

Inquilab Housing Association



INQUILAB

Annual Review for Residents

2021 - 2022



www.inquilabha.org

Foreword by Adnan Butt

Chair of the Residents Scrutiny Panel

As an Inquilab resident myself, I am pleased to continue to support the needs of other residents in my role as Chairperson for Inquilab's Residents Scrutiny Panel (RSP). I first take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank all our residents who get involved with the RSP and whose contribution has had a significant impact on the way Inquilab delivers its services for our residents.



Adnan Butt



If you're wondering what the RSP is all about, it's a group of residents who look at the services and policies that Inquilab have in place, to ensure that the organisation remains true to its values, purpose, and mission. This includes areas such as:

- Allocation and Letting
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Housing Service Management
- Repairs, Maintenance and Rent Collection
- Customer Care
- The Environment



Whilst the RSP reports to the Executive Management Team with a view to influencing its decision making, we work closely with the wider Inquilab team, who continue to work hard to provide the services and support you need.

Through our RSP we give our residents the opportunity to scrutinise the work Inquilab does, give it feedback and ideas which helps the organisation to build on the things that it does well, and to develop the areas where it can do better.

Looking at the year from April 2021 to the end of March 2022, it was another very tough year for everyone. The financial and health impact of the Covid pandemic hit hard; the rise in the cost of living and inflation set in; and the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has seen soaring food and fuel prices.

These issues brought a lot of hardship to many people's doors and, coupled with news headlines of poor housing conditions throughout the UK, it is not surprising that many of you have felt anxious and deeply concerned about your welfare and wellbeing.

I am particularly pleased that during this immensely challenging period, Inquilab has managed to maintain its services, prioritising those residents who were – and many of whom remain – most in need.



Some of Inquilab's initiatives like its 'In Touch' calls to check on the safety and wellbeing of our most vulnerable residents, and its commitment to a zero-tolerance approach to ASB, have been extremely well received.



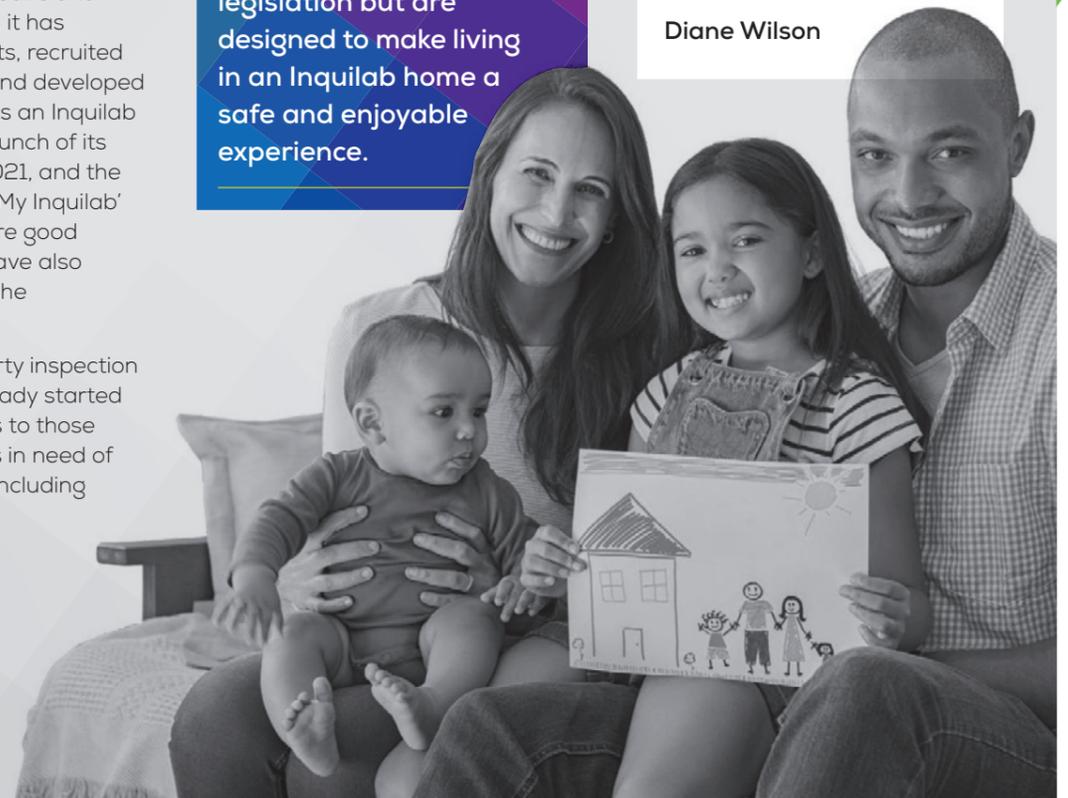
In 2021, with the added challenge of managing its own home-working and remote workforce – some of whom were still shielding or caring for others – another priority for Inquilab and for our RSP, was to ensure that the organisation is fit for the future in a post-Covid world. This meant making sure that it has the right people, structure, policies, and procedures to fully engage with, and support, its residents. And we're already seeing improvements as a result.

The organisation has improved its delivery times for repairs and maintenance requests, it has returned to on-site visits, recruited new housing officers, and developed ways to make our life as an Inquilab resident easier ... the launch of its new website in April 2021, and the subsequent launch of 'My Inquilab' App earlier this year, are good examples of this. We have also significantly improved the complaints process.

And, following a property inspection audit, Inquilab has already started a phased plan of works to those properties identified as in need of serious improvement, including damp and mould.

There is, however, more work to be done. Inquilab still needs to improve repairs and maintenance response times, and we need to find more ways to engage with our residents, to get your feedback and to ensure the organisation acts on it.

The RSP is here to support you, and to make sure that the governance and systems Inquilab has in place not only meet legislation but are designed to make living in an Inquilab home a safe and enjoyable experience.



Meet our Residents Scrutiny Panel

- Adnan Butt (Chair)
- Priscilla Ankrah
- Tamzin Davidson
- Anthony Hylton
- Josephine Okello
- Abhishek Pandit
- Jason Sylvester
- Diane Wilson

Review of the Year

Introduction from Chair and Chief Executive

When we wrote our introduction to our Residents Annual Review last year, we reflected upon the first lockdown and referred to extraordinary and unprecedented times. Who would have thought, back then, that twelve months later the same would be true.

There is no doubt that 2021 and early 2022 were extremely challenging years for the housing sector, and for our organisation.

The Covid pandemic continued to dominate the headlines with heightened concern for its variants and the impact these had, and are still having, on the UK population.

The ensuing economic and cost of living crisis has been further compounded by Russia's war with Ukraine which, together with escalating fuel and food prices, is bringing financial and wellbeing challenges to everyone's door.

As a housing association that supports some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in England, many of whom come from BME backgrounds, this economic uncertainty – coupled with the unpredictably high rising cost of living – has had, and continues to have, a serious impact on many of our residents' physical, mental, and financial health.

From a wider sector perspective, 2021 saw the national housing damp and disrepair crisis reach new levels of concern. A new legislation and the introduction of the Government's Social Housing White Paper, which was published in November 2020, has called for a much-needed change within the sector.

At Inquilab, we positively welcomed the paper and, specifically, its call to put residents' voice and influence at the heart of the sector's agenda, and to achieve greater accountability to residents through the new 2020 Code of Governance and its 'Together with Tenants' initiative.

2021 also saw Inquilab challenged by the ruling of a double-maladministration by the Ombudsman after an investigation determined our failure to respond to a resident's repair requests and our subsequent complaint handling. We commissioned an independent review of our complaints handling process and we have learned from the outcomes of this review.

As part of our commitment to continuous service improvements, we have (and will) continue to train and up-skill our people in the areas of complaints handling and investigation, customer service, and in communicating adequately with residents and the Ombudsman service.

Despite the challenges of the last year, we maintained most of our services to our residents, prioritising those most in need. It is, of course,



a collaborative effort and so it is appropriate to acknowledge the commitment and support from our colleagues, and delivery partners including Gilmartin's, Rose Property Services, and K&T Heating.

Some of our initiatives and ways in which we are improving our service to you – our residents – are contained in this review, which we hope you find interesting. We certainly welcome your feedback.



Pamela Leonce
CHAIR



Gina Amoh
CHIEF EXECUTIVE



We know that the challenging economic climate and pandemic are not over yet; but we remain committed to you, our residents, and to the wider communities, in supporting you with the services you need to enable you to live in a quality, safe, home and surrounding environment.

We will continue to strive to be a top performing organisation which puts you first; and we are proud of the way our residents and our colleagues here at Inquilab have managed during another difficult year.

To all our residents, we thank you for your continued support to us.



2021

2022

Highlights for 2021 / 2022

Despite the economic turbulence and challenges of the year, in 2021-22, we committed to:

- Improve the way we communicate and engage with our residents
- Better our service delivery response
- Develop our people and teams to deliver on the promises we make our residents
- Ensure financial stability to secure our investments in our properties, resident services, and in our employees.

Against this, we:

Invested in a new website, which was launched in early 2021, making information and advice more accessible for you.



Introduced a new complaints module, making it easier and more transparent for our residents to raise a complaint; and we now have a more robust module built into our CRM system to ensure that we deal with complaints consistently, transparently, and in a timely manner.



Strengthened our Board with three new appointments so that we continue to be well governed and accountable (plus one further appointment in July 2022)



Developed a new Residents App 'My Inquilab', which was launched in the Spring of 2022. 'My Inquilab' app gives you instant, easy, access to your tenancy account, raise and track repairs, view charges and payment, and to give us feedback on repairs and other services. Offering an instant, more efficient, way for you to get in touch with us and encourage a dialogue between us, we are now able to respond quicker to your enquiries, repair requests, and messages.

Restructured our team with a greater focus on customer services and delivery which has included a recruitment drive to better support the needs and requests of our residents, as well as a Building Safety Manager to work with our asset team to ensure our buildings comply with the latest fire and safety regulations.



Commenced development of 16 new homes with an investment of £4m to support our objective of providing quality homes for those in greatest need.



Invested in training and development so that our employees have the skills and breadth of understanding to deliver and manage our services – from developing new homes through to service and repair and including refreshed complaints handling training for all our customer service teams.



Maintained value for money and ensured our financial prudence so that we can continue to support our development programme for more, much needed, new homes.



Our Corporate Strategy

In early 2021 we launched a new Corporate Plan which sets out our organisation's mission, vision, and strategic objectives.

MISSION

To meet housing need and to support sustainable communities.

VISION

To deliver reliable services that customers value and trust.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



Our Corporate Plan has a commitment to ensuring:

- All our residents are safe in their home.
- We are transparent in our performance, including on repairs, complaints, and safety, and how we spend your money.
- Complaints are dealt with promptly and fairly, with access to a strong Ombudsman.
- Our residents are treated with respect, and that we support a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for tenants.
- To provide the platforms and opportunities to have our residents' voice heard
- To provide good quality homes and neighbourhoods to live in, and to keep our homes in good repair.
- To fully support the government in ensuring social housing can support people to take their first step to ownership.

OUR VALUES

SERVICE: Delivering services residents value and we are proud of

TRUST: Being open, honest and showing integrity

ACCOUNTABILITY: Taking ownership and responsibility

RESPECT: Showing care, commitment and fairness

STRENGTH: Building on the strength of people, legacy and resources

Getting on Board with a New Board

Inquilab is led and controlled by a Board which sets out our strategic direction, and ensures we are working to uphold our values, that we are well run, and that we meet the needs of our residents.

Inquilab residents can sit on the Board to work alongside independent professional people from a range of careers and backgrounds. Together, they bring different skills and experiences to help govern and steer our organisation. Board members are committed to ensuring we strive for constant improvement and that we remain legally compliant.



We are extremely proud to have a Board of Directors who are committed to making a difference to the lives of our residents and, in 2021 and early 2022, we were delighted to welcome new Board members*

Meet Inquilab Board Members:

- Pamela Leonce (Chair)
- Puneet Rajput (Senior Independent Director)
- Gina Amoh
- Katie Wilmot (Inquilab resident)
- Peta Caine
- Chyrel Brown*
- Jananara Rajkoomar*
- Wasiu Fadahunsi*
- Jack Stephen* [Joined July 2022]

You can read more about each of our Board members on our website www.inquilabha.org/about-us/our-people



Customer Committee

At Inquilab we feel it is crucial for residents to have the opportunity to influence the service you receive; after all, who knows the service better than our customers?

Our Customer Committee plays a critical role in providing a voice for our residents. It allows residents to raise issues of concern and monitor the improvements we make.

The committee liaises directly with the Board, which ensures that your comments and recommendations go directly to the top of our organisation.



"One of the key areas we focussed on in 2021 was improving communications including Inquilab's complaint process. It's now really good to see that a new website, a new resident App, regular newsletter communication, and a much more efficient complaint handling system, is resulting in better connection and engagement with one another!"

Chyrel Brown, Chair of Customer Committee

In 2021 / 2022, Our Customer Committee supported and helped the drive for:

- The development and roll out of a new Residents App to significantly improve the way you can manage your tenancy and get in touch with us
- The introduction of a new complaints-handling process
- Checking we are compliant with the social housing regulator's consumer standards
- Approving our organisation's new structure

Members of Inquilab's Customer Committee:

- Chyrel Brown (Chair)
- Zakia Raja (Independent committee member and resident)
- Jananara Rajkoomar
- John Barr

If you would like to get involved with Inquilab or have an issue to raise with one of our resident groups, please get in touch with us at engagementandcommunities@inquilabha.org.



How We're Investing in Technology to Support You

It takes a lot of resource to run a housing association and, with 1,400 properties, it can only be done with the right people and the right technology to support you – our residents.

In the last year we have not only restructured and strengthened our team with the appointment of new housing officers and support staff, but we've also been busy behind the scenes investing in technology and developing new ways to communicate with you. Here's how:

Our New Website

We were proud to kick off our new year in April 2021 with the launch of our new website, which has been designed to make it easier for you to find the information you're looking for.

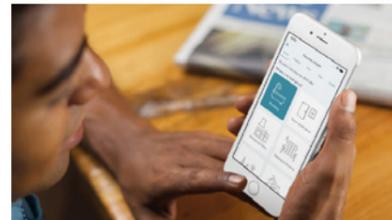
If you are a resident, you now have your own area of the website RESIDENT INFORMATION which, on a single click, will take you through to all the information you need about your home, raising repair requests, safety, community initiatives, important notices, and ways to pay your rent ... plus lots more including help and advice on a range of issues.

If you haven't yet visited our new website, you can browse its content at www.inquilabha.org.

My Inquilab Residents App

We developed our 'My Inquilab' app after listening to our residents who told us that they wanted a more intuitive, and easy to use, system.

With this in mind, and with so much more innovation and technology now available to us, we wanted to give you a more user-friendly and modern app-based approach.



Launched in Spring 2022, 'My Inquilab' app gives you instant, easy, access to your tenancy account, enabling you to message us directly, raise and track your repairs, view the charges and payments you have made on your rent account, and give us feedback on repairs and other services. It is also the quickest and most efficient way to get in touch with us.

The app is free and can be downloaded onto a Smartphone or any app-enabling device; and you can simply use its features at the touch of a single button, anywhere.

You can find out more about how to download and use the app from our website at www.inquilabha.org

Monthly E-newsletter

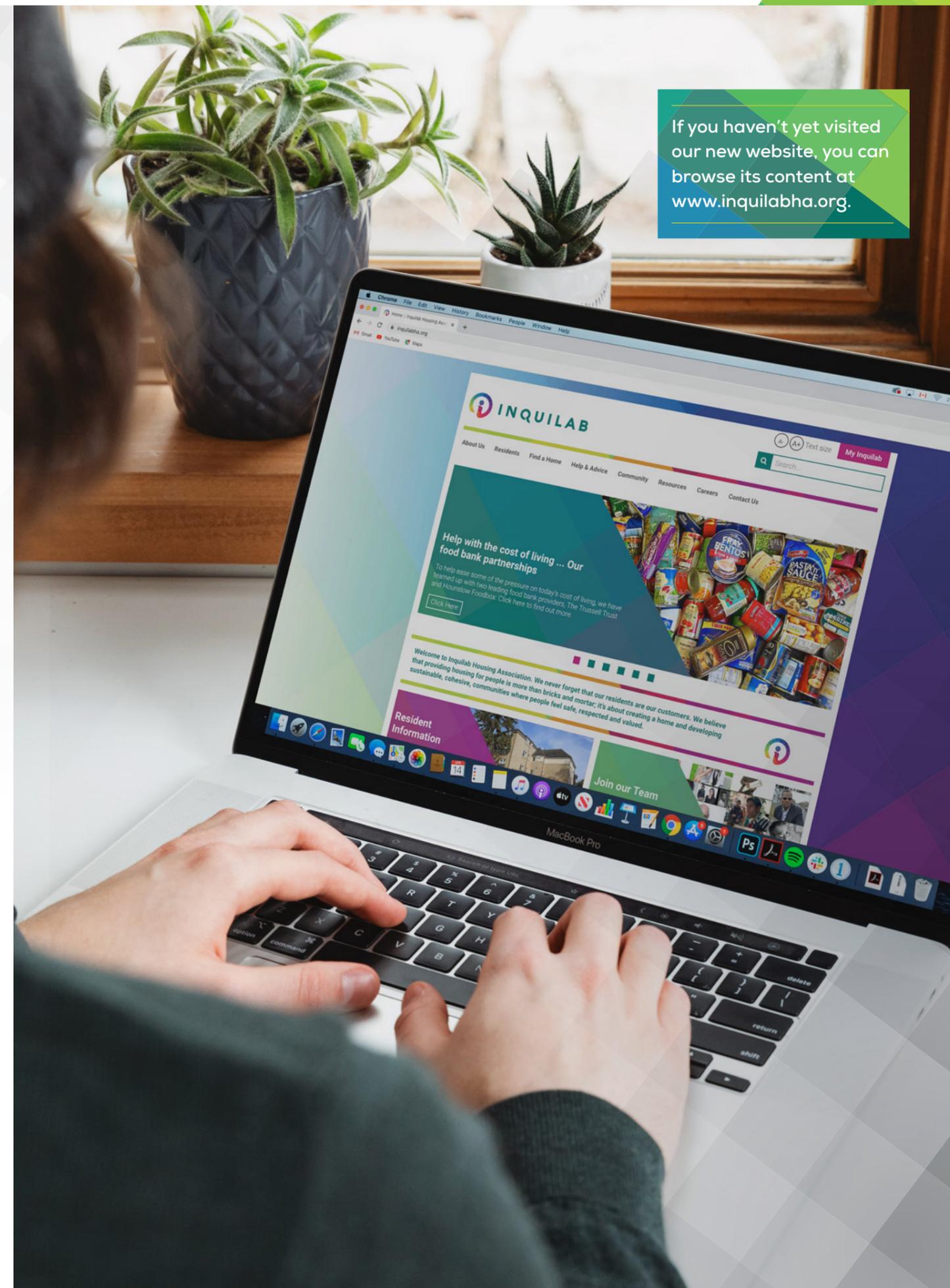
In 2021 we introduced a monthly e-newsletter to keep you informed of the issues and news that is important to you. This includes important notices as well as general advice and communication on a range of topical issues.

If you are not receiving these emails, please let us know at newsroom@inquilabha.org.

We Welcome your Feedback

If you have any comments or suggestions for ways in which we can improve our app, website, newsletters, or general communication, please get in touch with us via our Feedback form on our website. Or you can email us at newsroom@inquilabha.org. We'd also be interested to hear from you if you would like to join our Editorial Panel and help shape our resident communications.

If you haven't yet visited our new website, you can browse its content at www.inquilabha.org.



"I love my job. Inquilab has had such an impact on my life, my aspirations, and career goals that I can't imagine myself working without people around me and developing customer relationships."



Kickstarting Careers in Housing for Young People

Ashleigh Prior is one of two full-time paid work placements who joined Inquilab in 2021 as part of the Government's Kickstart Scheme.

The scheme, which was launched in 2020, provides funding for employers to create jobs for 16- to 24-year-olds who are on Universal Credit and who are at risk of long-term unemployment.

Since joining Inquilab on the six-month placement scheme as a housing administrator, Ashleigh has gained significant confidence and skills, citing the support that her Inquilab colleagues have given her as being instrumental in developing her new-found career aspirations within the housing sector.

From shop floor to front line

A graduate from West Thames University in special effects make-up and media, Ashleigh's circumstances and the lack of available opportunities in her studied profession, saw her take on roles in local shops and retail in order to make ends meet and to gain some experience.

Ashleigh explains:

"I had to pay rent and contribute to household bills, so waiting for the right opportunity to come along simply wasn't an option. But the retail environment didn't suit me; I lacked, then, a lot of confidence and felt hugely intimidated and anxious around people I didn't know.

"My type of anxiety would manifest itself in a phobia of dealing with the public and using a phone, I would literally be speechless. This made me feel susceptible to bullying, which was something I had experienced at

school, and I had very low confidence and self-esteem. These issues made it hard for me to interact and working in retail exasperated the problem.

"Although I knew I had something to give, I couldn't figure out how, but that changed when I joined Inquilab."

In late 2021, an opportunity to get involved with the Kickstart scheme presented itself through Ashleigh's job coach at the local Job Centre. It was to work as one of two Housing Administrators for a local housing association, Inquilab.

"I hadn't considered office work before because of my phobias, but I know I needed to push myself and, after meeting the team at Inquilab, I felt really comfortable. I liked that this induction scheme into the world of work would actually help me to gain confidence and manage my anxiety, rather than elevate it."

Since then, Ashleigh has successfully completed the six modules of Kickstart training and has been actively

involved with supporting residents with rent payments, repair requests, and in providing a listening ear when needed. She has, in her words "levelled up". With the help of the Inquilab team and the "incredible support" she has received from her Inquilab mentor and colleagues, she has taken huge strides to overcome her fear of using the phone and dealing with the public.

"I finally found a job that supported my development and where I felt it was OK to ask questions, where people and customers understood me (and I could relate to them), where I could truly be myself, and to even make a mistake without any judgement, and to learn from it.

"I have really surprised myself. Through Inquilab's culture of supporting its people and listening, I can now manage phone calls and deal confidently with residents in a way I never thought possible.

"Dealing with residents and helping them has given me a great sense of belonging and satisfaction. I have gained so many new skills including communication, working as a team, and learning new systems, that it has given me a whole new perspective on myself and what I can offer others.

The Kickstart scheme has supported over 100,000 young people into employment. Inquilab Housing Association continues to find opportunities to support people to come off Universal Credit and into long-term employment. For more information visit www.inquilabha.org [Communities].

Since going to press, Ashleigh has now been offered, and accepted, a full time permanent position with Inquilab ... Well done Ashleigh!

Anti Social Behaviour

The last two years has seen an increase in cases of Anti Social Behaviour (ASB), largely brought about by the breaking of lockdown restrictions and the impact of the Covid pandemic on people's mental health.

According to UK national statistics, there were 1.8 million incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the year ending June 2021, representing an increase of 7% of cases throughout England.

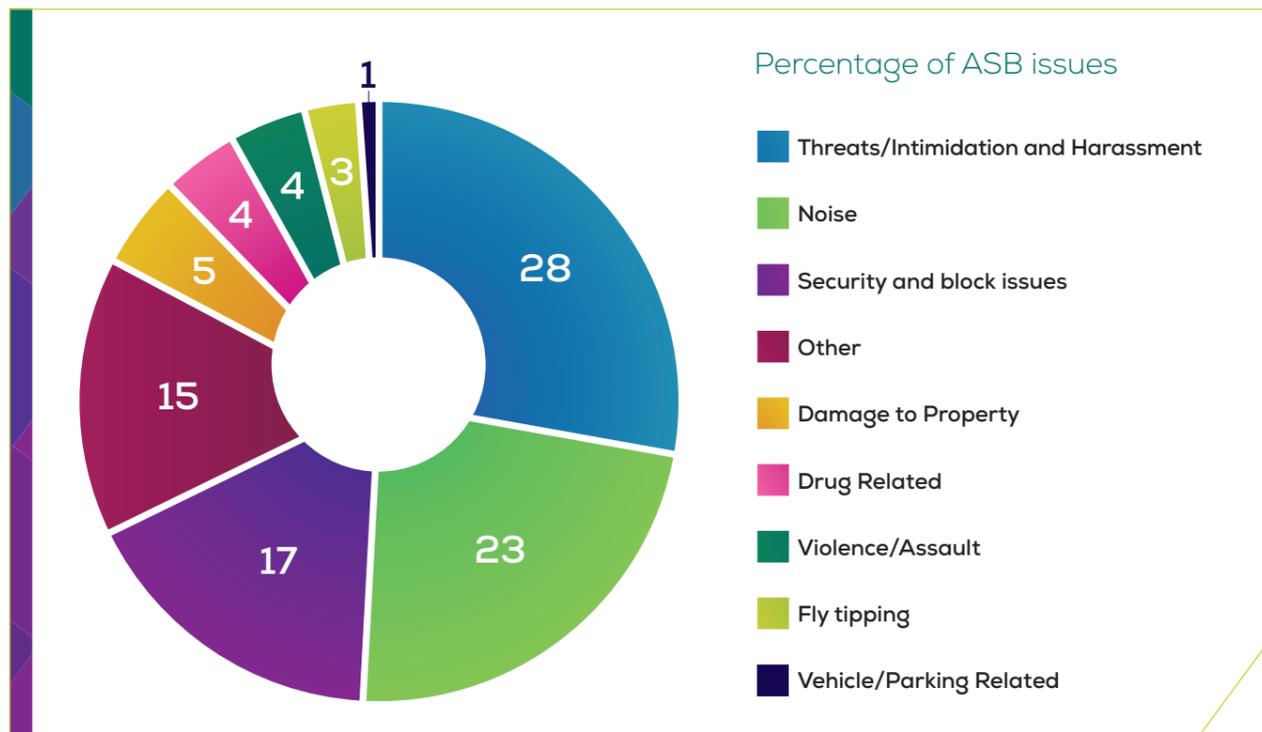
In our reporting year from April 2021 to end of March 2022 we resolved 75 'open cases' (many of which were raised prior to April 2021), and we ended the year with 32 cases in resolution process.

"We are committed to helping our residents to always feel safe and protected in their homes. At Inquilab, we do not tolerate ASB, and we aim to respond quickly and effectively to any issues raised."

Gina Amoh, Chief Executive

Inquilab works to protect the victims of ASB and to resolve cases without court action, thereby avoiding putting neighbours – and other witnesses – into a witness box.

Most common causes of ASB



Our Zero Tolerance Approach

By Ben Hunt, Inquilab's ASB specialist who works with our team in managing our zero-tolerance approach to ASB.

Tackling ASB is a key priority for Inquilab and in how we support our residents, neighbourhoods, and wider community.

We know that ASB causes anxiety, depression, and in some cases fear. The safety, health, and wellbeing of our residents will always be a priority.

To tackle ASB effectively we use preventative and intervention measures. We aim to respond to ASB incidences within 24 hours (48 hours maximum at weekends and bank holidays) and we try to resolve situations respectfully through early intervention and mediation.

If there are continued and repeated ASB incidences, Inquilab takes the necessary legal actions to stop it. This could include court action and eviction if the perpetrator's ASB behaviour is not resolved.

We establish early connections and collaborate with local Police, the Environmental Health Agency, Social Services, resident witnesses, and other relevant organisations – such as mental health experts – to ensure that we achieve the best possible and earliest resolution.

Our multi-agency approach has resulted in an exceptionally high success rate, with almost all cases resolved without court action.



CASE STUDY 1

Dealing with Rough Sleepers

During the winter months, we see an increase in rough sleepers (homeless people who take shelter in apartment blocks, communal grounds, and shared spaces). Whilst it does not always lead to aggressive behaviour, it is classed as a form of ASB, often leading to an increase in rubbish, noise, food waste, and – in extreme cases – on-site drug and alcohol abuse.

We know rough sleepers are an issue for residents, and the problem becomes exasperated in the winter months. With often scarce social services provision, rough sleepers are rarely seen as a priority issue for local services.

So, at Inquilab, we have taken the initiative to be pro-active.

Instead of waiting for the winter months to arrive, and in order to reduce the reliance on local services to take control of such situations, we decided to take early preventative and intervention action by reaching out and developing relationships with the local authorities and homeless charities early, and before the issue takes a hold. This enables us to work collaboratively, wherever possible, to find somewhere else for rough sleepers to go, and where we can move and support homeless people without disturbing or causing aggravation to our resident community.

Whilst we cannot put a complete stop to such cases, our approach is reducing the frequency and potential ASB issues that are all too often, and unfortunately, associated with rough sleepers.

CASE STUDY 2

Dealing with Mental Health Issues

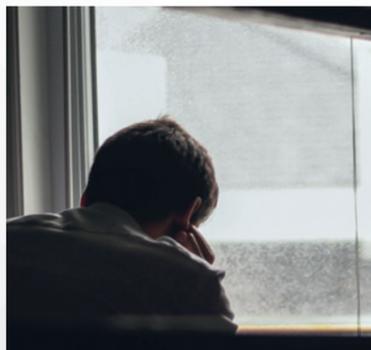
John was a long standing tenant of Inquilab who, for the last two years, had been harassing and intimidating neighbours with incidents of aggression, and alcohol and drug abuse.

John has mental health issues and a diagnosed personality disorder which leads to anti-social, erratic, and threatening behaviour, leaving neighbours (and Inquilab staff) fearful for their safety.

John's condition would also see him disappear for several months at a time; making it difficult for Inquilab and the local authorities to take control, or manage, the case.

Our priority was to remove John from his existing home and environment by taking back possession of his home on the grounds of ASB and rent arrears.

However, John's frequent absenteeism made this difficult, and we were also aware that in removing him from his existing home he would become homeless, and that would make his condition and behaviour worse.



It was clear to Inquilab that John's current home was no longer suitable for him. John needed to be in supported accommodation where he could get the professional support to better manage his mental health within a controlled and more strategically suited environment.

Using our multi-agency approach, our team set up a group of specialists including psychiatrists, clinical experts, the local authority, social workers, and the police. This group would help determine the case to secure the right accommodation and professional support John needed to manage his mental health in a safe and more controlled environment.

Thanks to the determination of Inquilab's Housing Team and multi-agency approach, the process successfully concluded without going to court. Inquilab has since re-let John's former Inquilab home to a family in need.

To protect the identity of our tenant, all names have been changed.

CASE STUDY 3

Dealing with Sub-Letting

Sub-letting an Inquilab home is not permitted within the terms of our tenancy agreements.

In a recent case, Inquilab tenants had moved out of their Inquilab home, abandoning it without notice and leaving rent arrears.

Taking advantage of this, the tenants' daughter and boyfriend moved in without the authority to do so. Furthermore, the couple were actively showing people around and promoting the property for sub-letting purposes.

In addition to this, there was soon a mounting case of ASB, with parties, noise, foul language, loud music and property damage. The emergence of local gangs, drug dealing, and on-site drug and alcohol abuse brought neighbours unease, and who became stressed, and extremely anxious.

Inquilab was persistent in following up each and every incident that was reported, to the point where our team – with the help of our multi-agency approach – set out the consequences to the illegal occupiers.

The swift action of Inquilab's Housing Team meant the property was returned back to Inquilab, and re-let to another family.

"ASB effects whole communities; not only our residents and neighbours but private residents too. We have a duty of care to all our communities to tackle ASB, to protect residents, and to work collaboratively with local services and agencies to reach a resolution that protects the victims."

Ben Hunt, ASB Specialist Consultant

Complaints

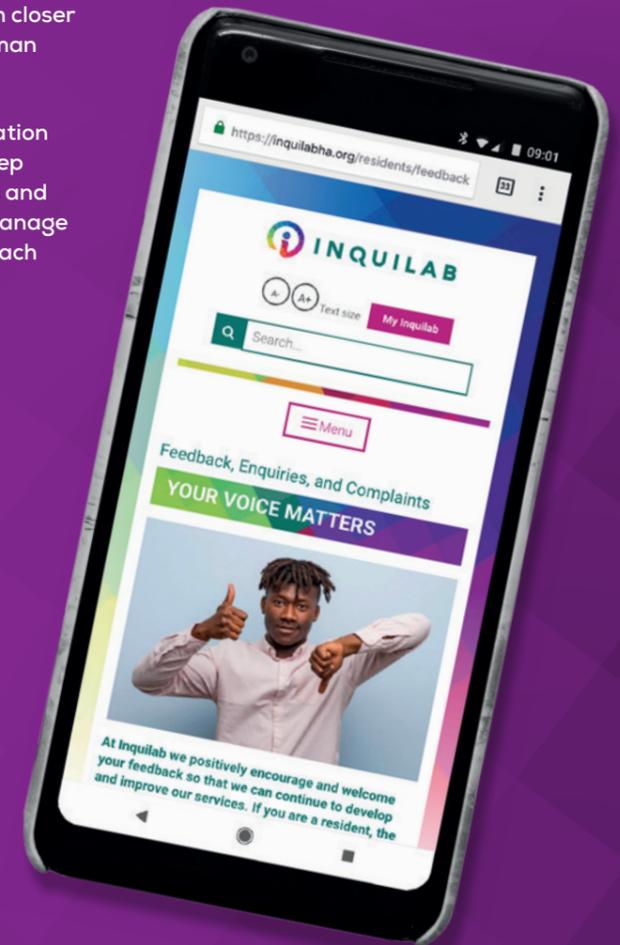
Although we strive to deliver the very best service possible, we appreciate that sometimes you may feel the need to make a complaint. That's why we have a complaints process in place so you can tell us if there is something you are unhappy with so we can put it right.

As a result of a major review of how we promote, handle, and manage our complaints service, we now have a much more efficient complaints process. Improvements include:

- Acknowledging a complaint with five working days
- Contacting residents directly and checking that the issues are being managed and dealt with properly
- Ensuring we have a much closer liaison with the Ombudsman
- Team Training
- Better overall communication with our resident(s) to keep them informed of repairs and improvements so as to manage any issues before they reach complaint stage

TOP THREE COMPLAINTS

1. Repairs
2. Planned improvements including kitchens and bathrooms
3. Anti-social Behaviour



Looking Forward

Despite the challenges of 2021 and into 2022, we have achieved a lot, and we are proud of the way we have continued to support most of our residents whilst maintaining a high quality service.



However, we know there is always more we can do, and we are committed to ongoing improvement by building on the things we do well, and developing the areas which you tell us you want and need.

We also have exciting plans to develop new housing, so that we can help meet urgent housing need.

As part of our continuous investment in your home and services improvement, throughout 2022 and 2023 our priorities for the coming year are to:

- **Prioritise your safety, ensuring you and your homes are safe, including our commitment to a zero-tolerance approach to ASB.**
- **Get closer to all our residents and identify their differing needs and how the economic and wellbeing environments are impacting you**
- **Collaborate and work with other partnerships and organisations to help deliver quality services and support for our residents, as well as drive scale of economy for greater value-for-money**
- **Improve resident's satisfaction by further refining and developing our repair and maintenance service**
- **Prepare for the introduction of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures in April 2023**
- **Continue investing in developing our homes, including the development of Renells Way in Hounslow where we are constructing a further 16 new homes**
- **To conclude our damp and mould investigations and publish our repair and planned maintenance schedule**
- **Ensure we have a greater understanding of our properties, including what we need to do to meet the Government's 2050 carbon neutral targets**
- **Tackle inequality and support the housing and cultural needs of our community and employees**
- **Invest in our organisation's structure and people**
- **Complete the roll-out of our 'My Inquilab' residents App which was launched in Spring 2022.**



In addressing these priorities, we will:

- **Continue to invest in technology and efficiency**
- **Deliver value for money in all we do**
- **Work collaboratively with partners and others to deliver our services and develop more homes**
- **Maintain a strong business where risks are robustly managed**
- **Establish strong foundations to underpin the delivery of quality services.**





INQUILAB

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