

# Annual Tenant Report

2022-23





## Who are CVCH?

Castle Vale Community Housing is a brand of the Pioneer Group, operating in Castle Vale. The Pioneer Group 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 sheltered 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

Firstly, may I warmly welcome you to the Annual Tenants Report from the year 2022-23. It was a very busy year, and a key challenge lay in supporting tenants and residents to meet the challenges of the Cost of Living Crisis. We established a Cost of Living Taskforce to bring together and coordinate support through Compass Support and our partners at Spitfire Services. We also partnered with the University of Birmingham who conducted in-depth research into the

experience of residents who make use of support services across the Castle Vale estate.

We recognised the challenges in responding to reports about damp and mould, particularly in the light of the tragic death in Rochdale of Awaab Ishak and the national publicity surrounding the case. We continued to investigate all reported cases through our specialist contractors and we put in place remedial actions to support households who were having problems.

Our Board approved a significant investment in a replacement windows and doors programme over a 2-year period from Spring 2024. This is a challenging programme to deliver, but we strongly believe that it is the right approach to take to ensuring that homes are warmer and better insulated over a two-year rather than a five-year time period.

We had our regular four-yearly inspection from the Regulator for Social Housing, and we were very pleased to be confirmed with the strongest rating for being financially stable (V1) and a well governed organisation (G1).

We were pleased to be able to let new properties at Slade Road in Erdington, as well as at Pixhall Walk on the Castle Vale estate. We remain committed to providing new housing to meet the huge challenges of housing need in Birmingham.

Our Annual Tenant Survey saw a small drop in overall satisfaction with our services, from 85% to 83% overall. However, we were pleased that there was no change to satisfaction with the repairs service.

Following feedback from tenants saying that we needed to improve on how we keep people informed about the things that matter to them, we commissioned a new Communications Framework. This is aimed at creating a structure for communicating with tenants that would help people to feel more in touch with how we are working to improve services. We have now appointed a new Communications Team and we hope this will help us to respond more effectively and to provide more regular feedback on the issues that matters to tenants and residents.

*Simon Wilson*



# Meet CVCH Board

## Our Board Members 2022/23

- Fern Watson
- Cliff Horrocks
- Jane Roche
- Gary Dulson
- Nicolette Browne-Marke
- Janine Green



## A message from Chair of CVCH Board, Fern Watson

CVCH Board had a busy year, moving back to in-person meetings which the Board found helpful in ensuring good oversight and governance. We were pleased to appoint Janine Green as an independent member and to make Cliff Horricks our Vice-Chair. Both have a strong experience in delivering services in community focussed social housing organisations.

A priority for the Board was to support tenants and residents in meeting the Cost of Living challenges. Quarterly reports were received on Income Collection, and there was a strong focus on partnership work to support communities who were facing pressures due to unprecedented cost increased. The production and delivery of a support pack to residents across the Castle Vale estate was particularly welcomed, as well as support through Money Advice, Crisis Funds and Compass Support services.

The Board oversaw the implementation of new contracts for Grounds Maintenance and Communal Cleaning. They were encouraged that there was a good response to the procurement process and that resident involvement in the selection process would help to achieve improvements in standards of delivery.

The Board took a keen interest in the roll out of the Resident Engagement Strategy and were particularly pleased to meet with the new

Scrutiny Group in March 2023. The Scrutiny Group have adopted the name of Searchlight Castle Vale and they reported to the Board on a review of the newly tendered grounds maintenance service. The recommendations were warmly welcomed, and the implementation of improvements will be monitored by the group.

The Board have actively challenged the timescale of the implementation of the Stock condition survey, the rent increase along with how data is presented to the Board and the Community. The Board's role to ensure that the 'Tenants Voice' as part of the Consumer Standards is being thoroughly pursued and reviewed, in line with the Social Housing Regulation Act.

The Board were instrumental in the decision to increase and bring forward a major investment in the windows and doors programme. It was recognised that taking the project forward in this way would create challenges, and that the initial contracting would take longer to achieve. However, the overall benefits of condensing the programme into a two-year time frame was felt to bring substantial long term benefits, particularly in the context of cost of living pressures.

*Fern Watson*

# Resident involvement

2022/23 saw us continue to grow and develop our approach to resident involvement. Searchlight Castle Vale began work on a number of activities throughout the year which are helping us improve our service offer to customers.

Following the recruitment of our new Neighbourhoods team, resident Walk and Talks began to take place again.

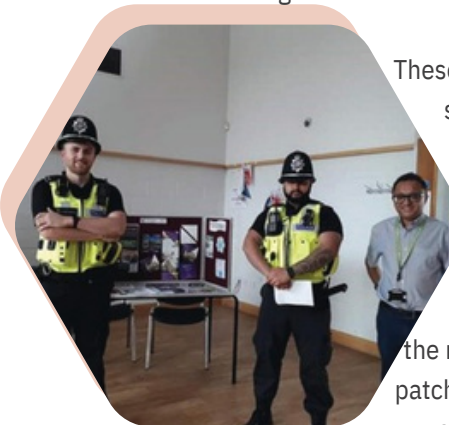
These walks have been a success so far and are an opportunity

for residents to have their say and provide us with insight on what they feel needs improving on their patch. Keep an eye out on

the next walk happening on your patch. You can find details on our website, social media channels

or by contacting our Resident Engagement Officer, Vikash Mistry on **0121 748 8100** or

**Vikash.Mistry@cvch.org.uk..**



## Searchlight Castle Vale

Searchlight Castle Vale, have been working with us 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. Searchlight 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:

Conducting an in-depth report on our Grounds Maintenance service. This has led to tighter monitoring of the contract and we will be recruiting 'Green Inspectors' off the back of the work carried out.



Reviewing our rent letters.

A more focussed programme of work is scheduled for 23/24.



## Block Champions

Our block champions continue to help us monitor the performance of our cleaning contractors, by providing weekly feedback on the works carried out by the contractors.

In the year 2022-23, we received 158 completed surveys from block champions, this feedback is shared with our Estates team who relay back to the cleaning contractor on a regular basis. We are always looking to recruit Block Champions, if this is of interest to you then please scan the QR Code below and register your details.





## 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 £50,000 investment is made into the community to fund these services.

This year's contribution has provided the community with a total of

**£666,780**

of funded services for residents including:

Compass Contribution: **£400,000**



Debt Advice: **£50,000**



Community Safety / CCTV: **£99,759**



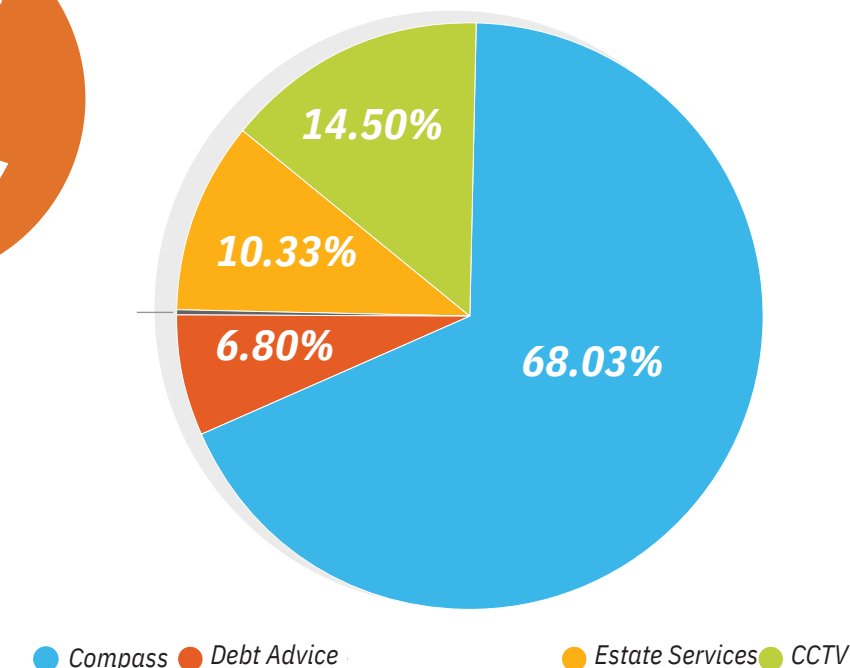
The Stadium **£10,147**



Additional Estate Services **£106,874**



### Distribution of Pledge Expenditure



● Compass ● Debt Advice ● Estate Services ● CCTV

## Castle Vale Community Offer

### Compass

Throughout the year the support we provided to some of the most vulnerable members of our community continued to grow and develop to reflect the local need. Through our regular consultancy work with residents, we further understood gaps in local provision and developed new services accordingly.

### Health & Wellbeing

The peer-to-peer support groups that have been running this year have been instrumental in meeting the needs of the local community, with



a focus on Prescription service in the area. During the year we received 690 referrals from six local practices, supporting these patients to improved physical and mental wellbeing. Our Independent Living Team supported over 100 adults during the year.

### Counselling

Our innovative counselling model supported over 82 citizens, delivering 634 hours of support, while providing work-based practice to five students, often dealing with longstanding trauma to embed coping strategies.



### Warm Spaces

Our Warm Space activities were provided with support from the City Council as part of its Warm Welcome initiative, providing weekly activities for different age groups in a friendly, warm space. Staff provided support and guidance. The average weekly attendance was 128. This offer was further enhanced by the Winter Food fund, providing hot drinks and food at some activities.

### Fundraising

The Partnerships Team helped secure a total of £397,187 external funding to support the delivery of our community offer.



Our team worked with BVSC on the Household Support Fund with more than £800,000 given to 4,000 vulnerable residents. We have continued to deliver the Erdington Neighbourhood Network Scheme to develop the support which enables people to lead happy, healthy, independent lives.

### Family Support

The voluntary and community sector partnership with Birmingham Children's Trust continued and we were able to signpost 598 families for support. Our Early Help Community Connectors delivered over 75 training sessions in the local area, building the capacity and knowledge of local assets to meet the needs of local families

### Community Hubs

Our community hubs became registered as Warm Welcome Sites, part of the Government's Warm Spaces Scheme, allowing for us to provide hot meals and snacks in a warm and welcoming environment.



### Children & Young People

Over 1,100 young people were supported by the team of Youth Workers at Compass Support. This support ranged from mentoring and one-to-one support through to supporting groups and individuals with their mental health needs and overall wellbeing.



The team delivered a range of physical and wellbeing activities and sessions, as well as taking the young

people on a variety of different trips and providing enrichment opportunities. The past year saw the universal offer for local young people develop to a more inclusive provision, further increasing accessibility for young people with neurodivergent conditions. The Youth Team joined forces with the Employment to engage with 50 young adults aged 18-30 years through our

### Employment Support

The Employment Team supported over 300 people, providing 1-1 coaching to help them get into work through the Ignite Aspirations project, in partnership with Witton Lodge Community Association. We also delivered our Get Healthy Get Working programme, which aims to improve people's wellbeing and build their skills to get paid employment, voluntary work or further training to achieve their career goals. The programme includes computer skills, help to find work and interview skills.

'Stand Out' programme, supporting people into employment and volunteering opportunities linked to the Commonwealth Games.

## Customer 1st Team

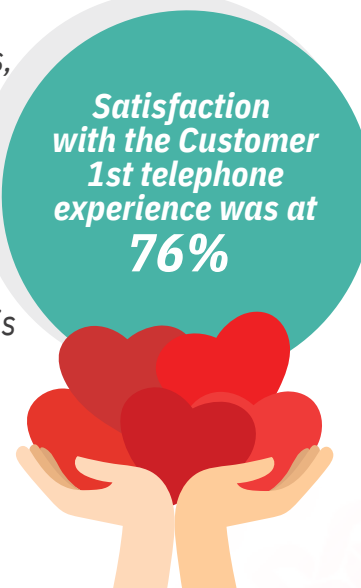


The Customer 1st team welcomed over 6,500 customers in the High Street Reception in 22/23 and answered over 22,000 telephone calls, giving us a total of 28,705 customer interactions.

In addition to this, the team continued to increase the output of customer satisfaction surveys, completed over 350 Annual Tenant Surveys, 835 Responsive Repairs surveys, 254 Gas Servicing / Repairs Surveys, as well as over 100 surveys, that covered New Home, Complaints and ASB surveys.



With each survey that is completed, we build a better understanding of which areas of our service need more focus.



### 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

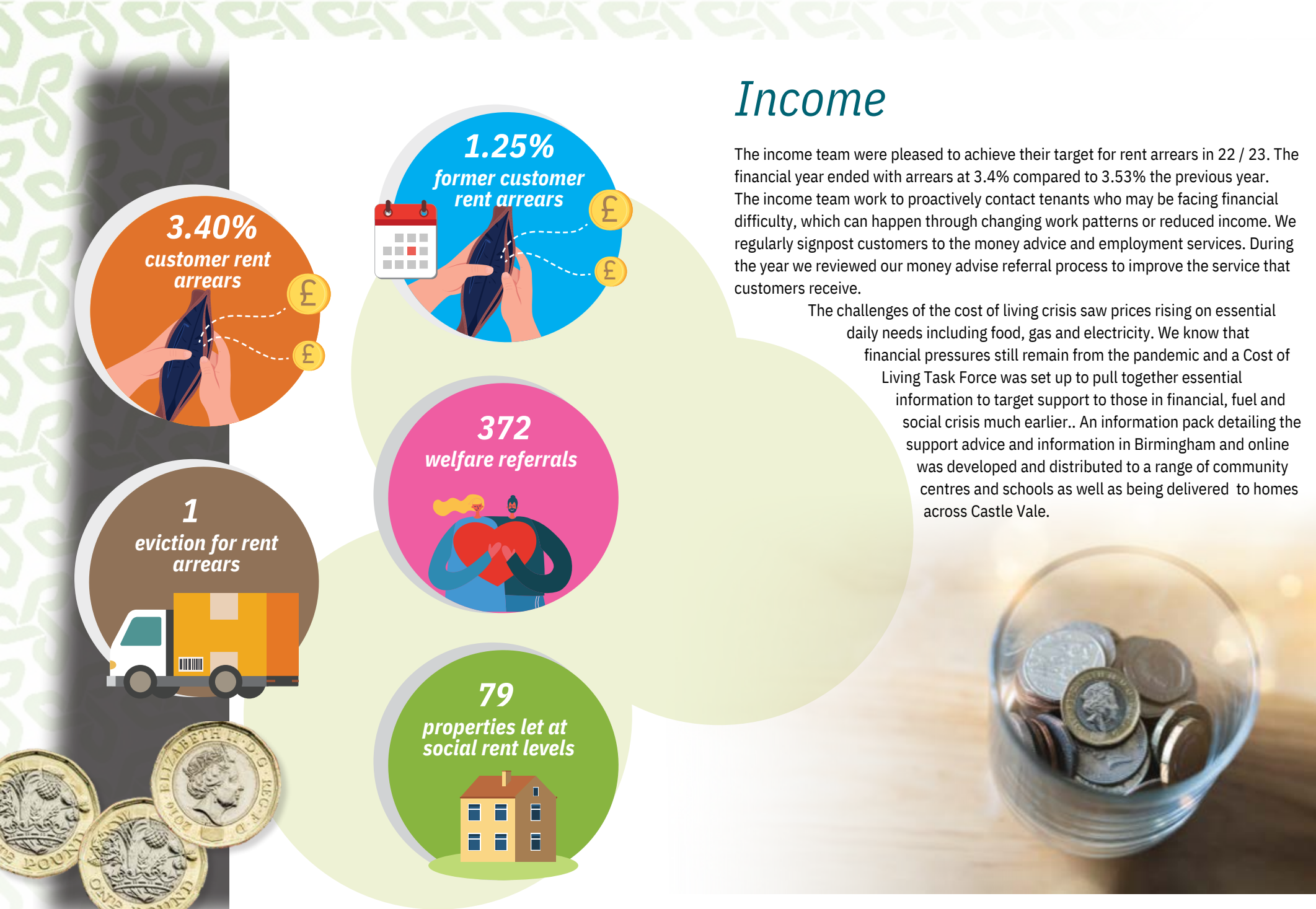
[www.cvch.org.uk](http://www.cvch.org.uk)  
**0121 748 8100**  
[contactus@cvch.org.uk](mailto:contactus@cvch.org.uk)



### 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.





## 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.*



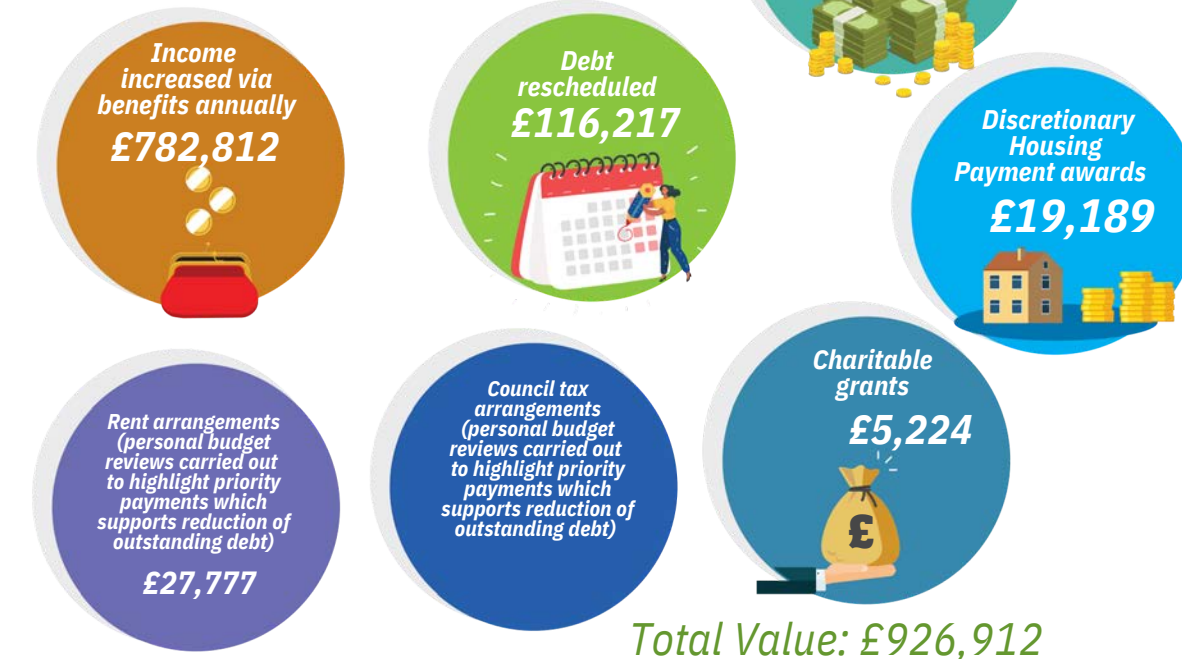
The Money Advice Service is a key part of our income collection and financial inclusion strategy. Working in partnership with Spitfire Services to provide a Money Advice Service, ensures we continue to have this offer for our customers. This offer is available to all our customers, from the start of a new tenancy and can be accessed all through the lifespan of a customer's tenancy with the Pioneer Group. Where customers are experiencing financial difficulty, we always advice they get in touch as soon as, so we can discuss their individual needs and signpost to the money advice service so they can



understand how to manage their finances as well as ensuring that they are maximising their income.

2022 / 2023 saw the number of referrals increase almost double from the previous year. This was mostly due to the financial pressures experienced from the remains of the pandemic along with the added cost of living pressure from the rising cost of energy (gas and electric), food and fuel following shortages due to the war in Ukraine.

*The Money Advice service gained the following for customers*



These figures demonstrates how engaging with the service can help put money directly into customers' pockets. The strength of the partnership continues to grow and from the testimonial below we continue to see positive outcomes and value. Client X suffered the loss of her husband last December. She had custody of two Grand-daughters and was claiming Child Benefit and Tax Credits, Disability Living Allowance and Careers Allowance. We advised her to also claim for the Bereavement Support Payment. The client was successfully awarded the Higher rate of bereavement support payment of £3500. In addition, she continued to receive her Universal Credit monthly payments.. This had a positive impact on the clients' finances as the referral allowed the advice team to maximise her income, making her feel less stressed and anxious about her finances.



## Estate Services

*The Estates Team are responsible for ensuring Castle Vale remains a clean, green and safe place to live. We continued to ensure this was kept at the forefront of what we do in 22/23.*

**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**



The Estates Team are responsible for ensuring Castle Vale remains a clean, green and safe place to live. We continued to ensure this was kept at the forefront of what we do in 22/23.

We have tendered for a new Grounds Maintenance and Cleaning Contractor, carried out over 120 minor repairs to make communal areas safe and worked in partnership with community organisations and external partners to maintain these sites. The purchase of a new Karcher sweeper machine has aided this.

This year we have achieved a 100% success rate on block inspections for fire safety and rolled out new Fire Safety Talks with all new residents. We are also working towards giving the same advice to all our residents in Complex Buildings.

New service provision that has been established includes co-ordinating

the completion of items picked up through inspections and compliance reports. It's been a great for our railing programme too with added value and benefit courtesy of internal painting works. Once again the team hit their 100% target.

We have also arranged and delivered on projects to tackle neglected areas with assistance from the Community Environment Trust. Our free bulk collections service has thrived, addressing concerns around fly-tipping on private and city council land while issues being reported via the 'Fix my street' app have risen.

We have also worked closely with the Neighbourhood Police Team, sharing information to ensure Castle Vale remains a safe place to live.



## Repairs & Maintenance

*Throughout 2022/23 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.*

For the year to date, repairs completed on the same day totals 84.5%

For the year to date, the number of customers who said they were satisfied with the repairs they received stands at 87%

Throughout 2022/2023 we have been working with our day to day and voids contractor Wrekin Housing Group. We have monthly reviews discuss or challenges, Key Performance Indicators and any Health & Safety requirements.

There has been a challenge with first time fixes this year, which has been recognised by ourselves and the contractor. One of the main reasons for this, is due to the age and wear & tear of the current window and doors we have got on our stock. We are rolling out a large window and door programme next year (2024) to help assist with this issue.

From the beginning of this financial year we have raised and attended to 3700 repairs so far.

### How did we do?

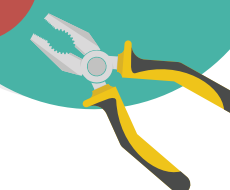
**Repairs Completed Same Day**

**84.5%**



**Customers Satsfied With Repairs**

**87%**



**Fire Safety Works Completed**

**100%**



### Performance Information

**3,700**

**Repairs raised and attended during the year**





## Gas Service & Maintenance

Status Heating carried out 2362 services over the last 12 months, with additional repairs taking an average of just 2.7 days to complete. Combined with a resident satisfaction rate of 93%, 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 in recent times 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 are taken to court 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

Throughout 2022/23 we have continued with our intensive programme of electrical testing across the estate. We completed over 400 electrical tests to ensure that the homes that we provide are safe, further demonstrating our commitment to providing Great, Safe Homes, we are now into the second year of our contract with our electrical contractor, Laker (BMS) Ltd who now have a team of electricians working across the programme assisting 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.



- **Planned Works**

2022/23 has seen over £1.2 million spent on major investment works to our properties which has included, new kitchens, bathrooms and roof replacements, a communal door entry replacement programme and the installation of over 160 properties with new windows and doors.



## Aids and Adaptations



Following close work with Birmingham City Council, we completed 34 aids and adaptations to our properties in 2022/23. These include grab rails, stair lifts and wet rooms to ground floor extensions and floor lifts. This work has resulted in a total cost saving of £132,000 for The Pioneer Group.

### Fire Safety

We have completed 100% Fire Risk Assessments in all of our blocks, resulting in a large number of actions being reported which required action, including the repair and replacement of fire doors. If you are contacted for such work to be done please can you make sure you are available to give access.

### Smoke/Heat/Co Alarms

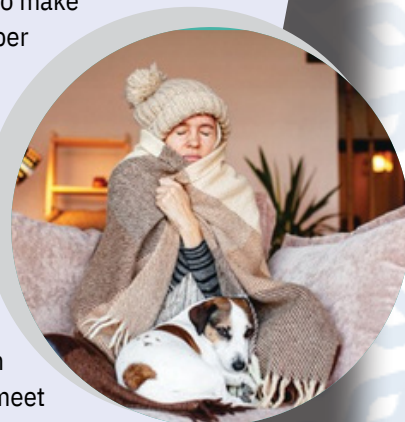
It is imperative that as a CVCH tenant, you let us know immediately if you do not have a functional, working smoke, heat or co alarms in your property so we can arrange for these to be replaced as a matter of urgency.

### Fuel Poverty

As part of our commitment to Great Homes, we have been working hard to understand the energy efficiency of our properties right across the stock. We have been doing this by collecting Energy Performance Certificates (EPC). These certificates enable us to identify where we need to make improvements to make homes more efficient and cheaper to heat. We are already working hard to address some of the homes that we have already identified by carrying out improvement works with the help of a Government grant to the tune of £700k. you will be able to see this work start in April of next year to our flats above garage homes.

This work will include increasing insulation as well as fitting solar panels.

Our work doesn't end there though, we are working with a specialist consultant to understand how we can best meet Government targets of ensuring that all homes meet an EPC rating of "C" by 2030 and Net Zero by 2050.

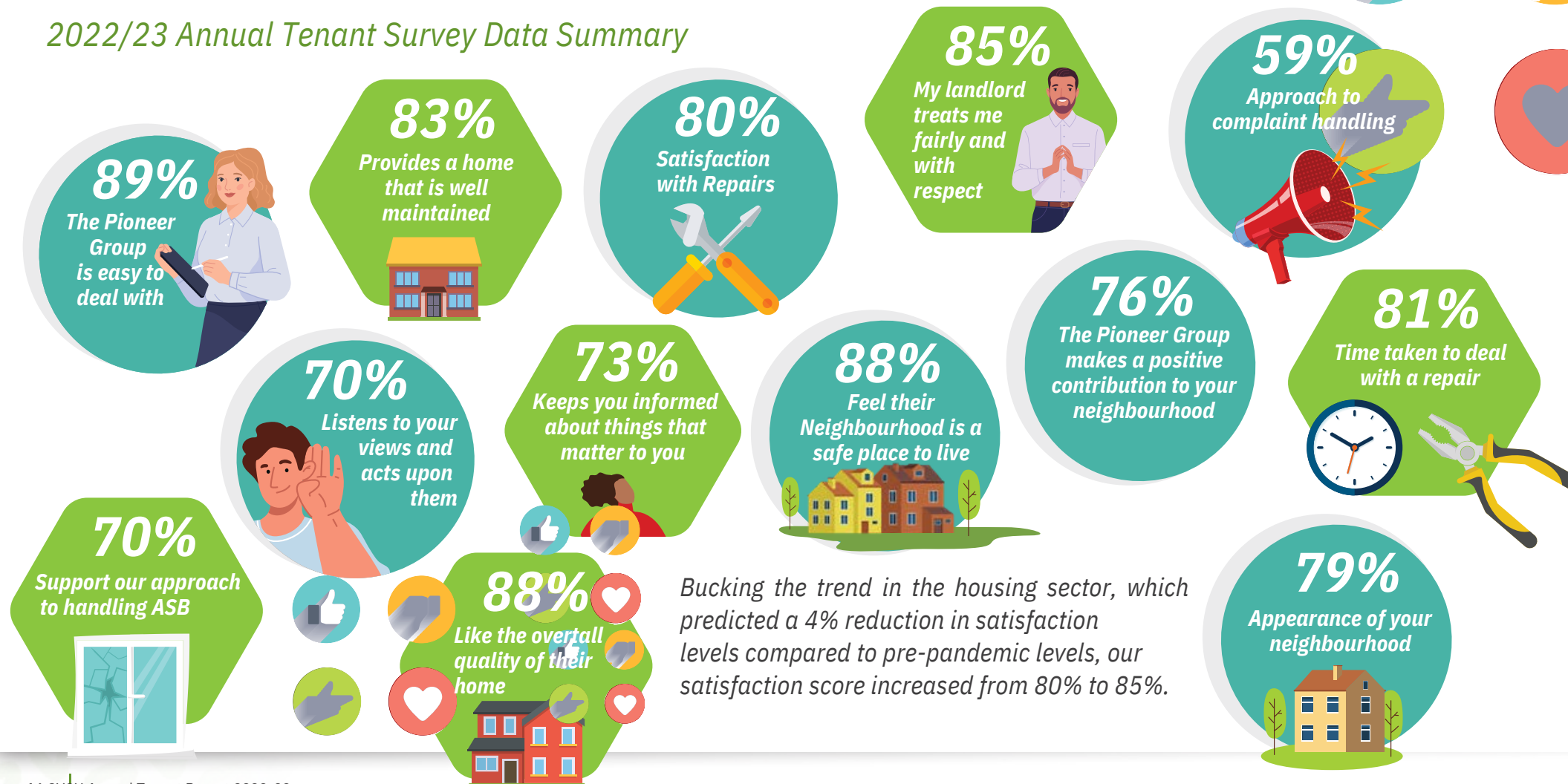




# Results of the Survey

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.

## 2022/23 Annual Tenant Survey Data Summary



## Examples of anti-social behaviour can include:



Loud Noise



Vandalism



Litter

## Anti-Social Behaviour

A key area of activity for our Housing Management Team is supporting tenants who are suffering as a result of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). We recognise that ASB can make life miserable, and that it comes in many forms. We have information on our website to help tenants to understand how to get help and who they can report to.

At Castle Vale Community Housing we have a responsibility to help prevent ASB by keeping the neighbourhood and communal areas under our control safe and clean. Tenancy agreements set out our expectations about the behaviour of tenants. We can take action against people who do not comply if we can gather evidence, and we have the right to seek to evict a tenant in serious cases.

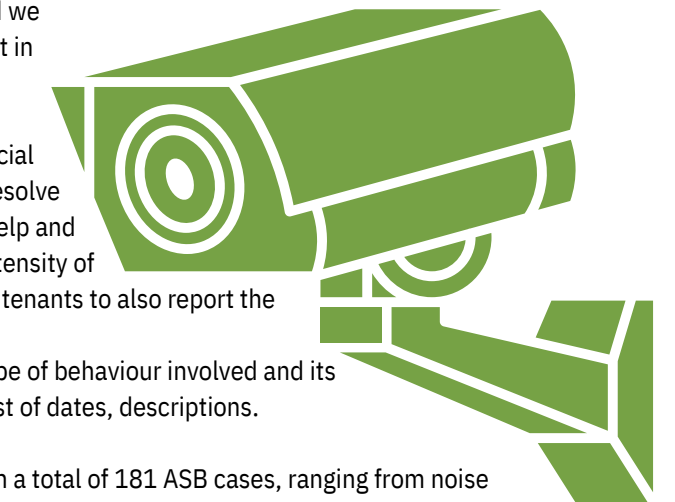
Tenants who are experiencing anti-social behaviour and haven't been able to resolve the situation, should contact us for help and advice. Depending on the type and intensity of the anti-social behaviour we may ask tenants to also report the incident to the police or the Council.

It is helpful to keep a record of the type of behaviour involved and its frequency including, for example, a list of dates, descriptions.

During the year 2022/23 we dealt with a total of 181 ASB cases, ranging from noise nuisance to drugs and substance abuse. We worked closely in partnership with the local Neighbourhood Police Team and with colleagues at Birmingham City Council.



We also participated in the Local Community Safety Partnerships as a formal mechanism for agencies acting together to support the promotion of community safety, specifically across North Birmingham.



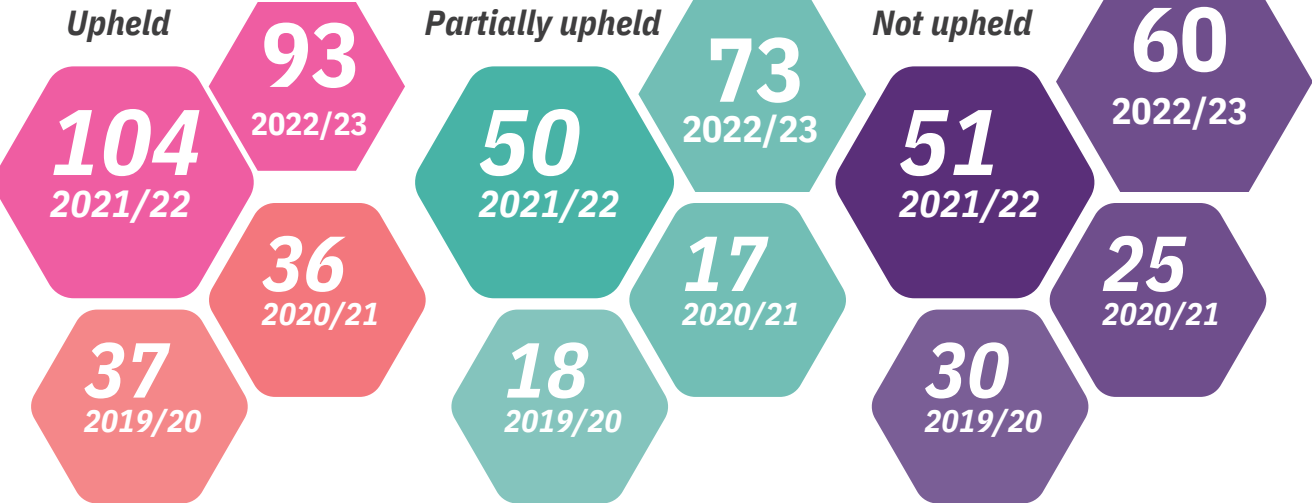


# Complaints Data

## 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.



## You told us...

You wanted more information about follow-on repairs jobs

We've created new process for contacting you with details about follow-on repairs

Some staff on our Out of Hours Service needed to improve their attitude

Feedback was given to the Out of Hours contractors and we have had no further complaints

We should be better at communicating with you

Training in communication skills is being arranged for our staff

We needed to strengthen our leasehold management arrangements.

We have re-structured the team so there is now a dedicated resource for the management of leasehold properties.

Our Notice to Quit letters were not clear about tenant requirements

Letters have been amended to make clear what tenants need to do when they are leaving our properties



You can find a full copy of our Complaints Policy on our website by following the links from [www.cvch.org.uk](http://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](http://www.cvch.org.uk)



## Spending for The Pioneer Group



Development  
**£343,611**  
Market rent **£300,545**  
Stadium **£299,287**  
CCTV **£107,641**  
Home ownership **£25,000**  
Commercial lettings **£48,400**

Community regeneration  
**£1,458,848**

Leasehold properties  
**£83,308**

Depreciation on housing properties  
**£1,743,793**

Rent losses from bad debts  
**£14,203**

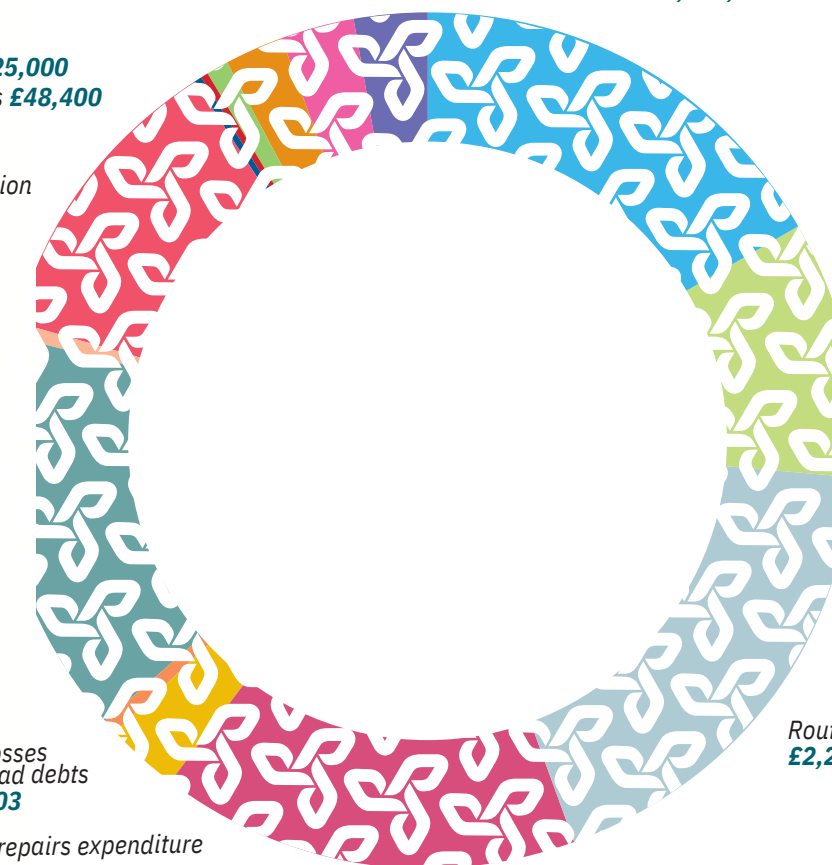
Major repairs expenditure  
**£340,108**

Planned maintenance  
**£1,296,080**

Housing Management  
**£2,065,879**

Services  
**£1,300,964**

Routine maintenance  
**£2,286,679**





## *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.



11 High Street | Castle Vale | Birmingham B35 7PR  
Tel: **0121 748 8100** Email: **[contactus@cvch.org.uk](mailto:contactus@cvch.org.uk)**  
**[www.cvch.org.uk](http://www.cvch.org.uk)**