

ISSUE 6

# NEIGHBOURHOOD NEWS

CASTLE VALE

Spring Edition

EMPLOYMENT  
*Needs?*  
BENEFITS  
*Advice?*

SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR ALL

Page  
2



This Spring edition of Castle Vale's Neighbourhood News shares all the latest updates for residents in the community. With new groups to get involved in, home safety tips, exciting employment & volunteer opportunities, and all important advice for those in need of some support; Castle Vale has lots to share.



KEEPING CASTLE VALE CLEAN!

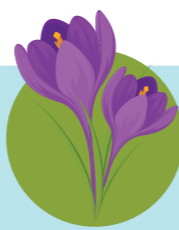
Page 3



MEET YOUR RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT OFFICER

Page 3

# INTRODUCTION FROM SIMON



I am delighted to introduce our spring newsletter. As the vaccine and booster programme help us slowly emerge from the pandemic, our services are broadly back to normal and we are so grateful for the patience, understanding and support shown by our customers through what has been such a challenging time.

on the help and support available through us here at The Pioneer Group, our charity Compass Support and a range of partners. I am pleased to share that the newsletter also updates on how members of our community can get involved, get your voice heard and can help us shape our services. We know on the back of the terrible events at Grenfell some social landlords have been under the spotlight for losing touch with their customers – whilst we cannot be complacent, I know our mission, vision and values mean we continue to focus on what matters most to people on the Vale. We share an update on how we spend your money on investing in improvements to our homes, keep everyone safe through fire safety works and tackle anti-social behaviour, as well as highlighting the hard work that goes into keeping the neighbourhood clean. I hope you enjoy reading the newsletter and as ever if you have feedback on it or any of our services please get in touch!

**Simon Wilson**  
CEO of The Pioneer Group



We know the strain on household budgets is being felt by many and, for those on low and fixed incomes, the proportion of money spent on things like heating your home and feeding your family is really tough. With this in mind, the newsletter has a focus

# WHAT'S ON AT *Compass Support*

Compass Support is delighted to be able to offer a new calendar of COVID-safe activities throughout 2022. Why not drop in to one of our two community hubs to see what is on offer?

There is something for all age groups and interests!



<b>Active Groups</b> Karate Groups Taekwondo Move It Or Lose It (Exercise Classes) Community Slimming Group	<b>Creative Groups</b> Adult & Children Dance Classes Community Choir Performance Arts Groups Music Tuition Sewing Craft Group	<b>Social Groups</b> Community Social Groups Indoor Bowling Community Meals & Food Club Youth Groups Stay & Play	<b>Additional Services</b> Chiropody Counselling Bereavement Groups
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Get in touch with our team for more information: 0121 748 8111  
contactus@compass-support.org.uk

# MEET YOUR RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT OFFICER

It's really important that tenants' voices are at heart of everything that we do, so we would like you to meet **Vik Mistry**, our Resident Engagement Officer!

**Vik works with residents, partners and local organisation within the community in order to improve services delivered by The Pioneer Group.**



Phone: 07976 007696  
Email: vikash.mistry@cvch.org.uk

## Want to be involved in our decision making and services?

We value all residents' views and opinions so we can find out what matters most to you as a resident. By getting involved and sharing your feedback with us, you can help develop our services, policies and plans for the future.

Whether it's popping into one of our resident sessions, being part of an interview panel to recruit new staff or contractors or taking part in our resident Scrutiny Panel, why not get in touch with Vik to share your thoughts or find out more ways you can get involved.

## SO WHAT ARE WE CURRENTLY WORKING ON?

Over the past few months, we have been working in partnership with TPAS (Tenant Engagement experts) with an aim to develop and implement a new Resident Engagement Strategy by April 2022.

improvements. Key customer feedback has included more community-based activities to help recovery from pandemic and more information on what's going on locally from volunteering to engagement opportunities.

another exciting session lined up for March.

- Scrutiny Panel met in late January to discuss how we are communicating and advised on printed materials before being published.

The process has involved reviewing our current engagement opportunities and workshops with residents & staff to explore their views and suggestions for

### What Resident Engagement has taken place so far

- A successful resident drop-in session took place in February to discuss local issues and concerns with

### Next Resident Drop-In

Thursday 14 April  
10am -12pm  
Meeting Place Café,  
St Gérard's Church



## KEEPING CASTLE VALE CLEAN!

CVCH Community Caretakers are committed to making Castle Vale a clean place to live. In the past 12 Months they have removed:



of bulky waste and fly tipping (which equates to roughly 130 truckloads!)



Over 1000 bags of litter-picked rubbish

To keep Castle Vale clean, the team will be taking part in Keep Britain Tidy's seventh annual #GBSpringClean. Keep your eyes peeled for our community litter picks along with ways you can get involved to help #KeepCastleValeClean!

## HOW TO RAISE A COMPLAINT

Here at The Pioneer Group, we understand that sometimes things do go wrong and we want to make it easy to sort things out. We have a simple complaints procedure which aims to put things right quickly. You can raise a complaint with our team by:

- Phone
- Email
- Letter
- Talking to us
- Visiting our office
- On social media
- Or asking a friend or support agency to contact us

To see our full procedure, you can pick up a leaflet from our office or visit:  
[www.pioneergroup.org.uk/complaints-procedure](http://www.pioneergroup.org.uk/complaints-procedure)

# SERVICE UPDATE FROM THE PIONEER GROUP

**If you are a tenant of The Pioneer Group you will have recently received your rent review letter. The letter tells you what you need to do and what support is available.**

If you haven't received this letter, please give our team a call and we can send you a copy. A small number of market rent properties that started after 1 October 2021 don't have a rent review this year because they are fixed term tenancies.

We understand the cost of living has seen a sharp increase which has put a lot of pressure on residents and community organisations alike. While prices continue to rise, we are working hard in the background to get the best value for money for the rent you pay.

All rent is reinvested into our core mission to provide great, safe homes and help build resilient communities where people can thrive.

The Pioneer Group invest more than £2m a year on day-to-day maintenance, with further investments in future planned works. This includes programmes such as our kitchen replacement scheme, where we have finished fitting 64 kitchens this year, and our upcoming window replacement scheme in 2022/23. You can find out more about our £17million investment over the next 8 years in our Repairs & Maintenance updates in this newsletter. Tenants will also know that we have undertaken significant investment in our electrical testing this year to keep your homes safe. Our £2.5m community investment pledge delivers a range of community services including the upkeep of Castle Vale's open spaces and community safety initiatives (including CCTV) to keep our estate clean and safe.

It can feel particularly tough

making ends meet right now, which is why we have invested so heavily in our support services, ranging from employment support, to health & wellbeing initiatives, debt advice to older persons services. There is a strong sense of community in Castle Vale, which is why we are dedicated to providing more affordable homes to rent, such as the 24 newly developed properties on Farnborough Road.

We will always endeavour to support residents however we can with any financial concerns they have. It is always best to contact our team in the first instance if you are worried about any financial difficulties. There is a range of support available for all Castle Vale residents, whether you are a tenant or not. Check out the following support services available and how to find out more.

## MONEY ADVICE *Services*

A local specialist service with 7 accreditation skilled staff, offering independent money advice from your landlord. Free for all Castle Vale residents through The Pioneer Group.

- Benefit assessments
- Support with benefit applications
- Assessments and advice on all disability benefits
- Advice on 'Bedroom Tax' and Universal Credit
- Gas and electricity arrears
- Water arrears / trust fund applications
- Payday loans
- Mortgage arrears
- Rent arrears
- Credit cards / loans
- Financial capability advice
- Assistance with rescheduling debts



**Contact:**  
[info@spitfireservices.org.uk](mailto:info@spitfireservices.org.uk)  
0121 747 5932

## INDEPENDENT *Living*

- Support for adults over the age of 18 living independently in B35 or B75
- Works with all adults over the age of 18 of all needs (must be able to manage their own tenancy to some degree)
- Assessments are carried out to identify the needs of individuals and help build a plan of where they want to be and how Compass can help achieve this – Referrals and signposting are also made to appropriate services

**Contact:**  
[shamsa.mughal@compass-support.org.uk](mailto:shamsa.mughal@compass-support.org.uk)  
0121 748 8111

## CRISIS *Funds*

We know one big issue can have both an immediate and longer term impact – in these moments of crisis a small bit of help and support can go a long way. Support is available to help get you through an immediate financial crisis. To check eligibility and request an application form, please

**Contact:** [contactus@pioneergroup.org.uk](mailto:contactus@pioneergroup.org.uk)  
or 0121 748 8100

## FAMILY SUPPORT *Services*

- Family support services for families living in B35 or B75
- Works with families who have children up to the age of 18
- Assessments are carried out to identify the needs of individuals and help build a plan of where they want to be and how Compass can help achieve this – Referrals and signposting are also made to appropriate services

**Contact:**  
[shamsa.mughal@compass-support.org.uk](mailto:shamsa.mughal@compass-support.org.uk)  
0121 748 8111

## EARLY HELP FOR *Families*

- Works with families who have children up to the age of 18, living in Erdington, Castle Vale, Pye Hayes, Kingstanding, Stockland Green, Gravelly Hill or Perry Common.
- Support is offered to families that are struggling with a number of issues. The Early Help Service will work with relevant services to help the family reach their desired outcome

**Contact:**  
[ErdingtonFamilies@compass-support.org.uk](mailto:ErdingtonFamilies@compass-support.org.uk)  
0121 748 8199

## HEALTH & WELLBEING *Support*

- Health and Wellbeing Activities: Social groups including, chair based exercises, litter picking and walking groups
- Working with local doctors and GP's to support and signposting services to adults over 18.
- Hoarding Support: Provide support and signposting to services who want to tackle hoarding behaviour.
- Ageing Better in Birmingham: Creating activity groups, services and volunteer opportunities for residents over 50.
- Sutton Coldfield Neighbourhood Network Scheme: Providing support to community assets to enable wellbeing services for residents over 50.
- Erdington Neighbourhood Network Scheme: Providing support to community assets to enable wellbeing services for residents over 50.

**Contact:**  
[Sarah.Powers@compass-support.org.uk](mailto:Sarah.Powers@compass-support.org.uk)  
0121 748 8111

## INCOME *Team*

If you experience any financial difficulties, please talk to the income team straight away. The income team's primary role is to work with you to help you afford your home and keep your tenancy.

The income team helps hundreds of households each year by offering advice with payment and support options.

**Contact:**  
[incometeam@cvch.org.uk](mailto:incometeam@cvch.org.uk)  
0121 748 8100

## EMPLOYMENT *Support*

- One-to-one information, advice, guidance and group training to support people into work
- Confidence building, CVs, job searches, interview skills, employability, work experience/voluntary work placements
- Life coaching; to identify personal and career goals, identify barriers and strategies to overcome them

**Contact:**  
[employmentadvice@compass-support.org.uk](mailto:employmentadvice@compass-support.org.uk)  
0121 748 8111

## CCTV/POLICE UPDATE



The safety of residents is extremely important to The Pioneer Group, which is why their CCTV is operating 24/7 throughout Castle Vale.

The team are pleased to share they are in the process of upgrading all cameras to Full High Definition, which will make it much clearer to investigate any crimes committed. With 75% of the upgrade complete so far, the local police team shared how their working partnership benefits the community:

The Tyburn Police Neighbourhood Team work closely in conjunction with CVCH in the CCTV control room; we regularly meet to share relevant information and knowledge. This working

relationship extends further across the West Midlands Police as Force Response, Force CID and other investigative units are aware of the extensive camera network and will utilise it wherever possible.

The police use the cameras for a range of things such as looking back at incidents for investigative purposes, monitoring live incidents/ crimes and helping to look for missing or vulnerable people. We have also worked with partner agencies such as the Fire Brigade and Birmingham City Council who have commented on the quality and usefulness of the camera network.

The actual CCTV control

room is an impressive state of the art room with multiple screens and access to over 80 cameras at the touch of a button. There are a mix of camera types; some fixed cameras at key locations such as entry points to housing blocks, and some cameras that are capable of moving 360 degrees and zooming in to great depth.

CVCH are in the process of upgrading the cameras to high quality cameras that are capable of picking out things such as vehicle identification in great detail.

**All residents are encouraged to notify CVCH with anything that may be cause for concern on 0121 748 8100.**

# What is GAS SERVICING?

Gas servicing is a legal requirement that forms part of your tenancy and is an essential service that checks the safety of your appliances. Engineers attend the property to check the gas supply and appliances installed by us. If anything is found to be unsafe, they will repair it or make it safe until a replacement can be arranged.



## Why is Gas Servicing so important?

Gas supplies must be inspected every 12 months, as if they are not properly serviced or maintained, they could pose a serious risk to your health and safety.

If you have a faulty system, there is a danger of it leaking carbon monoxide. This is a poisonous gas that is odourless, colourless and tasteless which makes it hard to detect; breathing it in can make you unwell, and

it can kill if you're exposed to high levels. Having your gas serviced regularly will avoid the risk of carbon monoxide leaks.

Regular maintenance also minimises the risk of breakdown and helps lengthen the lifespan of your appliances.

## Keeping you safe

We are required by law to service your gas appliances every year. Without these checks your home is at risk

of becoming unsafe for you, your family and your neighbours - it is therefore extremely important that you let us in at the agreed appointment time to do the servicing. Granting access for important services like these is also part of your tenancy agreement so please work with the team to avoid legal implications.

**If you have any questions about your gas servicing appointment, please call The Pioneer Group on 0121 748 8100.**

## REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE Update

The Pioneer Group's Asset Management team are currently working on the mobilisation of their biggest 'major works programme' to date. This includes delivering replacement windows, doors and bathrooms throughout the Group's properties, investing more than £17million over the next 8 years.

The team are also embarking on a major project to gather data and update the condition of properties, in order to identify where major



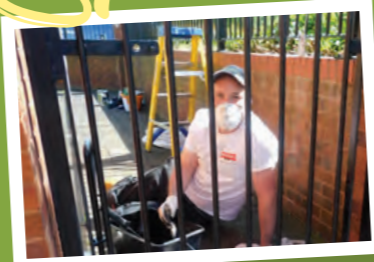
improvement works are required in the future.

Energy Performance Certificates are also being carried out to better understand how energy efficient properties are and how they can be made more efficient; helping to reduce fuel costs for residents.



## MAKING A

# Splash



Did you know? This year CVCH's painting team painted over 4 miles of railings, achieving a customer satisfaction rate of 91%



## FIRE SAFETY IN FLATS

### What to do in case of a fire:

Fire safety is of the utmost importance. CVCH's Community Caretaker team carry out regular fire safety checks of all communal areas to ensure they are kept as safe as possible for all users. Independent fire risk assessments are regularly carried out and if any items are left in the communal areas, they are removed to keep residents safe.



**In your flat:** Should a fire occur in your flat, GET OUT (closing all doors behind you), then call the Fire Service on 999 to report the fire.



**In the block:** Should a fire occur elsewhere in the block (e.g. landing, stairwell, etc.), STAY PUT as your flat is designed to resist fire getting in. Call the Fire Service on 999 and report the fire.



**In a communal area:** If a fire breaks out while you are in the communal area, GET OUT of the building if it is safe to do so. If there is no safe access out, return to your flat closing all doors behind you. Do not use the lift in the event of a fire. **Call the Fire Service on 999 and report a fire.**

# CAN WE FIND YOUR PLACE2WORK?



**Are you unemployed and looking for a new role in a rewarding career? Place2Work works with various employers to offer job-hunters various training and employment opportunities.**

## **We've teamed up with the NHS!**

Working for the NHS doesn't just include doctors and nurses, there are a wide range of roles available too in administration, clinical and facilities. Our team can offer course placements that provide full training in these positions and, upon completion of the course, a guaranteed interview with a hiring manager! With over 70 people referred to this programme

so far, your new job with the National Health Service could be just around the corner.

## **Construction Roles**

IM Properties is working on a development in Minworth called Peddimore. This infrastructure will be an employment location for businesses - but they're

keen to get people learning already. Teaming up with Winvic Construction Ltd, they are offering unemployed residents construction roles to offer that first step into industrial solutions.

## **Back to School**

Always wanted to get into teaching? Our team have been working with local schools throughout Castle Vale, and we are thrilled we can now offer Voluntary Teaching Assistant positions available from March 2022.



Interested in any of these roles? Contact the team today on [Place2Work@pioneergroup.org.uk](mailto:Place2Work@pioneergroup.org.uk) or call 0121 748 0876

## THOUGHT ABOUT VOLUNTEERING?



Volunteering is a great way of connecting with the local community, especially if you're new to the area; it can help you get to know your neighbourhood and make new friends. It's also a great

way to practice and develop your social skills, especially if you're naturally shy and find it hard to meet new people.

There is also lots of evidence that volunteering has a positive impact on your health. Research has shown that volunteering can increase a person's longevity, improve their mental health, keep them fitter and help them to cope better with illness.

There are plenty of ways to offer your help while giving as much time that suits you - whether that's regular days or an hour here and there.

Many of our volunteers found they had time on their hands after retiring or when their children started school, and they wanted to put their skills to good use. To find out more about our volunteer opportunities, get in touch with our team!

**Compass Support**  
**0121 748 8111**

