO detector, please let us know as soon as possible.

To test either type of alarm, press the test / hush button which is normally located in the centre of the unit for a few seconds. The alarm should sound for few seconds and then stop.

If you have more than 1 smoke alarm in your property, when you press the test button on one smoke alarm it should make all smoke alarms sound as they should be linked together. If the alarm(s) do not sound or sounds but doesn't stop, please contact us straight away so that we can arrange for the unit(s) to be checked.



Christmas Trees

A real Christmas tree is a popular choice, but did you know that a real tree can catch fire a lot quicker than a fire retardant artificial one so it's worth considering a fake tree.

If you do have a real Christmas tree, you need to make sure you keep it well watered so that it doesn't dry out.

Don't spray hairspray on the pine needles to stop them dropping off as it's very flammable. Keep the tree well away from any source of heat.

Christmas Lights

Don't overload plug sockets and try to avoid the use of extension leads or adaptors. Overloaded extension leads can be a fire hazard and also a trip hazard.

As Christmas lights are packed away for most of the year, they can easily become electrically unsafe. Always read and follow the manufacturer instructions.

Do not attempt to repair faulty lights unless it's just a bulb, always replace the lights.

LED lights operate at extra low voltage, they use much less power and generate less heat reducing the risk of fire and burns.

Check your lights are not damaged or broken before you use them and look out for loose wires.

Use identical replacement bulbs and replace failed bulbs immediately to prevent overheating.

Lights used outdoors should be specifically designed for outdoor use and should be connected using a 30ma RCD protected socket.

Keep lights away from flammable decorations and materials that can burn easily.

Switch all lights off and unplug them before going to bed or if you are going out.