



Tenant Update 7th January 2021

There are now tighter restrictions in place and the Government have asked us all to stay at home to help stop Covid 19 infections rising. Circle VHA are continuing to work within the Governments Level 5 restrictions whilst ensuring that we do everything we can to protect our tenants and staff.

All Circle VHA staff will continue to work from home. Our officers are using the most appropriate method of communication including by phone, text, email or letter during level 5 restrictions. Our teams will still be visiting estates however they will not have access to our offices. You can contact us through our main telephone line 01- 4072110, by emailing us at info@circlevha.ie and you can raise a repair, give us feedback or pay rent on our website www.circlevha.ie

We are committed to continuing to provide services to our tenants, customers and housing applicants in these challenging times. However, we are taking sensible precautions to protect everyone.

Rent Payment

You must still pay your rent each week but if your household income has reduced, please let us know. We have recently written to you to ask you to complete a Confidential Income Statement so that we can conduct your annual rent review. If you have posted your statement back to us there may be a delay in assessing your new rent. It helps us if you can complete your Confidential Income Statements online, as we are no longer working in our office and access to post is more difficult at this time. You can upload your documents or take photos of documents and upload the images by logging onto:

<https://circlevha.ie/tenant-assistance/confidential-income-statement/>

Rent payments can also be made online by following the link below.

<https://circlevha.ie/tenant-assistance/rent/online-rent-payment/>

Repairs & Facilities Services

We are looking to continue to maintain our current level of service, however, it is important that we have adequate measures in place to protect our tenants, staff and contractors. When our staff and/or contractors phone to make an appointment, they will ask you a number of questions.

Please tell us if you or any of your household: -

- are self-isolating.
- have come into contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid 19 in the last 2 weeks.
- have recently come back from traveling in an affected area.

Directors: Aoife Watters (Chair), Jerome Casey, Máirín Ó Cuireáin, Jane Doyle, Gráinne Ní Dhubhghaill, Chris Ellison (UK), Joan Green, Brian Shefflin, Garret Tynan, and Chris White.

Patron: Fr. Pat Carolan. **Chief Executive:** John Hannigan. **Company Secretary:** Anne O'Meara.
*Circle Voluntary Housing Association, Company Limited by Guarantee, registered in Ireland No. 374693.
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Your assistance and understanding when asked these questions is most appreciated as we are taking this action to minimise the risk of infection to you and your household. When our contractor attends at your home, we ask both you and anyone else over the age of 11 within the home wear a face covering and follow social distancing guidelines.

We are prioritising Emergency and Urgent Repairs. An emergency callout means attending to repairs that are potentially dangerous to you or other people, for example, serious electrical faults, heating systems failing to heat or burst pipes causing flooding. All routine repairs request will be risk assessed and our response will depend on the nature and extent of the works to be carried out.

You can log a repair online at

<https://circlevha.ie/tenant-assistance/repairs-and-maintenance/report-a-repair/> [this process gets the same level of attention as a phone call]

During this period of Level 5 restrictions, there will be changes to the work activities that we can undertake in occupied properties. This means internal non-essential routine repairs and planned internal replacements programmes will cease for the time being.

The housing repair and facilities activities that will continue are:

- Emergency and urgent housing repairs
- Property compliance works - gas servicing, fire safety (fire doors & fire detection) and electrical checks.
- Work in empty properties
- Medical adaptations
- Facilities management services to communal areas - servicing, cleaning, , and the provision of waste management will continue as normal in the schemes that we provide facilities services to. Staff and contractors will wear protective clothing where necessary and will clean touch surfaces such as handrails, lifts, door handles regularly.

Tenants will still be able to report all repairs through our Customer Service Team throughout this period. No appointments will be offered for any internal non-essential routine repairs and internal planned programmes. Tenants will be contacted again once the Government confirms these works can proceed.

Gas Servicing

Landlords have a duty of care to their tenants. This is a legal duty to repair and maintain gas pipework, flues and appliances in a safe condition, to ensure an annual gas safety check on each appliance and flue, and to keep a record of each safety check. During the COVID-19 outbreak, there is a balance between ensuring people, including the vulnerable, are protected from possibly fatal risks arising from

carbon monoxide exposure or gas explosion, while doing what we can to protect people from COVID-19.

Current guidance states that work can still be carried out in people's homes where necessary, e.g., for reasons of safety, provided that the Government's guidance on social distancing is followed. However, there may be some occasions where the gas service cannot go ahead i.e., if tenants are deemed vulnerable or have come into contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid 19 or they have tested positive for Covid 19. However, we must arrange the gas service as soon as possible after the isolation period has ended.

If you are due a gas service our Customer Service Team will continue to notify you by letter or a phone call. If you receive a letter, please contact our Customer Service Team immediately to make an appointment or to discuss further.

A reminder that gas leaks are dealt with by Gas Networks Ireland. If you suspect or smell a gas leak, please call Ph: 1850 20 50 50.

What can you do?

As we spend more time in our homes you will be more aware of noise levels from your neighbours, which may include general household noise and children playing. Please try to be tolerant of the noise levels you might experience during this time, and please consider the impact your household noise levels, and behaviour may have on your neighbours.

We greatly appreciate that the past 10 months have been very difficult for people and we want to thank you for your support. Please stay safe and support your neighbours and community, we must all play our part. In the meantime, we'll continue to monitor the information, advice and guidance from the Government and will implement any further recommended changes to our working practices. Where there is any further change, we will update you through our website and by text.

Further support and advice

For information regarding unemployment benefits:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/be74d3-covid-19-pandemic-unemployment-payment/>

For HSE Covid-19 updates:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/>

ALONE the national charity that supports older people to age at home is operating a helpline for all older people, for queries or concerns about Covid-19 all older people can call Ph: 0818 222 024. The HSE Live helpline is also available for advice, call save 1850 24 1850 or www.hse.ie

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