

ISSUE 5

# NEIGHBOURHOOD NEWS

CASTLE VALE

*Festive  
Edition*

## COVID *Community Offer*



This newsletter is a special edition featuring all of the amazing work that went on during this year's pandemic. Each page tells a story about how Castle Vale came together during this difficult time and how we continue to support each other as a community.



## PLACE 2 WORK

*Page 03*

Employment concerns? Find out more about the options available including a new local programme to help people back into work.



## CHRISTMAS ACTIVITIES

*Page 12*

Get into the holly jolly spirit with our festive fun on the back of our newsletter.





# WELCOME TO THIS SPECIAL EDITION OF OUR NEWSLETTER



**2020 really has been a year like no other, and unsurprisingly we have faced considerable disruption; this has meant we haven't been able to produce as many newsletters as we would have liked.**

But throughout the year we have been working incredibly hard to support residents and the whole community across Castle Vale. During the spring, and the first period of lockdown, we were part of a huge community mobilisation effort that reached out and supported those most in need. Many of the stories of those activities are set out in the pages of this newsletter.



Over the summer we worked hard to re-mobilise services across both CVCH and Compass Support activities. We were also incredibly pleased to be able to

welcome people back to Castle Vale Stadium and to open the doors again at TiggyWinkles Day Nursery.

Of course, the autumn months have brought new challenges for us all and we are again working across the community with partners to make sure that this Christmas is still a special and magical time. We are also launching our Community Voices initiative to give everyone an opportunity to tell us what really matters to you about living in Castle Vale (see details on page 11).

We understand this year has been disappointing for many not being able to celebrate different festivities with our friends and family such as Easter, Eid, and Diwali. We hope that 2021 is a year of new hope and that we get to celebrate together again soon as a community. For now we hope you and your loved ones are safe and I would like to take a moment to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a New Year filled with hope, health and happiness.

**Simon Wilson**  
**CEO of The Pioneer Group**

## COVID *Community Offer*



During the March lockdown this year we saw an amazing effort to provide support to residents across Castle Vale. We called this the 'COVID Community Offer' and it was put in place by the efforts of local organisations, resident volunteers, community groups, local charities, schools and faith groups. Here at The Pioneer Group, we organised these different activities into ten key areas and provided updates on how each took shape during the lockdown and beyond over the summer months.

In the following pages, we are pleased to share with you the efforts that went into each of the offers and offer some advice on how to access some of these continued support options.





# MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

## #COVIDCommunityOffer

Now is the time when asking "How are you?" means so much more. People are experiencing this uncertain time through so many different ways whether that's a loss of normality & routine or feeling anxious about the future. It is important to remember that it is perfectly normal to feel all of these things and more.

Because of the amazing support from so many resident volunteers, Compass Support were able to launch their Telebuddies scheme, where

local people are able to establish connections and stay in touch with regular phone calls. Through frequent telephone calls, the team have been able to support so many people who are experiencing loneliness, a loss of routine and going through a tough time.

**We cannot stress the importance of finding new ways to take care of your mental health, especially now that we aren't able to socialise as much. It's crucial to keep**

**occupied and to stay positive, so to anyone who is struggling, please contact Compass Support who have lots of different services that can help.**



## Place 2 Work



**PLACE 2 WORK**

LOCAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

**Have you recently lost your job, apprenticeship or college place as a consequence of COVID-19? Would you be interested in participating in our Place 2 Work Trailblazer with The University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust?**

The Pioneer Group has a fantastic opportunity for those out of work to enter into a twelve week registration programme during which time you will be introduced to training and learning opportunities within the NHS.

For more information contact our team today on 0121 748 0876 or fill out a simple referral form on our website for someone to get in touch: [www.pioneergroup.org.uk/place-2-work](http://www.pioneergroup.org.uk/place-2-work)

## UNIFORM DONATIONS



Over 400 families have been spared the cost of some school uniform since September thanks to a recycling initiative set up by Castle Vale's Parent Champions. Local volunteers are now extending the scope of the project to cover adjoining areas in North Birmingham and need your help with any uniform you have spare! Whether it's shirts, shoes, skirts, blazers or ties - drop your donation to The Sanctuary. To enquire about uniform for your family simply get in touch with Compass Support on 0121 748 8111 or visit the Facebook group 'Vale Clothing Project'.







# COVID UPDATE FROM OUR COMMUNITY CENTRES

For our Community Hubs, the lockdown has once again reduced the services and activities we are permitted to host within the centres.

Both centres remain open for general enquiries or to make appointments to see specific members of staff. The current service delivery is centred on support activities and include the Get Healthy Get Working programme, chiropody, counselling and the youth delivery - all delivered at the



Sanctuary. At Falcon Lodge, private training providers are continuing to deliver their services as well as Foodcycle who are preparing and distributing hot meals alongside the food parcels and also youth services.

Once restrictions are eased, we are looking forward to welcoming back the community for fantastic programmes such as church groups, yoga, exercise classes, karate and more.

## WELFARE SUPPORT #COVIDCommunityOffer

The first lockdown came as a shock to everyone; supplies in shops diminished and understandably people were worried. We were determined to support all of our residents but there became an immediate need to support the vulnerable in our community.

Becki Winkless, Resident Inclusion Officer, lead a Community Response Team of volunteers including residents, The Pioneer Group, Compass Support, Spitfire Services, Wrekin Housing Group and more. After arranging over 500 welfare calls each week, a partnership was then set up with The Active

Wellbeing Society to arrange large food supplies. Volunteers organised all the parcels to go out for

delivery with help from Wrekin's Repair team who delivered across the estate in their vans.

In addition to feeding the community, our volunteers arranged medicine pickups for those in need and Compass Support's Telebuddies made hundreds of calls to local residents to keep people connected, preventing residents from feeling isolated.

We're so proud of the Community Response Team - helping ensure that no one goes hungry or lonely.



**Spitfire Services food bank is still open for those in need during these difficult times, and Compass Support's Telebuddies project is also open if you need someone to talk to. For more help with these services, please give our team a call on 0121 748 8100.**





# YOUTH SUPPORT

#COVIDCommunityOffer

For hundreds of young people their youth clubs, one to one support and school support was stopped overnight and it has had a big impact on their lives. The team at Compass Support acted quickly to set up a virtual youth programme that saw mentoring moved to video or telephone, youth clubs delivered in zoom rooms, and online activities became a daily routine with local young people. One of the most popular sessions were the online quizzes where education and hobbies were brought together.

The team worked hard to make sure the sense of normality was not lost and helped the community celebrate the holidays by delivering Easter eggs, VE day packs, ice creams when it was hot and even brought a touch of gardening to local people!

**The team are always working on new ways to engage and work with children and young people within Castle Vale. For support or information, you can contact the team on 0121 748 8111.**



## KEEPING CASTLE VALE

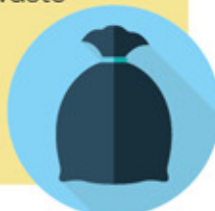
# Clean

Fly-tipping is reaching epidemic proportions. While it's a complex problem, a number of actions, taken together, can substantially reduce the 50 or more daily incidents many authorities are dealing with.

- Book an appointment to visit your local Household Waste Recycling Centre on [www.birmingham.gov.uk](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk);
- Book a Bulky Waste Collection from Birmingham City Council on [www.birmingham.gov.uk](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk);
- Report any fly tipping on land owned by The Pioneer Group to our team on **0121 748 8100**;
- Report any fly tipping on land owned by Birmingham City Council on [www.birmingham.gov.uk/flytippingremoval](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/flytippingremoval)

You are legally responsible for any household waste produced on your property and could face a large fine if your waste ends up fly-tipped.

**Let's work together to keep our estates clean!**



## BABY BOOST!



In a bid to make sure all families are looked after during these difficult times, Castle Vale's Parent Champions are collecting and distributing donations of baby supplies to families who may be struggling, including those living in temporary accommodation. If you could spare any supplies such as baby formula, nappies or clothes please get in touch on **0121 748 8111** or drop donations at The Sanctuary.



# COMMUNITY SUPPORT NETWORK

#COVIDCommunityOffer



Castle Vale has always had a **tight knit community support network, including large employers, schools, churches and charitable organisations, to focus on key issues within the neighbourhood. With the onset of COVID-19, Castle Vale's priorities changed overnight, and the strength of the community's partnerships really came to the fore.**

During the lockdown the work between schools and nurseries enhanced to ensure that all vulnerable families had been identified so support could be provided to any families who needed additional help.

A partnership was also arranged between The Active Wellbeing Society and Spitfire Services food bank to make sure food parcels were getting out to over 100 families per week, and teams of people came forward to support the growing need of welfare calls.

The effects the lockdown on the community have been negative in terms of unemployment, schooling and general wellbeing, however, everybody has come together and we have been truly blown away by the positive community spirit during the crisis.

## Helping the HOMELESS

Our Compass Support volunteers are working with YMCA to support those who are homeless. If you are able to donate any items such as adult clothes, sleeping bags, hygiene essentials, etc. Please get in touch or drop your donations at The Sanctuary. For people facing homelessness, your donation could be the lifeline they desperately need.



## WELL-BEING SUPPORT

#COVIDCommunityOffer

This past year have been different and challenging for all of us in one way or another. Part of looking after yourself is exercising, joining local groups and taking part in activities. Not being able to do these could affect us both physically and mentally, which is why Zoe Woodward, Compass Support's Well-being Activity Co-ordinator, decided to encourage a little structure into our daily lockdown lives by bringing fitness and well-being to people at home. Zoe created a timetable of daily virtual classes to keep everyone moving and mindful throughout the week. The classes have been well received by all members of the community as they were streamed live on Facebook and saved on the page to provide the option to go

back and workout in your own time.

**Zoe continues to provide a wealth of these fitness classes through Facebook and encourages everybody to join in and give them a try! Check out [www.facebook.com/CompassSupportServicesLtd](http://www.facebook.com/CompassSupportServicesLtd)**





# LOCKDOWN CHAMPION AWARDS

Look out for details and nomination forms for our Lockdown Champions Awards. The Community Taskforce and Greenwood Academy have joined forces and will be celebrating the achievements of residents, community groups and local partners throughout Castle Vale who have gone above and beyond to support others this year.



## THE PIONEER GROUP LAUNCHES 5 YEAR CORPORATE PLAN

**The Pioneer Group has launched its new 5 year Corporate Plan, which builds on the new direction set out back in 2015.**

The plan outlines how The Pioneer Group will remain focussed on housing, people and communities and deliver its new vision of "Making Lives and Communities Better" in its core neighbourhoods.

As part of the plan, three strategic aims will be delivered to provide quality

homes and help build resilient communities where people can thrive:

- **Great, safe homes**
- **Strong, vibrant communities**
- **Business excellence**

While we are proud of our achievements so far, our future plans address the significant challenges we face, in particular to provide more homes and improve the lives of our local communities.

We want to ensure continuous improvement of our services – and that is why we have set ourselves ambitious targets.

Our Corporate Plan will prioritise better performance and service quality for our customers over the next five years and gives a clear indication of how we are going to deliver for our communities.

**To read the latest copy of The Pioneer Group's Corporate Plan, visit [www.pioneergroup.org.uk/corporate-plan](http://www.pioneergroup.org.uk/corporate-plan)**







# ADVICE

#COVIDCommunityOffer

Since COVID-19 took hold and the lockdown kicked in, one of the biggest impacts on residents has been financial – especially for those who are suddenly unemployed or furloughed, which for many resulted in a 20% reduction in income.

CVCH worked to reduce the burden on Castle Vale tenants by making some major changes to rent arrears recovery including the free Money Advice offered through Spitfire Services. There are now three different levels of support:

- 1. Crisis support** – for those who literally have no money available for necessities. These households will be contacted the same day.
- 2. Struggling to pay rent or mortgage** – any resident, whether it be homeowner or a tenant, who is struggling with their rent or mortgage will be contacted by Spitfire Services within two working days. An appointment will be booked to look at the available benefits, especially Universal Credit, which is even available to some low-wage residents on furlough.
- 3. Other concerns** – any other household member impacted by COVID can

be referred and will be contacted within five working days.

This new structure helped ensure that debts were prevented as best possible or kept to a minimum, allowing residents to maximise their income through the difficult time.

If you are a resident of Castle Vale and have been financially impacted by COVID-19, contact The Pioneer Group on **0121 748 8100** who will be able to provide advice & assistance and ensure any relevant referrals are made.



## TIGGYWINKLES BRINGS IN THE TINS!

November saw the annual efforts around Children In Need and TiggyWinkles Day Nursery were ready for it! As part of the fundraising, the nursery asked parents and staff to donate food for Castle Vale's food bank local food bank.

The team were overwhelmed by the amount of donations received from everyone and want to say a massive thank you for everyone's kindness and to keep up the amazing community spirit!

**TiggyWinkles Day Nursery still has availability from ages 6 weeks to 5 years old for full-time, part-time and funded placements. Get in touch today to reserve your child's place or check out their website for more info [www.tiggywinklesdaynursery.co.uk](http://www.tiggywinklesdaynursery.co.uk)**





# PLACES FOR *People*



Places for People is an initiative from Birmingham City Council, supported in part by Sustrans. It aims to reduce traffic in residential areas so that streets become quieter, the air is cleaner, and the area feels safer. This project supports Birmingham's Transport Plan to reduce the number of journeys under a mile in the city (currently 25%).

The filters on Yatesbury Ave and Cosford Crecent stop through traffic. Residents will still be able to drive onto their street, have visitors, get deliveries, etc, but it will be made harder to drive straight through the area. This will still allow access for pedestrians, cyclists, mobility scooters and wheelchair users.



**sustrans**  
JOIN THE MOVEMENT

These are temporary, trial measures that can be changed, removed or made more permanent at a later stage depending on their success and feedback received during this trial period. It has been acknowledged

that they might not be in the right locations and may not be the right measures for Castle Vale. A second round of funding will have wider consultation to make sure that whatever does go into place next is the right fit for the estate.

**There has been little consultation prior to the trial going in place as was directed by the conditions of the grant, but Birmingham City Council request feedback now that the measures are in place. You can:**

- Submit comments online at [covidmeasuresbirmingham.commonplace.is](https://www.covidmeasuresbirmingham.commonplace.is)
- Leave written feedback with Compass Support's The Sanctuary in Castle Vale (please mark 'FAO Birmingham City Council')

## SUPPORT FOR LOCAL FAMILIES #COVIDCommunityOffer



Compass Support operate Family Support and Independent Living services for those in the community, and at the first sign of a lockdown the team knew their clients would need them more than ever.

With a real focus on families' emotional wellbeing, the team worked hard to connect with households through schools and phone or video meetings to find out what hardships local families were facing. From here, whether it was financial, emotional,

welfare, or others – the team could make referrals and connect residents to vital services that could help them.

Two new Community Connectors are now spearheading the Early Help programme in Erdington. Part of a city-wide initiative, this project delivers a directory of all services available to support young people (0-25 years) and families in the borough. For support or more information, contact the team on 0121 748 8111.





Coming soon

## NEW ALLOCATIONS POLICY

After speaking with our tenants, residents and applicants about how we allocate properties on Castle Vale, we have made some changes to our Allocations Policy; this policy determines who is eligible to go onto our waiting list, and how applications are prioritised.

The new policy means applicants will need to prove they have a connection to Castle Vale, such as through living, working or having close family on the estate. Applications will then be prioritised based on community contribution so that people who work or volunteer, or are in education, are given a higher priority.

We have been contacting our current applicants over the previous weeks to inform them of the changes however if you have any questions in the meanwhile, please check out our handy FAQs on our website [www.cvch.org.uk](http://www.cvch.org.uk)

## NON DIGITAL ACTIVITIES



### #COVIDCommunityOffer

After speaking to hundreds of residents across the Erdington and Sutton Coldfield constituencies, it was clear there needed to be new ways for residents to feel like they are still part of their community whilst being able to stay safe at home.

After a successful funding application, the team at Compass Support were able to create Wellbeing Activity Packs. Residents could select from four

activities including: baking, crocheting, gardening and puzzles. Every week, volunteers would deliver the activity packs to participants' homes which include everything that they need for their chosen activity.

There was incredible feedback from participants with some saying that it had given them a reason to get up in the mornings and

others saying that it has made them feel that they are cared about when they had started to feel like they had been forgotten.

If you're interested in staying busy with one of our well-being activity packs, simply call the team on 0121 748 8111 or visit the Compass Support website to find out more information [www.compass-support.org.uk](http://www.compass-support.org.uk)



## WELL-GROOMED WAGTAIL WALK



Throughout Castle Vale's Neighbour Tasking a key issue was identified that Wagtail Walk was in need of clearance. Newly appointed Community Engagement and Conservation Officer, Shannan Poyner, made this a priority and worked together with CVCH's Estates Team to cut back on overgrown hedges & trees, tidying up the popular walking and cycling route. Check out the amazing difference!

Castle Vale Neighbourhood Tasking are bi-monthly meetings for residents to have their say on all things clean, green and safe. If you want to get involved, contact [Mashkura.Begum@pioneergroup.org.uk](mailto:Mashkura.Begum@pioneergroup.org.uk)



# COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING

## #COVIDCommunityOffer

A month into the crisis, major funders began to release emergency funding opportunities for local communities. Funding can be a hugely competitive process and speed was a critical success factor in order to secure some help for Castle Vale. Alan Crawford, Head of Fundraising at The Pioneer Group, worked hard to get fast results.

There was an army of willing volunteers, new ideas coming from all corners of city and partners offering what resource they could – but even the most energetic of groups need

finances in order to be able to carry out their initiatives.

In an overwhelming response, the total fundraising activity brought in over £300,000 over a 12 week period which sought to channel the amazing goodwill in the community.

Since the first lockdown, Alan continues to raise crucial funds to help various community organisations including Compass Support, Spitfire Services, Community Environmental Trust and many more.



## COMMUNITY CO-ORDINATION



Every now and then, society is faced with overwhelming challenges. These can be so life-changing that we quickly need to come up with new ways of working, which can be difficult without any rule books to guide us. In a few days Castle Vale had to re-engineer how the needs of the residents were met through remote services and sharpened communication.

We are immensely proud of the innovation, passion and desire of the teams who have made this happen right across our organisation. Much of the work has been on a voluntary basis and above and beyond everybody's day job.

Following the second national lockdown, our local partners are coming together in a community taskforce to look at how we can continue this offer as it develops in the months ahead.

## COMMUNITY VOICES: WE WANT TO HEAR YOURS!



We want to understand what really matters to the people of Castle Vale, what neighbourhood issues you care about, what you would like to see from The Pioneer Group and what you want for the future of your community.

For this purpose, we have commissioned DJS Research, an independent research company, to speak to Castle Vale residents and hear your stories.

The findings will be used by us to help develop our services and what we do to help improve the neighbourhood.

If you're interested in finding out more, simply get in touch or visit our website [www.pioneergroup.org.uk](http://www.pioneergroup.org.uk)



## Thank you



We would like to take the opportunity to thank all those involved in this amazing mobilisation of help and support; it is incredible what has been achieved in such a short space of time. Well done and a huge thank you to all of the community groups, local organisations and volunteers who came together and made sure our friends, neighbours and family in Castle Vale were safe. There really is no other like Castle Vale's community spirit!



# GIVE THE GIFT OF CHRISTMAS

Our Compass Support volunteers are taking donations of toys to help families who might not otherwise be able to afford to put presents under the tree for their children this Christmas. If you could donate a gift for a child this Christmas then please drop your donations to The Sanctuary.



## CHRISTMAS WORDSEARCH

Search for the festive words going up, down, left, right and diagonal.

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

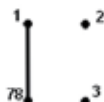
## COLOUR IN

What's your favourite colours when decorating your tree? Colour in your own to get into the festive spirit!



CHIMNEY  
DECEMBER  
TOYS  
JINGLE BELLS  
TREE  
SANTA  
SNOW

ELVES  
RUDOLPH  
SLEIGH  
REINDEER  
LETTER  
HOLIDAY  
STOCKING  
STAR



## DOT TO DOT

