



# ESG Report 2024

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## The Pioneer Group heritage

The government-sponsored Housing Action Trust programme ran in Castle Vale, Birmingham, from 1993 to 2005, refurbishing existing homes, building new homes, and investing in the wider environment of the estate.

Castle Vale was transformed into a modern, low-rise estate, with only two high rise buildings remaining from the original 34. The two commercial centers on the estate were demolished and rebuilt with a range of modern retail and community facilities, and a new central park was created.

The Housing Action Trust was designed to be a temporary body and the priority was to plan for succession, once the Trust's work ended in 2005.

The Pioneer Group was founded in 1996 to be the long-term anchor organisation of Castle Vale, and by 2005 had taken ownership of 2,400 homes built or refurbished as part of the regeneration programme.

Compass Support Services Limited and the Merlin Venture Limited were also founded during the same period and have subsequently joined the Pioneer Group.

This heritage makes the Pioneer Group different to other stock transfer housing associations. The Group has inherited a concentrated stock of high-quality homes and retains a firm commitment to sustaining the successful regeneration of Castle Vale through wider people and community-focused activities.

The Group invests significant resources in non-social housing activities in order to ensure that this successful regeneration is maintained.

Two decades later, Castle Vale continues to be a good place to live. The quality of the housing stock is high, the environment is clean and pleasant, and there is a substantial waiting list for people wanting to live in the area.

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## Company Values

We believe in helping people and communities to be the best they can be. We have the privilege of being an anchor organisation in our communities and through the provision of homes and support we provide the strongest foundations from which many people can thrive. This fundamentally makes us a people business, so our values absolutely need to reflect this. Our Pioneer values demonstrate our principles and guide our actions. How we will communicate with each other, with our tenants, residents, communities and our stakeholders.

We want our values to be lived through people's experience of each other and the Pioneer Group as whole - ultimately helping create a culture that ensures our commitment to achieving our vision and mission.



### 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

### Better Together

- 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

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## Mission and Vision Statement

The Pioneer Group's vision is:

- **Making lives and communities better**

The Pioneer Group's mission is:

- **As an anchor organisation, use our Group strength to provide great homes and help build resilient communities where people can thrive.**

## Principle Activities

The principal activity of the Pioneer Group is providing social housing in north and east Birmingham, with the vast majority of the stock in Castle Vale, Birmingham. Social housing represents 85% of the Group's turnover (2023: 83%).

To achieve its wider mission to build resilient communities where people can thrive, the Pioneer Group also provides a range of other people, community and housing-focused services including:

- Community regeneration, including health, family support, young people services and community facilities
- Market rented homes
- CCTV
- A small number of commercial properties on High Street, Castle Vale
- Sports and leisure facilities at Castle Vale Stadium

The Pioneer Group owns and manages 2,541 social and market rent homes, of which 2,389 (94%) are in Castle Vale. Other homes are in neighbouring areas of north and east Birmingham, primarily Stechford (68 homes), Stockland Green (51 homes) and Sutton Coldfield (27 homes).

We are currently headquartered 11 High Street Castle Vale Birmingham B35 7PR and provide homes within United Kingdom.

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## Pioneer Group Structure

The Pioneer Group is the group parent. It is a charitable Registered Provider, holding all the Group's housing assets and all its borrowing.

The Pioneer Group provides central services including finance, treasury, human resources, information technology and governance to the wider group.

The Pioneer Group has two subsidiaries:

- **Compass Support Services Limited**

A charity registered with the Charity Commission, delivering a range of people-centered services including health and wellbeing, youth and employment services.

- **The Merlin Venture Limited**

A company limited by guarantee, which ceased trading on 30 July 2021 and is dormant.

This structure allows for other brands or organisations to join the Group in the future. There are no financial cross guarantees between the group members, which protects the social housing assets.

## Message from Chief Executive, Simon Wilson



I am delighted to share our first sustainability report under the Sustainability Reporting Standard for Social Housing. This first report brings together the work we have been undertaking on our journey to meet our environmental goals to achieve net zero by 2050.

The timing of this first report comes after a wave of economic shocks that have rocked the UK economy. The impact of austerity has been compounded by Brexit and a global pandemic, more recently Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Liz Truss' short tenure as Prime Minister. Such turmoil has caused challenges for our business with inflationary pressures and supply chain issues. As a community focused social landlord, we are most acutely aware of the impact these issues have had on our tenants and residents who are continuing to face a cost-of-living crisis. We know those on fixed or low incomes and in tenuous employment have been disproportionately impacted. The resultant poverty has forced some unbelievably tough choices on those least well equipped to cope.

Given our mission and vision we have brought together partners in the cost-of-living task force aimed at mitigating the worst impacts of the crisis. The task force has focused its efforts across four areas of activity. Ensuring tenants and residents can access timely advice and information;

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helping ensure tenants and residents can access food, warmth and wellbeing support; helping tenants and residents with employment support and focused financial assistance schemes.

This report sets out the role we can play as an anchor organisation with a long-term financial plan and long-term mission helping us take a continuing view and decisions that meet the challenge of climate change and reverse trends across some measures of deprivation. We have a determination to make our homes greener, warmer and more energy efficient – driving down costs to our tenants and recognising the importance tenants and residents place on the environment outside their front door as we continue to invest in services to keep our neighbourhoods clean and green.

I am pleased that we have worked together with our strategic partners through MATRIX housing partnership to leverage government funding through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2 which will help us accelerate our commitment to reaching SAP C by 2030 across all our homes.

We have also been working hard to understand and respond to the real-world impact of climate change and the resultant extreme weather events. In our main community on Castle Vale this has seen the development of a flood risk and response plan and flood mitigation measures given the risks identified. We have also continued to respond to the strengthening of legislation across a range of building and fire safety areas and have been proactive in response to the emergence of damp, mould and condensation risks in the sector.

Much of the focus on safety of tenants was brought into focus by the events at Grenfell and the tragic death of Awaab Isaak. The lessons learnt around how the sector let its tenants down and did not listen to their voices are lessons we are determined to learn. Our new Corporate Plan will have an even greater focus on how tenants, residents and customers have the opportunity to shape, influence and steer the strategic and operational activity of the Group. We have streamlined our Governance structure and are introducing a new Customer Influence Committee to hard wire tenants' voices into this structure, supporting this with better tenant data and even greater insight into what really matters to our tenants and residents.

We are well aware of the challenges that lay ahead. We expect a new decent home standard to be published soon and an emergence of greater clarity on what 'net zero' really means to our tenants and our business, plus the potential risks and opportunities this brings. We also anticipate difficult choices as we continue to invest in existing homes, contribute to the shortfall

in social housing through growth and face up to the challenge of climate change all against backdrop of tougher and most costly regulation. We will continue to place tenants and residents at the heart of these choices as we deliver our ESG commitments.

## Structure of the Report

This report has been prepared according to the specific themes outlined in the latest version ([v2.0 published in Autumn of 2023](#)) of the Sustainability Reporting Standard for Social Housing by Sustainability for Housing ([SfH](#)). The standard comprises 46 criteria across 12 themes distributed among the sustainability pillars E, S, and G. An index of criteria reported under each theme is provided below, along with corresponding UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

ESG Area	Theme Number	Theme Name	SDG Goal	
Environmental	T1	Climate Change	13	Climate Action
	T2	Ecology	15	Life on Land
	T3	Resource Management	12	Responsible Consumption and Production
Social	T4	Affordability and Security	11	Sustainable Cities and Communities
			10	Reduce Inequality
	T5	Building Safety and Quality	11	Sustainable Cities and Communities
	T6	Resident Voice	11	Sustainable Cities and Communities
	T7	Resident Support		
	T8	Placemaking		
Governance	T9	Structure and Governance	16	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
	T10	Board and Trustees		



	T11	Staff Wellbeing	8	Decent Work and Economic Growth
	T12	Supply Chain Management	12	Responsible Consumption and Production

Please note that unless otherwise specified, all information in the report refers to data reported at the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2024.

## Environmental

We have developed a road map that sets out our journey for achieving the governments energy efficiency and carbon reduction targets in the most efficient and cost-effective way, not only reducing the impact on the environment but making our business operations and homes more sustainable.

Our overall aim is to deliver sustainable, affordable and efficient homes, understanding the impact that energy costs and environmental issues have on our customers.

We already have a commitment to reducing utility costs by investing in our assets as set out in our corporate plan and Asset Management strategy. This strategy sets out our aim to establish a baseline position for performance of our homes, developing clear targets to monitor and measure energy performance improvements. It will also define our approach to future stock investment programmes.

### Theme 1 - Climate Change

#### C1. Distribution of EPC ratings of existing homes (those completed before the last financial year – 31<sup>st</sup> Mar 2023)

To provide insight into the overall energy efficiency of our current stock, we are disclosing the distribution of our Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating across our existing portfolio.

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EPC Rating (Existing Homes)	Percentage
A	0%
B	5.6%
C	60.6%
D	16.8%
E	0.6%
Not yet assessed	16.5%

## **C2. Distribution of EPC rating of new homes (those completed in the last financial year – 2023-24)**

To ensure that our future stock of housing is more energy efficient than our older units, we are disclosing the distribution of our EPC rating for newly constructed homes in our portfolio.

EPC Rating (Existing Homes)	Percentage
A	31.2%
B	68.8%
Total	100%

## **C3. Does the housing provider have a Net Zero target and strategy?**

The organisation aims to achieve net zero by 31 Dec 2050.

The organisation has not yet established a net zero target, but we are actively exploring the development of such a target and strategy. We have included net zero targets within the environmental management strategy, with clear carbon reduction actions to be achieved over the corporate plan 2025 and the overall aim to achieve net zero by 2050.

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#### **C4. What retrofit activities have been undertaken in the last 12 months to the housing stock, and how do these activities align with, and contribute towards, performance against the Net Zero strategy and target?**

We have successfully bid in the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund to retrofit 77 properties. Replacing all windows and doors throughout the whole stock. Both these activities contribute to improving our overall EPC position to allow us to meet the 2030 target of EPC C.



#### **C5. GHG Emissions**

Streamlined Energy & Carbon Report (SECR) is a replacement for the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) Energy Efficiency Scheme which sets out requirements for disclosing greenhouse gas emissions. The information below is also disclosed in our SECR Report.

##### **Description of Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions**

We are expecting to be able to report this around 2025/6.

#### **C6. How has the housing provider mapped and assessed the climate risks to its homes and supply chain, such as increased flood, drought and overheating risks, and how is the housing provider mitigating these risks?**

Pioneer has recently completed a flood risk assessment that identified which properties are at risk and the likelihood of a flood event happening. Flood action plans have now been put in place and we are exploring flood mitigation measures such as SuDs and flood gates / doors to help reduce the risk to tenants and properties if there is ever a flood.

### **Theme 2: Ecology**

#### **C7. Does the housing provider have a strategy to enhance green space and promote biodiversity on or near homes?**

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We don't not have a formal strategy, however we are currently working on a plan to enhance green space and promote biodiversity with a local charity 'Community Environmental Trust'. The measures include:

- A programme of tree planting across the estate to include a new community orchard, to improve air quality and enhance biodiversity, has been completed.
- Hedgerows have been planted in the Conservation Area to increase biodiversity and offer a sound barrier to the adjacent major roads and railway.
- Additional shrubbery areas on pockets of vacant green space to improve biodiversity and reduce fly-tipping have been planted.

**C8. Does the housing provider have a strategy to identify, manage and reduce pollutants that could cause material harm, and how does the housing provider target and measure performance?**

Yes, the environmental management strategy aims to manage and reduce pollutants that could cause material harm.

We don't have quantitative targets; however, we monitor delivery of strategy actions, and proactively manage our contractors to ensure compliance with our environmental management objectives, ensuring procurement documentation captures environmental impact. As part review of the review of the environmental strategy (due 2025) we will consider performance measures.

**Theme 3: Resource Management**

**C9. Does the housing provider have a strategy to use or increase the use of responsibly sourced materials for all building and repairs works?**

No, we do not have a separate strategy. This is not required; however, the environmental management strategy has clear actions to responsibly source sustainable materials with clear actions to source a variety of external funding initiatives to address the challenges faces by achieving the carbon target.

We do not have quantitative targets to measure impact, although through all our procurement activities we have specific specifications that all materials have to comply with relevant building



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regulations. As part review of the review of the environmental strategy (due 2025) we will consider performance measures.

**C10. Does the housing provider have a strategy for waste management incorporating building materials, and how does the housing provider target and measure performance?**

The environmental management strategy has clear actions to responsibly manage waste. Our overall aim is to reduce waste going to landfill, both from within the organisation, from our properties and sub-contractors. We look for opportunities to reduce waste and encourage recycling across the organisation and within our supply chain. This is achieved by our continued measurement of approved contractors on their environmental credentials, which measures a contractor's commitment to waste management amongst other attributes. This score for environmental awareness and action contributes directly to the decision-making process when we are looking to appoint, with clear targets and procedures to reduce waste production.

We do not have quantitative targets, focusing on delivery of actions, but as part of the review of the environmental strategy (due 2025) we will consider performance measures.

**C11. Does the housing provider have a strategy for water management?**

As part of the environmental management strategy, we have identified clear water management actions such as to integrate water saving devices into our replacement and new build specifications.

We do not have quantitative targets, focusing on delivery of actions, but as part of the review of the review of the environmental strategy (due 2025) we will consider performance measures.

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## Social

### Theme 4: Affordability and Security

**C12. For properties that are subject to the rent regulation regime, report against one or more Affordability Metric:**

- 1. Rent compared to median private rental sector (PRS) rent across the relevant Local Authority**
- 2. Rent compared to the relevant Local Housing Allowance (LHA)**

To help provide housing to households who cannot afford to rent or buy in the open market, provision of affordable housing is a core purpose of regulated housing providers.

We measure our rental affordability in the context of both the Local Housing Allowance and the Private Rented Sector Median as displayed below.

**Rent compared to Private Rented Sector (PRS):**

General Needs Properties	Our Ave. Weekly Rent (£)	% Rent Compared to PRS
One Bedroom	£87.07	48.7%
Two Bedrooms	£98.82	50.4%
Three Bedrooms	£110.17	53%
Four Bedrooms	£121.84	40.9%

**Rent compared to Local Housing Allowance (LHA):**

General Needs properties	Our Ave. Weekly Rent (£)	% Rent Compared to LHA
One bedroom	£87.07	72.1%
Two bedrooms	£98.82	68.7%
Three bedrooms	£110.17	70.9%
Four Bedroom	£121.84	62.3%



**C13. Share, and number, of existing homes (owned and/or managed) completed before the last financial year (31<sup>st</sup> March 2023):**

To better understand the scale and composition of tenure type in housing, a breakdown is provided to demonstrate the extent to which we provide accommodation.

Units (existing homes)	Number	Percentage
General Needs (social rent)	2211	80.93%
Intermediate Rent	41	1.5%
Affordable Rent	7	0.26%
Housing for older people	128	4.96%

Low-cost home ownership	30	1.1%
Private Rented Sector	100	1.83%
Other Category	215	7.87%
Total Homes Managed / Owned	732	100%

**C14. Share, and number, of new homes (owned and/or managed) that were completed in the last financial year (2023-24), allocated to:**

During 2023-2024 financial year we developed 27 new homes and purchased 4 market rented properties. As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, we had further 26 homes targeted to be delivered in 2024-25. The new homes completed during the 2023- 2024 financial year is detailed in the table below:



New homes	Number	Percentage
Affordable Rent	16	51.61%
Low-cost home ownership	11	35.48%
Private Rented Sector	4	12.9%
Total Homes Managed / Owned	31	100%



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### C15. How is the housing provider trying to reduce the effect of high energy costs on its residents?

Our Corporate Plan and Environmental Management strategy seeks to prioritise and support fuel poor homes, making sure that they will be the first beneficiaries of the energy performance improvements to be delivered in our aim to achieve net zero. We aim to reduce energy consumption and lower energy bills by upgrading homes, focusing on the least energy efficient housing stock first.

We are conscious that there is currently no minimum energy efficiency standard which applies in the social rented sector except the requirement in the Decent Homes Standard which stipulates that homes should provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort and be free of excess cold. This standard is not good enough to achieve our ambitious targets and we welcome the government's commitment to review the Decent Homes Standard to better support the decarbonisation and energy performance of homes, particularly with regard to the ambition set out in the Clean Growth Strategy that all social rented homes should meet EPC C by 2030.

In addition, we welcome the governments funding for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, which is aimed at upgrading social housing stock that is currently below EPC B and C and we are confident that the SHDF works currently planned in 2024/25 (on the 77 properties with a EPC of D and below) will increase our SAP rating.

Finally, the financial business plan includes delivery of the accelerated windows replacement programme, but we will not achieve the Corporate Plan target for bathrooms. Overall delivery of this objective has been impacted by the boards, noting customer feedback, agreeing that windows should be brought forward, and bathrooms delayed. This is an appropriate response to environmental and cost of living concerns and has been factored into financial planning.



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### **C16. How does the housing provider provide security of tenure for residents?**

Offering long-term tenancies to general needs residents (where possible) is deemed good practice. This provides security of tenure which makes a huge difference to people's lives.

The company aims to build strong and sustainable communities, and we believe that offering long-term tenancies will help achieve this goal.

The Pioneer Group uses Assured Shorthold Tenancies for the first year and tenancies then become periodic Assured Tenancies. The only other fixed term tenancies that we use are in our Rent to Buy homes (39 in total).

## **Theme 5: Building Safety and Quality**

### **C17. Describe the condition of the housing provider's portfolio, with reference to:**

<b>Compliance Checks</b>	<b>% of Homes</b>
Percentage of homes for which all required gas safety checks have been carried out in the year (2023-24)	100%
Percentage of homes for which all required fire risk assessments have been carried out in the year (2023-24)	100%
Percentage of homes for which all required electrical safety checks have been carried out in the year (2023-24)	100%

### **C18. What % of homes meet the national housing quality standard?**

The Decent Homes Standard (DHS) is a government-agreed technical definition on the statutory minimum requirement for a home to be classed as 'decent'. This is a standard national criterion that provides insight into the condition of a Housing Provider's stock.

% of homes meeting the national housing quality standard?	Increase/decrease on housing with quality standard for previous year
99.75%	0.16%

As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, 6 properties in total failed: Remedial actions include:

- Property 1 – this relates to property fire and is currently with insurance loss adjusters.
- Property 2 - Tenant temporarily decanted while remedial works are undertaken.
- Property 3 - New roof completed and remedial works (internal works) ongoing to rectify.
- Property 4 - Awaiting independent expert report.
- Property 5 - Awaiting independent expert surveyors' report.
- Property 6 - Awaiting independent expert surveyors report.

### **C19. How do you manage and mitigate the risk of damp and mould for your residents?**

For a number of years now we have been proactively monitoring the number of repairs that mention the work “damp, mould or condensation” in any of the communications we have with customers or contractors.

This information is collected from our central digital platform that is used to administer all our repair and maintenance activities. This system is updated daily with information from our suppliers and contractors, ensuring that we are able to confidently hold all data in a central location, not having to rely on externally held systems or spreadsheets. These findings are then plotted to monitor trends and identify potential problem sites.

The group proactively adopts a “No Lifestyle” fault approach to dealing with Damp, Mould and Condensation cases. We never blame damp and mould on our customers as we firmly believe that the no one would ever suffer these conditions willingly and that we have a role to play in solving these issues for our customers.

We take a proactive approach to make sure that properties meet our customers' lifestyle needs. There are occasions where the customer will have to work with us, but we will always help them

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to do this. We also approach each case without delay, addressing these issues early is not only an important way of improving the living conditions for our customers, but is also the most economical way for us as it minimises the damage caused by these conditions to the properties.

We have fostered an excellent working arrangement with a local specialist damp company who has fully subscribed to our ethos. As a result of this arrangement, damp reported faults are visited usually within 3 working days and works agreed there and then. There is a no quibble approach to required works including redecoration.

With specific relation to cases that may include legal representation, we do not suspend or pause our approach on the basis that it is subject to a legal claim. We push on regardless as the overriding factor in these cases is remedying the defect for the customer to minimise any adverse living conditions and equally important to minimise the extent of remedial works to our property.

More recently we have been investigating the deployment of intelligent digital resources that can help us monitor conditions within our properties in order that we can be more proactive in identifying and addressing damp, mould and condensation issues before they arise.

HHRSR data for the association is held digitally on a bespoke platform, that again is linked to our central digital platform that is used to manage repairs and maintenance activities. This system has been fully updated as recently as the summer of 2022 and records show that we have no A to C (category 1) hazards. We obviously constantly monitor this position and update as needed, but our proactive approach to the issues of damp, mould and condensation means that we will only temporarily have hazards that are then addressed quickly.

## **Theme 6: Resident Voice**

### **C20. What are the results of the housing provider's most recent tenant satisfaction survey, and how has the housing provider acted on these results?**

- 80% satisfaction with overall service (upper quartile)
- 73% satisfaction with the repairs service (lower median)
- 74% satisfaction with the time taken to complete repairs (upper median)
- 78% satisfaction that homes are well maintained (upper median)
- 82% satisfaction that homes are safe (upper median)
- 67% satisfaction that views are being listened to and acted upon (upper median)



- 74% satisfaction that customers are informed about things that matter (upper median)
- 81% satisfaction that customers are treated fairly and with respect (upper median)
- 37% satisfaction with complaint handling (upper median)
- 76% satisfaction that communal areas are clean and well maintained (upper quartile)
- 75% satisfaction landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhood (upper quartile)
- 53% satisfaction with handling of anti-social behaviour

The data (including qualitative feedback) has been analysed, and we are undertaking a series of actions to address the key areas of dissatisfaction:

1. Similar to last year, as a key complaint was the condition of windows and doors, we have accelerated the programme to install over 2000 windows and doors by June 2025.
2. We will proactively utilise the Communications Framework to publicise our work through our website and social media, encouraging feedback from tenants and residents.
3. We will develop clear communication of the options available for customers, and enhance quantitative reporting, responding in real-time to customers' comments through the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).

## **C21. What arrangements are in place to enable residents to hold management to account for the provision of services?**

We operate a reception service and telephone service where customers can escalate their concerns and complaints. We did run an optional 3rd stage to our complaints process where customers were able to sit with a service director in addition to a resident board member, where they could then share their concerns. Unfortunately, with the changes to the complaints code, we have removed this stage of the complaints process as per the Housing Ombudsman instructions. We also have regular resident drop-in sessions that are held by our resident engagement officer up and down the estate, in addition to neighbourhood 'walk and talks' and on-site resident



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meetings at our high rise and older person schemes. Our scrutiny panel also review our provision of services and will hold us to account and highlight areas of concern and improvement.

**C22. In the last 12 months, how many complaints has the national Ombudsman determined that maladministration took place, and how have these complaints resulted in change of practice within the housing provider?**

One complaint. We developed a whole new commercial team, where leaseholders will be better served and looked after. Previously, they fell under our housing team and were not getting enough of a bespoke service. We now run a minimum of 2 leaseholder meetings per year where invites are sent to all leasehold properties well in advance.

**Theme 7: Resident Support**

**C23. What are the key support services that the housing provider offers to its residents, and how successful are these services in improving outcomes?**

Compass provide a range of support services for local residents, with each service working to achieve specific outcomes. Services consist of Family Support, Health & Wellbeing, Employment Support and a Youth team. In addition, we have two community hubs where activities and events are held for the community.

Family Support provide support to local families through the Birmingham Early Help scheme, which assists families who may need some extra help which may require the involvement of a number of organisations. The service at Compass consists of Community Connectors working with local schools and other professionals to promote the offer and working with families to connect them to local services



through signposting/referral. The team includes family support workers who provide up to 6 months support for families where required. Outcomes can be wide ranging with help provided

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but not limited to, school attendance, home and life relationships, wellbeing, finances, employment support. During the 2023/24 financial year, 123 families have received one to one support through our support workers. A total of 773 families have been supported through the Early Help scheme.

The Health & Wellbeing service covers a range of projects focused on improving residents' wellbeing, including physical and mental health.

Key projects during the last 12 months

consisted of our Social Prescribing service, Wellbeing First, Independent Living Support and the Household Support Fund. A number of other targeted projects were also active simultaneously, examples include Long Covid project, Joy to the Vale (Christmas hamper project) and Active Castle Vale. As a whole, the service has seen a total of 5467 engagements in wellbeing activities, demonstrating the reach of the service in the community.



Of the key projects, Social Prescribing supports residents in six GP surgeries with one is specifically in Castle Vale. Compass Link workers connect people to activities, groups and services in the community to meet the specific needs of the individual with the overall aim of improving their wellbeing and reducing pressure on GP surgeries in terms of patients presenting with non-medical needs. The project has seen 783 individuals accessing the service with 728 receiving targeted support.

The Independent Living Support service supports vulnerable adults to be able to continue living independently at home for as long as possible. The team aims to address a diverse range of needs to assist residents. Frequent areas of need include support and guidance with financial needs / benefit entitlements, mobility aids/adaptations to the home and addressing social isolation. 94 residents have been supported in the year, of which 30 cases have been closed with outcomes achieved. 16 of these closed cases resulted in maximising income, either through addressing debts or providing assistance with benefit entitlements. A further 107 received assistance for various issues with 58 of these relating to income maximisation.

The Employment Support service supports residents who are either looking for employment and people in employment who require support to progress in their career. The service provides information, advice and guidance including job search, CV writing, IT skills, applying for jobs and

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interview skills. Additionally, there is a dedicated project to support those furthest away from the job market. In total 376 people have been supported by the service.

Finally, our Youth team provides support to young people under the age of 25 through various projects and activities. The service includes after school clubs tailored to specific age groups, school holiday clubs, evening football sessions as well as targeted support such as mentoring and sensory friendly activities for young people with additional needs. Outcomes are measured through regular participation, which reflects the effectiveness of the service provided. Through all Compass youth projects, during the year 1019 young people have engaged in activities.

## Theme 8: Placemaking

### C24. Describe the housing provider's community investment activities, and how the housing provider is contributing to positive neighbourhood outcomes for the communities in which its homes are located.



The Pioneer Group coordinates the local Voluntarily Sector Partnership, which meets bi-monthly. The Partnership is supported by the Head of Social Investment with their fundraising efforts which has helped generate £6m in investment over the last 5 years to support the delivery of positive neighbourhood outcomes. Part of this investment strategy has focused on place-shaping activities that improve community spaces. This includes:

- Investment in the community garden so that it can host positive activities for a range of groups including SEND children.
- Environmental improvements to the Conservation Area following an agreed Conservation Plan to enable it to become a Designated Nature Reserve.
- Volunteer work to unlock local paths to create improved walking routes for leisure and exercise.
- The creation of a new boating facility on the local canal that can accommodate Bell Boating and Kayaking.



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## **Theme 9: Structure and Governance**

### **C25. Is the housing provider registered with the national regulator of social housing?**

Yes, we are registered with the Regulator of Social Housing in England.

### **C26. What is the housing provider's most recent regulatory grading/status?**

We had an In Depth Assessment by the Regulator of Social Housing in July 2022 which provided the Pioneer Group with a G1 rating. A stability check in November 2023 by the RSH regraded the Pioneer Group's viability to V2.

### **C27. Which Code of Governance does the housing provider follow, if any?**

We have adopted a Code of Governance (NHF Code of Governance 2020), based on clear requirements and commitments which enable the board to demonstrate best-practice compliance as it applies to the housing sector.

### **C28. Is the housing provider a Not-For-Profit?**

Yes, the housing provider is Not-For-Profit.

### **C29. Explain how the housing provider's board manages ESG risks, and are ESG risks incorporated into the housing provider's risk register?**

Environmental: The Group has an approved Environmental Strategy looking at a range of environmental issues from Net Zero to flooding. The strategy has a number of measurable deliverables where the actions are monitored at governance level including flood risk and Net Zero as specific risks noted on the corporate risk register.

Governance risks are covered in all Board reports and where appropriate included in our strategic risk register. We have links to all relevant legislation and our regulatory framework is included in all our board reports.

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**C30. Has the housing provider been subject to any adverse regulatory findings in the last 12 months (data protection breaches, bribery, money laundering, HSE breaches etc.) - that resulted in enforcement or other equivalent action?**

The housing provider has not been subject to any adverse regulatory findings in the last 12 months that resulted in enforcement or other equivalent action (e.g. data protection breaches, bribery, money laundering, HSE breaches or notices).

**Theme 10: Board and Trustees**

**C31. How does the housing provider ensure it gets input from a diverse range of people into the governance processes?**

The Group has an EDI Strategy that sets out the Groups principles and approach and a supporting policy and action plan. The Group is committed to ensuring that its leadership and workforce reflect the diversity of Birmingham City.

We are also members of the Housing Diversity Network, an organisation that specialises in supporting us to promote diversity in recruitment, with mentoring and training, and we are signing up to a trainee board member programme through the network.

**Does the housing provider consider resident voice at the board and senior management level?**

The Pioneer Group has a resident led committee which has direct links into the Pioneer Group Board ensuring that the resident voice is heard at Board Level. The resident led committee also meet on a regular basis with the Scrutiny Panel.

**Does the housing provider have policies that incorporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) into the recruitment and selection of board members and senior management?**

Yes. All recruitment packs for Board Member positions set out that the Group is committed to equality and diversity and uses positive discrimination where appropriate such as encouraging applications from ethnic minorities. We also modify our recruitment approach depending on the Board we are recruiting to ensure that we reach a wide range of applications, such as streamline applications or requesting only a CV. We advertise all vacancies on our website and

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our social media platforms and share these with our Board Members and staff to share with their networks ensuring that we reach a wide audience.

Demographics of the board	
What % of the board are women?	40%
What % of the board are BAME?	30%
What % of the board have a disability?	Unavailable
Average age of the board	49
Average tenure of the board	4.7 years

### **C32. What % of the housing provider's Board and Senior Management Team turned over in the last two years?**

We've had a turnover of the Board and turnover of the executive leadership team in the past year.

Turnover	2023-24
Board members that have turned over in the last two years	10%
Senior Management team that have turned over in the last two years	20%

### **C33. Number of board members on the housing provider's Audit Committee with recent and relevant financial experience.**

4 of our Audit Committee members have recent and relevant financial experience.

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**C34. What % of the housing provider's board are non-executive directors?**

100% of the board members are non-executive directors.

**C35. Has a succession plan been provided to the housing provider's board in the last 12 months?**

Yes

**C36. For how many years has the housing provider's current external audit partner been responsible for auditing the accounts?**

2 years

**C37. When was the last independently-run, board-effectiveness review?**

An independent review of the Board and Board governance arrangements was undertaken last 2022. As recommended by NHF Corporate Code of Governance best practice, the Board undertakes externally facilitated board-effectiveness reviews every three years.

**C38. How does the housing provider handle conflicts of interest at the board?**

The Pioneer Group has a Probity Policy and a Board Conduct policy which sets out how conflicts of interest should be managed. Our policies consider conflicts of interest and dualities of interest. Any conflict or dualities of interest need to be declared to the Head of Governance & Assurance as soon as they become apparent. The Head of Governance & Assurance also requires all Board Members annually to update their declarations of Interest. Members are required to declare any relevant personal relationships, employment and other appointments they hold, and confirm that these do not interfere with their ability to perform or conflict with their role as a board member.

All Members are also required to declare any interests at the start of each Board meeting.

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## **Theme 11: Staff Wellbeing**

### **C39. Does the housing provider pay the Real Living Wage?**

We ensure that all our staff are paid the Real Living Wage.

### **C40. What is the housing provider's median gender pay gap?**

As of 31 March 2024, the gender pay gap is 5%.

### **C41. What is the housing provider's CEO: median-worker pay ratio?**

The CEO-worker pay ratio demonstrates the pay dispersion between the CEO and the organisation's median earner. At 31<sup>st</sup> Mar 2024, our CEO-worker pay ratio is 4.5:1.

### **C42. How is the housing provider ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is promoted across its staff?**

Pioneer has an active EDI Working Group and an action plan and supporting procedure. Pioneer also has a Diversity Group which supports with arranging EDI events to raise awareness and diversity celebration events. Recent events that have been held include Black History Month celebrations, Menopause awareness and Diwali celebrations. All staff received EDI training when they join the organisation, with period refresher training.

### **C43. How does the housing provider support the physical and mental health of its staff?**

We aim to support our staff in terms of their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Pioneer has internal trained MNHFA and Wellbeing Champions who can support staff. All new staff are buddied with one of these representatives during their probation. All line managers attend a mental health champions training delivered by the charity Mind. Pioneer offers all staff a health cash plan which includes an Employee Assistance line.

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#### **C44. How does the housing provider support the professional development of its staff?**

Training is identified through one to one and annual review discussions. Where training is identified, employees are asked to complete a training request form. Once approved, the organisation considers the best way to meet the employee's development, including considering internal and external training events, courses and programmes of study. If external training is considered the best option, the People team book the training and sponsors the employee.

### **Theme 12: Supply Chain Management**

#### **C45. How is social value creation considered when procuring goods and services, and what measures are in place to monitor the delivery of this Social Value?**

We are committed to deliver social value and drive social change through our procurement policies and processes.

A minimum 5% of quality scoring is allocated to social value in all procurement activities including but not limited to:

- Local job creation
- Investment in local supply chains
- Volunteering
- Monetary donations to Pioneer community events
- Donations in kind
- Conservation initiatives
- Carbon reduction initiatives

Our approach to measuring social value makes use of a mix of methodologies that provide both social and economic measures of impact, expressed in monetary terms.

One part of our methodology uses the HACT Wellbeing Valuation (WV) which focuses on two components, allowing us to quantify the savings to the Exchequer and the increase in a person's wellbeing due to a social intervention. National surveys are analysed to isolate the effect of a particular factor on a person's wellbeing. Analysis then reveals the equivalent amount of money needed to increase someone's wellbeing by the same amount.



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Alongside this we use the Unit Cost Database (UCD), based on the TOMs (Themes, Outcomes & Measures) framework. This allows us to assess the social value generated from our social investment, calculating the saving to the Treasury based on our interventions using financial proxies.

## **C46. How is sustainability considered when procuring goods and services?**

### **What measures are in place to monitor the sustainability of your supply chain when procuring goods and services?**

We are committed to ensure that we consider our environmental impact through our procurement policies and processes.

A minimum 5% of quality scoring is allocated to environmental impact in all procurement activities.

1. Bidders shall demonstrate their commitment to ISO 14001 and or equivalent policy.
2. Bidders shall demonstrate their commitment to net zero/carbon neutrality.
3. Bidders shall demonstrate how they will promote and implement sustainable measures including:
  - Green technologies
  - Recycling/reusing
  - Avoiding landfill
  - Using clean energy/transportation
  - Bidders shall explain how the proposed methods will be measured and the outcomes reported.

A minimum 5% of quality scoring is allocated to sustainable supply chain in all procurement activities.



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## Compass Metrics

A core part of the Pioneer group is Compass Support, who since 2004, we have been providing opportunities that enable people to make a positive change in their lives.

Our opportunities - employment, family support, health and well-being, children and young people, independent living, and access to a variety of provision through our community hubs - are tailored to the individual, looking at the whole person, providing the full package.

During the year we supported many individuals across a range of support services, as detailed below.

### Employment

Of those supported by Compass Employment team, 27 adults moved into employment during the year. A total of 57 adults achieved a positive outcome either through employment, training or volunteering placements. 35 adults reported an improvement in wellbeing as a result of the support provided by the service.

### Health & Wellbeing

A total of 2523 participants achieved a positive outcome through the community groups and activities available. For our targeted support service, Social Prescription, 60 service users reported an improvement in wellbeing captured through the WEMWBS Assessment.

### Youth

Of the total of 1,019 young people that have engaged in youth services, some attended a range of both targeted and generic youth services and therefore achieved positive outcomes from both areas. From this engagement, there was a total of 1,024 positive outcomes, with all of those attending achieving at least one positive outcome from the service.

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### Family Support

A total of 34 positive disengagements were recorded for the year. This figure captures the cases closed in the year. A total of 34 cases were closed and all of these reported a positive outcome, demonstrating the success of the team and the impact the service has to the families supported.

20 families experienced an improvement in school attendance of their child/children following engagement with the service. Improvement was recorded where children attended school more frequently than prior to receiving support.

### Independent Living

A total of 30 positive disengagements were recorded for the year. A total of 30 adults disengaged in the year, all of which were positive, having benefitted from the support provided. From 14 feedback questionnaires completed, all 14 stated good or excellent for the service they received.



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## Contact Information

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