



Castle Vale
Community Housing
Part of The Pioneer Group

Annual Tenant Report

2021-2022



Who are CVCH?

Part of the Pioneer Group, Castle Vale Community Housing (CVCH) is a community-led organisation where the customer and community is at the heart of everything we do. We manage over 2,400 properties within our social rented portfolio which include a wide range of stock from general needs to supported schemes and our policies are created with the support of tenants, residents and partner organisations. We have a clear vision and strong values which are at the heart of everything we do.



Our Values:

#COMMUNITY

- > Consistently do our best for our tenants and residents
- > Listen to what matters most to our tenants and communities and act on what we hear
- > Be ambitious for ourselves and for the people in our communities



#RESPECT

- > Take organisational and personal responsibility
- > Be helpful and kind
- > Embrace and celebrate diversity



#EMPOWER

- > Invest in colleagues and people to be the best they can be
- > Build trust by being humble and honest
- > Create confidence and capacity in our communities



#BETTERTOGETHER

- > Find the best most inclusive way to make things better
- > Make the most of our resources to make positive impact and think carefully about every penny we spend
- > Work smart/hard and enjoy what we do





Introduction from CEO

Last year saw us remobilising our services while still very much impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

We were pleased that we were able to sustain our repairs service even during the lockdowns, but we were impacted by the backlog that had built up, and at times that made it challenging to deliver at the pace that we wanted. Similarly, the investment programme in our stock fell behind and was then impacted by supply-chain shortages and difficulties. So 2021-22 was definitely a year of catch up for our services.

We were really pleased to be back to providing that responsive presence on the estate when we re-opened the reception in summer 2021. While the majority of our staff now work in a more agile, blended way, we are back to being able to visit tenants in their homes, to conduct estate walkabouts and to generally be more visible again.

Given the challenges that we faced, it was perhaps not surprising that overall satisfaction with our services fell from 92% to 85%, which remains a high score compared to other housing associations, and we were pleased that 89% told us that we were easy to deal with. We will continue to work hard on providing good services in the year ahead.

We have also been responding to new Government initiatives to ensure that we are listening to the voices of our tenants. During the year we developed a new Resident Engagement Strategy and we are now working to improve communications and make sure that information is widely shared and that people can keep up to date with the latest news.

We realise many tenants are worried about the cost of living crisis and in particular the rise in household bills over the winter. As a business we also are facing significant increases in costs, some of which we may have to pass on to tenants BUT we will strive to ease this where possible and continue to put our efforts into supporting those in greatest need. We will stay focussed on keeping our services running and remain committed to making improvements to our homes and supporting our communities.

Meet CVCH Board

Our Board Members 2021/22

- Fern Watson
- Cliff Horrocks
- Colin Sakellis
- Gary Dulson
- Nicolette Browne-Marke
- Roy Beech



A message from Chair of CVCH Board, Fern Watson

As we emerged from the long period of Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions, it felt as though 2021-22 was a year where we needed to get back on track with delivery of our services.

I took over as the Chair of CVCH Board from November 2021, after we said goodbye to Sue Spicer who had very many years of involvement with all aspects of the Pioneer Group and CVCHA before it. During the year we also said goodbye to David Pipe and John Whitwam, both independent members who had been a great help to the Board. We thanked them all for their service and we were sorry to see them go. We were pleased to welcome Colin Sakellis and Roy Beech as new resident board members and this ensured that tenants continue to make up a majority on CVCH Board.

During the year we focussed on improving our engagement with residents. TPG commissioned Tenant Empowerment experts, TPAS, to help us develop a new Resident Engagement Strategy. TPAS held a series of

'Discovery' sessions with tenants and the feedback told us we needed to focus on:

- Trust
- Information
- Community
- Collaboration

While the strategy was being developed, a programme of drop-in sessions for residents began, along with the remobilisation of the resident groups at Chivenor, Topcliffe, Phoenix and Whittle Croft. Slowly but surely, there has been a growth in the number of involved and engaged residents who keep in touch with TPG on a regular basis.

Resident safety continues to be kept at the forefront of all work, and the embedding of the Fire Safety Group is helping to ensure that the requirements of the new Building and Fire Safety legislation are met. Work continues in checking the condition of the housing stock and moving the asset management information on to a new database. This work is ongoing, but a great start has been made during the year."

Resident involvement

2021/22 saw us reinvigorate our approach to resident involvement. Following our 2020/21 Castle Vale Stories research, we listened to the feedback from customers and began work with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) early in 2021/22.

To make a difference in everyday lives we recognise it is important for tenants to be part of both our governance structure and significant decisions we make as an organisation.

We are passionate about involving residents to help us improve our services and support our neighbourhood. This is why as a community-led organisation, we offer a variety of formal and informal opportunities for you to have your say.

Whether this be part of our board, a member of our scrutiny panel or stopping by one of our community events to let us know your thoughts, please get in touch.

If you are interested and would like more information, please contact our Resident Engagement Officer, Vikash Mistry, on **0121 748 8100** or **Vikash.Mistry@cvch.org.uk**

Scrutiny Panel

Our newly recruited scrutiny panel, now called Searchlight Castle Vale, will work to ensure that customer-facing policies receive adequate customer engagement through the review process and help to provide assurance that CVCH meets the rules and regulations set out by the Regulator of Social Housing through a set of consumer standards. The scrutiny panel will work alongside our CVCH board in our resident majority governance structure and are the eyes and ears within the community.

This year our Scrutiny members helped to support us by:

Improving tenant communications such as ensuring our rent review letters were clear and helping to put in place a rent support scheme for those who faced difficulty meeting their housing costs



Reviewing our policy around tenancy changes

A much broader programme of work is scheduled for 22/23.



Block Champions

One of our Block Champions was involved in the recruitment process for our new cleaning contractor, they sat on the interview panel and were able to provide detailed tenant input to inform the decision making process. Block champions take pride in their homes and blocks, working closely with the CVCH Neighbourhood and Estates teams to help maintain and improve their community. The volunteers can tell us about any issues with cleaning, communal repairs, ground maintenance services, graffiti, fly tipping and any other problems that affect their community.

If you are interested and would like more information, please contact our Resident Engagement Officer, Vikash Mistry, on **0121 748 8100** or **Vikash.Mistry@cvch.org.uk** or **contactus@cvch.org.uk**



Castle Vale Community Pledge

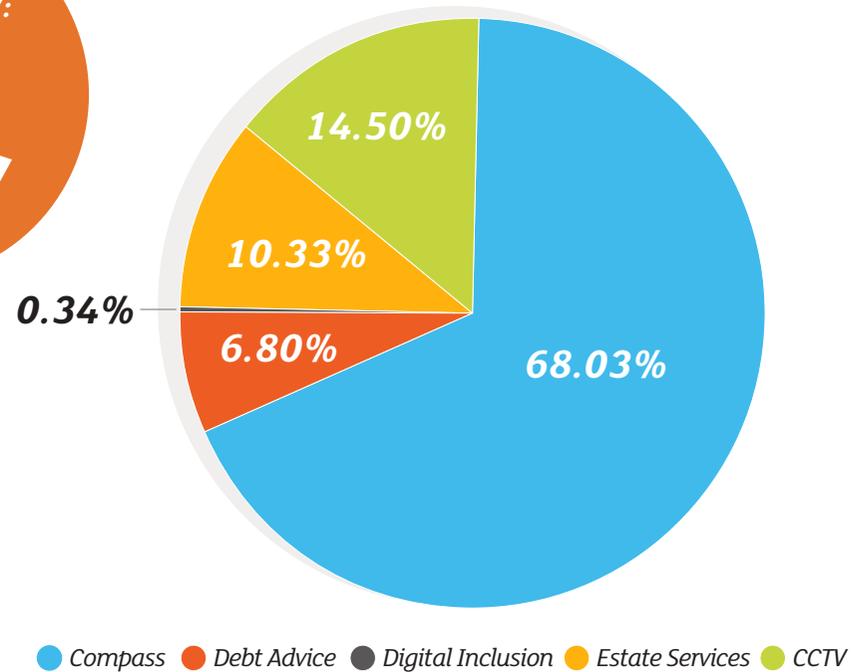
In 2015 we made a 10 year promise to the Castle Vale community to demonstrate our commitment to our values and invest in the estate's long-term sustainability. We recognised that there needed to be clear financial commitment to continue delivering a range of 'added value' services that are beyond our core landlord responsibilities. Therefore, each year a minimum of £500k investment is made into the community to fund these services.



This year's contribution has provided the community with a total of
£587,991
of funded services for residents including:



Distribution of Pledge Expenditure



Castle Vale Community Offer

Wellbeing

Compass Support, the charitable arm of The Pioneer Group, continued to provide a blended offer combining on-line and face to face services. As exercise sessions and activities began to open up during the year, local people embraced the opportunity to begin to re-engage in the community. Over 2000 people took part in the health and wellbeing activities – online, over the phone and face to face.



Mental Health

Support to some of our most vulnerable adults has continued. Our befriending service saw an on-going need for contact to reduce isolation and support networks within local areas. This service has been invaluable in providing on-going and transition support as government restrictions were eased during the year. Volunteering has played a key part in this with 23 volunteers engaging, providing 877 hours of support to 73 people in addition to the thousands of hours of staff time devoted to making welfare calls throughout the pandemic.



Counselling

Our innovative counselling model supported over 140 service users whilst providing work-based practice to 5 students. This has enabled a responsive service, to address often longstanding trauma to support individuals to embed coping strategies.

Employment Support

The pandemic continued to impact upon those in and seeking employment opportunities. Furlough ended and people were struggling to make ends meet. Whilst Birmingham, like many other cities, has seen positive progress with economic recovery, local residents were still not engaging as much as pre-pandemic. We soon returned to face-to-face service delivery, but despite 161 people engaging during the year many people were still struggling to secure jobs. To address this we are working with key local employers such as the NHS and IM Properties, along with strategic partners Birmingham City Council and West Midlands Combined



Authority. We continue to focus upon providing a holistic approach by delivering Get Healthy Get Working (wellbeing and employability training programme), Learn My Way digital skills training, alongside healthy lifestyles, budgeting and referrals into other Compass Support services.



Children and young people

Our offer of virtual and face-to-face support continued supporting over 1,300 young people during the year with the majority of delivery transitioned to in-person during the latter months. There was a continued identified need regarding poor mental health and well-being alongside support for children and young people with additional needs. Mentoring and 1-1 support was provided to almost 50 young people and was critical in improving wellbeing and enabling the right support for young people. Our universal offer in our community hubs and via outreach reconvened and has seen growing numbers of children and young people return with 32 young people engaging in our Young Leaders programme. This service also linked with our employment support delivery to engage with 44 young people aged 18-30 years through our 'Stand Out' programme which delivered neighbourhood outreach, to support people into employment and volunteering opportunities linked to the Commonwealth Games.

Support for Local Families

The voluntary and community sector (VCS) partnership with Birmingham Children's Trust continued into 2021/22. We were able to signpost 580 referrals for support and identified over 450 community assets in the Erdington constituency.

With a real focus on families' emotional wellbeing, Compass Support worked hard to connect with households through schools and phone or video meetings to find out what hardships local families were facing.



The team helped people to access £159,000 of the Household Support Fund to support local people in financial hardship as well as working with local partners to connect to the right services to meet their needs - whether financial, emotional, welfare, or others.

Independent Living

Whilst the majority of services and service users have adapted well to virtual support, we have continued to see challenges when engaging with vulnerable adults to support them in retaining independence. As a result of this we introduced door-step conversations and when possible, meeting face to face within our community hubs, moving towards home visits during the latter part of the year. Even with this challenge we had 671 engagements in our Wellbeing First programme with 68 individuals receiving intensive 1-1 support during the year. We also provided support and guidance to 24 individuals to address hoarding.



Community Fundraising

Pioneer's Head of Fundraising worked with local groups to raise £1,583,850 in the last financial year. This funding went to a variety of good causes, in particular ensuring that Castle Vale residents enjoy a 1st class employment support service and a wide range of small community organisations receive support to keep going.



Community Co-Ordination

Pioneer has continued to coordinate local groups and agencies through the Castle Vale Partnership and the Castle Vale Third Sector group. This coordinated effort has been essential in seeing a joined-up approach as we supported the community through the Covid Recovery Phase. The sharing of information and ideas has been crucial in driving the success of the work of the Head of Fundraising, as we look to respond to local challenges and opportunities.



Customer 1st Team

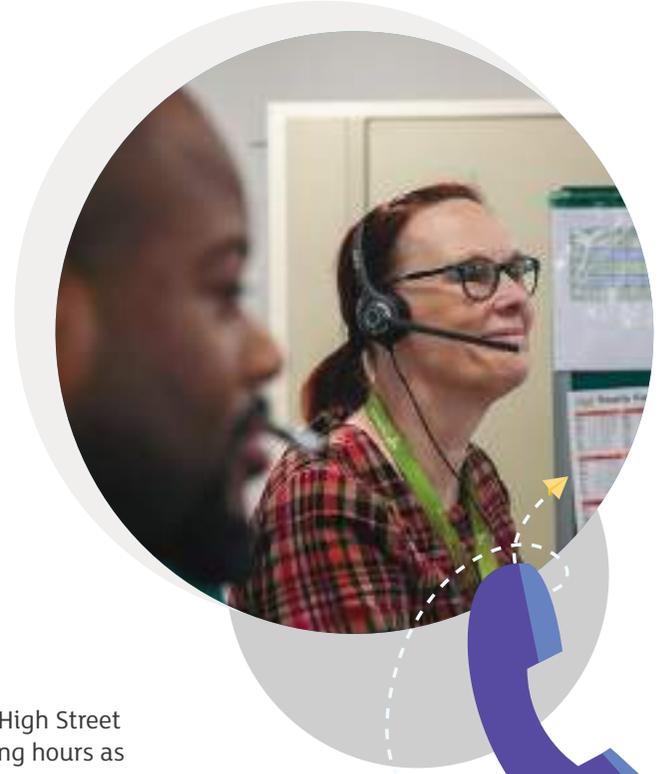
Calls received in 21/22
22,870



Our average waiting time was
100 seconds



4,663
customers were welcomed by our reception staff



21/22 saw a change in how the Customer 1st team were working. Our reception reopened in April of 2021, following almost a year of closure due to the pandemic and our team have responded in a positive way. Over 27,000 customer interactions were handled by the team in a combination of telephone calls and face to face services.

Opening Times

Our reception service at the High Street is now fully open with opening hours as follows:

- Monday** – 09:00 to 17:00
- Tuesday** – 10:30 to 17:00
- Wednesday** – 09:00 to 17:00
- Thursday** – 09:00 to 17:00
- Friday** – 09:00 to 16:00

For all out of hours emergency calls, please call 0121 748 8100 (24 hours)

Closed on Bank Holidays

www.cvch.org.uk
0121 748 8100
contactus@cvch.org.uk

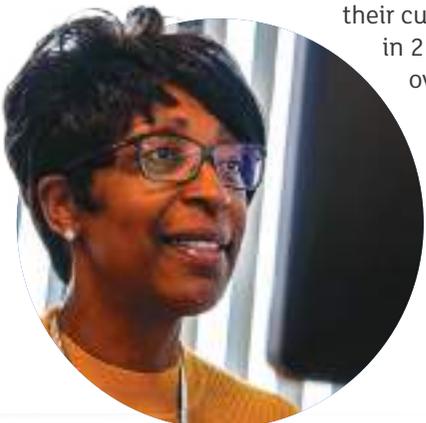
On top of this, the team increased their customer survey output in 21/22, completing over 300 Annual Tenant Surveys, 1214 Responsive Repairs surveys in addition to a number of other satisfaction surveys carried out across all of our services.

Satisfaction with the Customer 1st telephone experience was at
82%

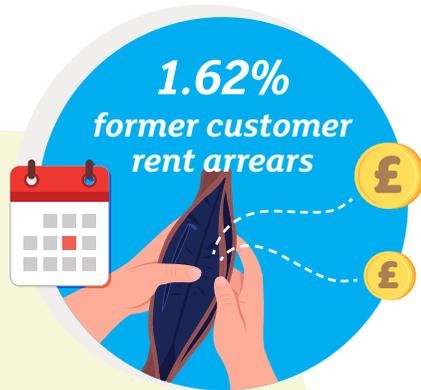


Reception

We are running a full reception service; however, it is recommended if you would like to see a specific housing or income officer that an appointment is booked in advance so that we can ensure they are available.



Income



We take the total rent arrears and divide it by the amount of rent due to work out our arrears percentage. The income team have continued to adopt a customer centric approach to tenants who are still recovering from changes in work status and income. We continue to support customers who may be facing financial difficulty by signposting to our money advice and employment services. Our teams focus has always been on keeping people in their homes by supporting them through financial difficulty to meet their rent obligations. Their success is reflected in the fact that there were no evictions for rent arrears during 21/22.

We know that financial pressures remain and have made this an ongoing priority and will be setting up a Financial Inclusion Partnership to pull together essential information that will be used to target the right support to those in financial crisis much earlier in the next financial year.



Money Advice Service

The Pioneer Group contracts with Spitfire Services to provide a Money Advice Service. This is embedded in our income collection process and overall financial inclusion strategy. Everyone is offered the opportunity to engage with the service from the start of a new tenancy, as well as existing tenants who are about to or are currently experiencing financial challenges. The outcomes from the service provide tools to help people to understand how to manage their finances as well as ensuring that they are maximising their income.

Similar to other organisations, 2021/22 was a challenging 12 months due to the pandemic. Spitfire Services put emergency home working procedures in place due to government restrictions to meet local needs. Spitfire continued to provide advice and support to the community, ensuring that referral processes went uninterrupted.



The Money Advice service gained the following for customers



Total Value: £488, 135

These figures represent outcomes for 142 cases for the year. Although the number of referrals decreased throughout the year, the financial gains are impressive. An example of the financial gains to a service user is highlighted as follows. Client H is a 59-Year-old female living on her own in Pioneer Housing. Due to severe Osteoarthritis she had to finally give up work after a long period of sickness and was assisted to claim Universal Credit, Contribution Based Employment Support Allowance and Council Tax Support. In addition, client was also helped with a PIP2 application at the start of December 2020. On 22nd February 2022,

Client H rang to confirm award of Standard Daily Living Personal Independence Payments. £1,560 back payment and ongoing award £3120 each year. This alleviated the concerns the customer had as the backdated payment cleared her arrears and her ongoing additional support payments got her finances in order.

In addition, we helped her with a PIP2 application at the start of December 2020. The strength of the partnership gained more than 10 times the value of the contract – putting money directly into customers' pockets.

Estate Services

The Estates Team are responsible for ensuring Castle Vale remains a clean, green and safe place to live and continued to ensure this was kept at the forefront of their roles during the year.

1457
bags of litter collected which equates to 600 full wheelie bins



Collected **85 tonnes** of fly tipping and bulk collection from Castle Vale



100% inspections on blocks, schemes, garage site and alleyways



Our team have been working hard in reducing / removing fly-tipping from CVCH land and also work to support the wider neighbourhood by addressing issues on Birmingham City Council owned land.

By being locally based, we can be responsive and we have been able to quickly tackle graffiti on the estate, removing it quickly to maintain high standards in our community.

The Keep Britain Tidy week, in partnership with Castle Vale Community Environmental Trust was a great success with many members of the community involved in litter picking right across Castle Vale.

Our painting team have been out painting residents external railings and freshening up internal communal areas.

CCTV



Our CCTV system is recording 24 hours a day and we have invested in our CCTV system to ensure we are keeping up to date with the currently technology. There are 81 cameras operating throughout the estate and 95% of our external CCTV cameras that you will see around the estate have now been upgraded to full high definition cameras. This has assisted our CCTV operators in tackling and investigating issues on the estate. We continue to work closely with the Neighbourhoods team, West Midlands Police and other agencies to ensure Castle Vale is a safe place to live. Due to this close working approach our CCTV operators have assisted in many incidents, which have led to arrests being made.

We have created a direct reporting line to our CCTV operators, for residents to report any issues that require investigating. They can report any crimes that have been committed, Fly-tipping, ASB and much more.



Repairs & Maintenance

Throughout 2021/22 we have been working closely with our responsive repairs contractor Wrekin to ensure that the services they deliver meet your expectations. Monthly contractor meetings are attended by the contracts manager where performance is reviewed and scrutinised.

The commitment to deliver excellent services saw an increase in our investment in this service by 12%, demonstrating our commitment to provide great homes and deliver excellent services to our customers.

Despite the challenges of the ongoing pandemic, the team were able to deliver 5759 repairs over the 12 months of 2021/22 (that's about two for every household on average), with feedback from our customers telling us that we are going in the right direction with improving performance in a number of areas including satisfaction that has seen continuous improvement from 85% in 2020/21 to 88% in 2021/22.

Being the envy of many housing providers and tenants alike, the contract has a unique feature where we aim to deliver 85% of all repairs on the same day. Over the last 12 months we have managed to achieve this target which is keeping our homes in great condition. Customer satisfaction scores tell us that you agree.



How did we do?

Satisfied with repairs

88%
2021/22



85%
2020/21

Repairs fixed first time

87%
2020/21

85%
2021/22



Fire Safety Works

100%
2021/22



100%
2020/21

Performance Information

83%

Jobs completed same day as reported



Gas Service & Maintenance

Status Heating carried out 2352 services over the last 12 months, with additional repairs taking an average of just 2.4 days to complete. Combined with a resident satisfaction rate of 91%, you have been telling us you value this service.

Gas servicing is a legal requirement. Gas appliances that are not serviced can produce poisonous carbon monoxide gas which can cause sickness and even kill. In extreme cases, a dangerous appliance or gas leak could result in an explosion, as has been seen on our doorstep in Kingstanding only recently, where tragically a 79 year old woman lost her life. For the safety of you and your family, and your neighbours, you must make every effort to ensure that access is provided to complete your gas service on time. This check will not take longer than 1 hour to complete.

Enabling entry for gas servicing is critically important and a condition of your tenancy agreement. There have been several high profile gas explosions across the UK in the last 12 months, all of which have totally destroyed the properties, so please let us in to carry out the annual safety check. Because of the dangers, we take a firm approach with tenants who do not let us in to carry out servicing. Each year, a small number of customers find themselves threatened with court action for not letting us in. When a court injunction is granted the customer is usually ordered to pay hundreds of pounds in costs and they could face a prison sentence if they continue to deny access.

GAS SERVICING IS PARAMOUNT TO YOUR SAFETY AND ONLY TAKES AN HOUR SO PLEASE WORK WITH US TO ENABLE ACCESS

If you smell gas, please isolate your supply by turning the emergency handle and call 0800 111 999

This is a free service that will attend within 30 minutes to check the property is safe.

The emergency gas handle looks like this and will be located near to your gas meter.



Electrical Testing

2021/22 continued in the vein of 2020/21 as the most intensive programme of electrical testing across the estate that we have ever carried out. We completed over 700 electrical tests to ensure that the homes that we provide are safe, further demonstrating our commitment to providing Great, Safe Homes.



In order to continue that process and continue to meet our obligations as a responsible landlord, we have successfully procured a new 3-year contract with our new Electrical Contractor, Laker (BMS) Ltd to assist with providing Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICRs), the delivery of our electrical safety programme and any identified remedial works across the properties managed and provided by The Pioneer Group, ensuring safety and legal compliance.

Taking ownership of the entire process with clear communication throughout, the change from our incumbent contractor to Laker (BMS) Ltd has proved a seamless transition and we now think of them to be a fully integrated part of our team, from the office staff to the front-line electricians.



Aids and Adaptations

Following close work with Birmingham City Council, we have delivered £111,650 **£78,000 worth of adaptations in 21/22.** This includes items from grab rails, ramps and wet rooms to ground floor extensions.

Fire Safety

We have carried out 100% of required Fire Risk Assessment surveys across our stock in 2020, ensuring that the homes that we provide are safe.

The team have also been working hard to ensure the association meets the new legal requirements of the Fire Safety Act 2021 via a dedicated Fire Safety Group who continue to work hard to make sure they are doing everything possible to keep you safe in your home. This work has consisted of a number of detailed property inspections including a detailed inspection of cladding to our low rise blocks that have been deemed safe and will not encourage the spread of fire.

Fuel Poverty

Fuel poverty relates to households that must spend a high proportion of their household income to keep their home at a reasonable temperature. The most recent government survey says there were 2.53 million fuel-poor households in England in 2017.

To address this, the team has worked hard to create a new Environmental Strategy to get our homes to net zero by 2050, reducing fuel poverty for our customers.

Net zero refers to achieving a balance between the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced and the amount removed from the atmosphere.

Over the course of 2021 we will build upon this work by collecting energy performance information about our stock, so we may be booking our tenants an appointment with an Energy Assessor.



Results of the Survey

It is important for us to understand your experience of the services we provide through the feedback you give us. Resident feedback helps us understand what works well and helps us shape our services to ensure that we are delivering our commitment to the community and understand those we serve.

2021/22 Annual Tenant Survey Data Summary



Bucking the trend in the housing sector, which predicted a 4% reduction in satisfaction levels compared to pre-pandemic levels, our satisfaction score increased from 80% to 85%.

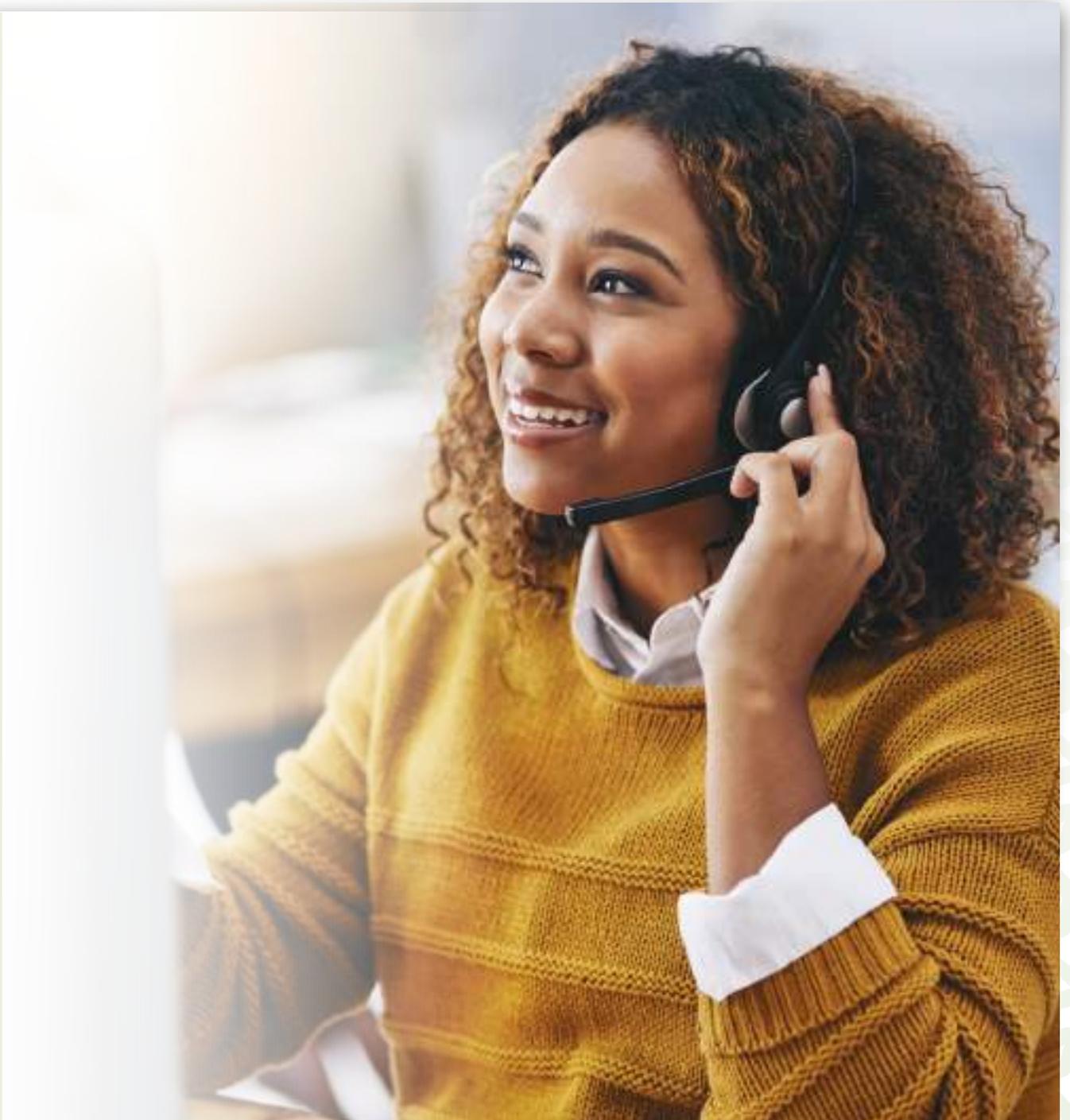




You said, we did!

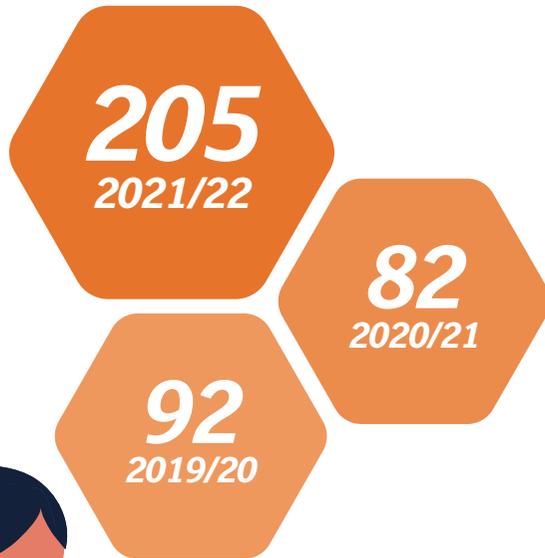
Our residents' feedback is important to us to help us shape our services and deliver our commitment to the community. Last year, while there were a number of highlights, there were also some areas to work on, including customer perceptions of our approach to tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) and complaints and listening to resident's views and acting upon them. As a result, we are taking forward improvements into 2022/23 to;

- *Overhaul our ASB service and we are seeing signs of improvement already in our satisfaction surveys.*
- *Run training workshops with complaint investigating officers to focus on the handling of complaints.*
- *Improve our resident engagement offer, arranging a number of community drop-ins and implementing quarterly neighbourhood updates from the teams.*
- *Improving our telephone offer, giving customers a call back option as part of our telephone service.*



Complaints Data

Total complaints



The Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) Complaints Code came into force from January 2021. This included a standard definition of complaints which all housing organisations must use. This has resulted in the number of complaints we log increasing by large numbers. We welcome this change as it helps us understand our customers' perceptions and what is important to them. We feed this feedback into service improvements.

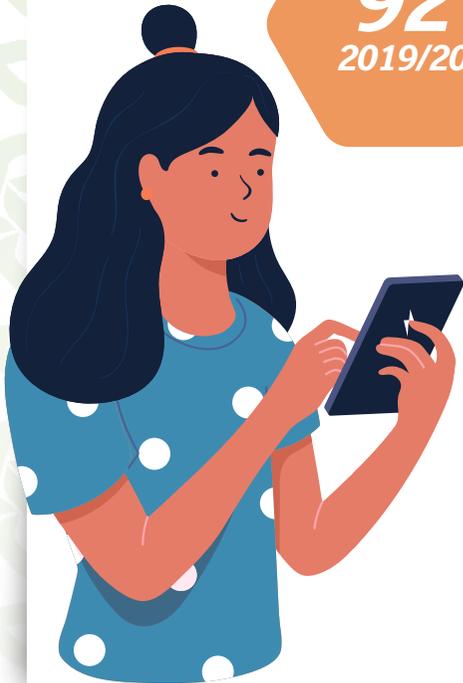
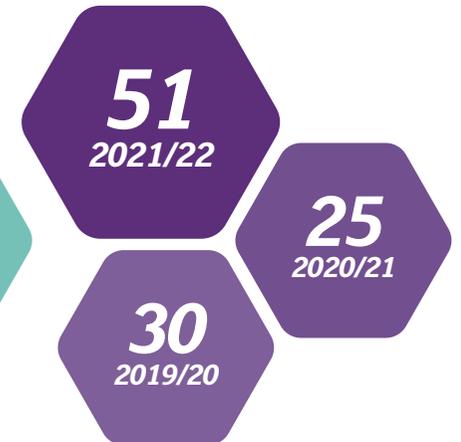
Upheld



Partially upheld



Not upheld



You told us...

That you were unhappy with the delays in returning calls.

We've put in place new working arrangements with our staff and set clear expectations on the need to prioritise call returning.

The communication of planned works is not good enough.

We are preparing a news article to be published on our website with an update on planned works, there has been real difficulty in the procurement of the windows programme with a number of differing factors.

Customer did not understand what was required from them with ASB complaints

We have created new website pages which sets out a lot of information about anti-social behaviour, who can tackle it and who is responsible. We have also worked with our staff to introduce a new computer system to help us manage complaints and keep customers informed. We'll be continuing with the training with our new staff.

Customer's not being kept informed of actions being taken and apparent one off contractor failures. These are generally split between Wrekin and Status.

We're improving the information available to our staff to enable them to understand what is happening with repairs. We also undertake regular meeting with our contractors to address individual issues.

Out of Hours service did not action your call correctly and sent the wrong trade.

Arrangements were made for a session with our contractor to help identify emergency repairs and to set the expectation that all new Out Of Hours staff are up to date with processes for Pioneer. Ensuring all OOH staff are trained to recognise issues and ask the right questions to ensure they have gathered all necessary information to complete the repair.



You can find a full copy of our Complaints Policy on our website by following the links from www.cvch.org.uk or you can ask us for our complaints leaflet, which provides a simple summary of the process, along with details about how you can ask us to review some of the decisions we make. You can also pick up a copy from our reception at the High Street.

We have published copies of our self-assessment on how we are doing against the complaints handling code and frequently update this. We keep our processes under review, shaped by what you tell us.

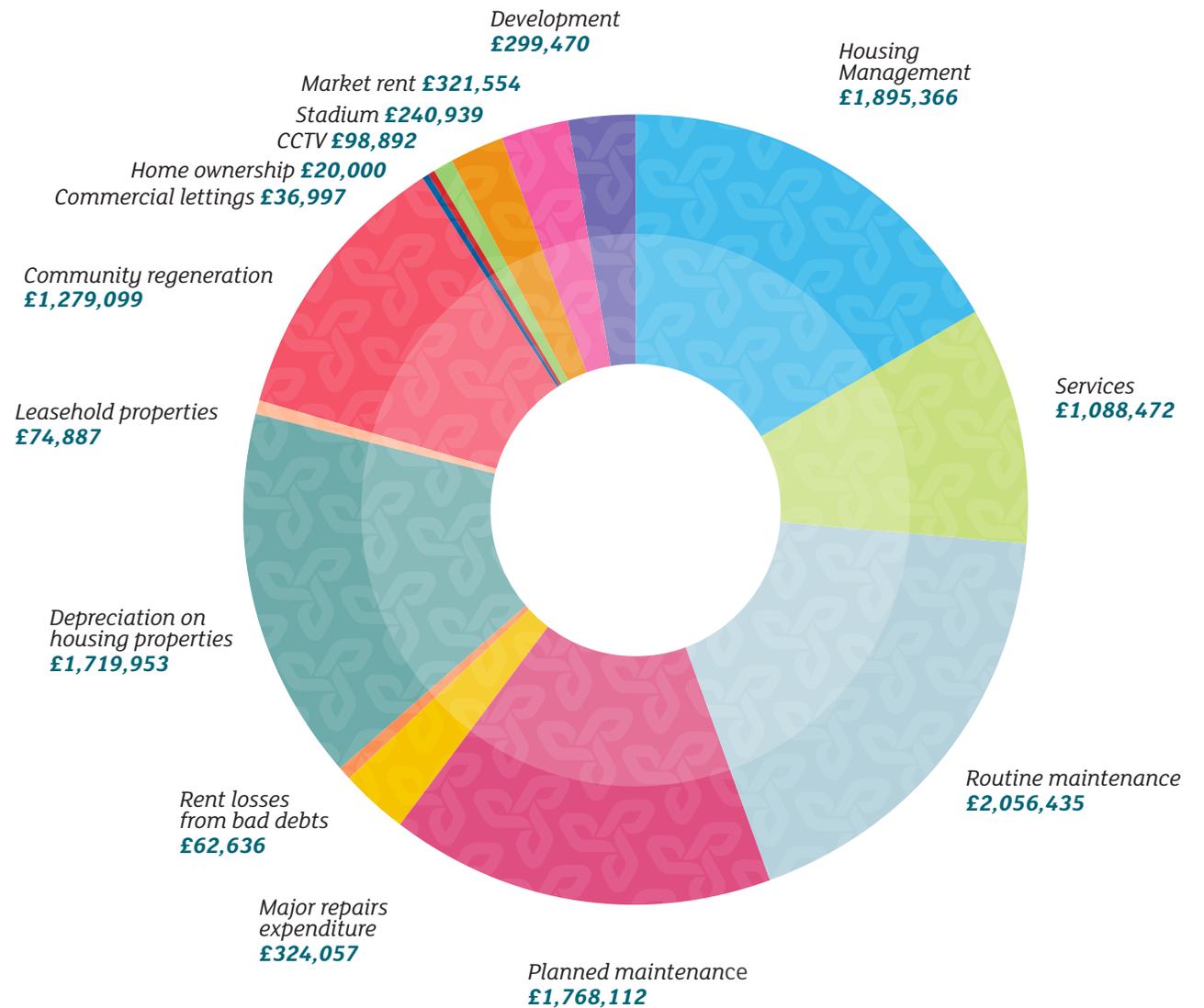
Compliments

During the year, a total of ✨
15 compliments
were received from tenants and residents about our staff or services.

We always welcome feedback from our residents, so if you would like to get in touch with yours, please visit us at www.cvch.org.uk



Spending for The Pioneer Group



Legal status of structure

The Pioneer Housing and Community Group Limited ('The Pioneer Group') – is a Registered Provider with the Regulator of Social Housing. It is charitable registered society. It owns all of the housing assets of the Group and holds all loans and other liabilities.

Castle Vale Community Housing (CVCH) – is a trading name of The Pioneer Group used in the management of the social housing assets owned in Castle Vale. The work is overseen by an operational committee of the Group called Castle Vale Community Housing Board. It has a resident majority on the board and delegated authority to ensure services are delivered to Castle Vale residents.

Compass Support Services Limited ('Compass Support') – is a company registered by guarantee and a registered charity. It is a subsidiary of The Pioneer Group.

Pioneer Places – is a trading name of The Pioneer Group for market rented homes, shared ownership and sales of the Group assets.

SGCH – is a trading name of The Pioneer Group to manage the housing assets owned in Stockland Green. The work is overseen by an operational committee of the Group called Stockland Green Community Homes Board. Homes Board.



11 High Street | Castle Vale | Birmingham B35 7PR

Tel: **0121 748 8100** Email: contactus@cvch.org.uk

www.cvch.org.uk