

# Welcome

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter. In this Spring edition, the theme is Wellness. The start of a New Year can be a good time to make new habits. Even the smallest changes can make a big difference to your daily life. Some helpful tools include, the 'Mindfulness in Minutes' podcast which is available on all podcast app's, and on YouTube there are plenty of yoga videos including 'Yoga with Adrienne'



## Welcome to the new Intercultural & Diversity Coordinator

Hi all, my name is Marie Corr, and I am Circle's first Intercultural and Diversity Coordinator. I am working on an exciting new project for Circle, along with two other Approved Housing Bodies (AHB's), Clúid and Respond, to ensure that we have strong quality standards in our Cultural Diversity work.

Circle is committed to building inclusive and welcoming communities for people of all backgrounds and we want everyone, no matter what their cultural background, to feel welcome and supported in their tenancy and their community. The Intercultural Diversity Standard Project is a process whereby Circle will achieve a Quality Mark for its work in building sustainable intercultural communities.

As Maya Angelou once said, "In diversity there is beauty and there is strength", and we are trying to build on that beauty and strength, and we will definitely need your help to do this! We will be reaching out to tenants to get involved and to give us their insights, ideas and perspectives on how we can achieve better standards in all areas intercultural. If you would like to know more, to get involved or to talk to me about this work, it would be lovely to hear from you. I can be contacted by email: [mcorr@circlevha.ie](mailto:mcorr@circlevha.ie) or text/WhatsApp 086 107 5089, or alternatively you can contact your Tenancy Services Officer (TSO).



# Getting Involved

We are currently looking for tenants to get involved with the different tenant lead groups. Get in touch with your Tenancy Services Officer or the Tenant Engagement Officer for support and information.

The IT Focus Group will be asked to trial our new tenant app and see if there are any improvements /changes we can make before it goes to all tenants to use. It does not matter what your tech ability is, all levels are welcome and training on the app will be given. We are also in the process of updating our website and would like your thoughts on this.

Would you like to set up or be a part of a Tenant Association? It would be great for community spirit. You would be helping to organise community events and your involvement can be from your home.

The Editorial Panel reviews and gives feedback on what goes into this newsletter. We would love for more of you to be involved so that we can include pieces that you, the tenant, would like to see in the newsletter.

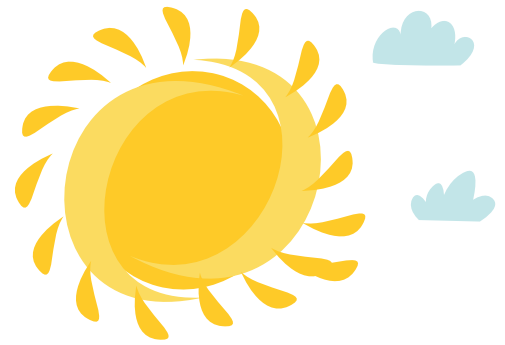
## Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure has been Updated

The previous Complaints, Suggestions and Compliments Policy and Procedure was updated in the summer of 2019 by an external consultant. In May 2021, the review process started, to update and make sure it was accessible for all.

The documents have now been revised, refreshed, and simplified, based on advice from staff and the Tenant Advisory Group (TAG). If you would like a physical copy, please let us know and we can send you out one.


The key change within the Policy and Procedure was the addition of a new step in the Complaints Handling Process – Frontline Complaints Resolution. This was added to ensure that Complaints that come into the organisation that can be handled quickly, are still captured, but may not have been seen as Complaints under the previous Policy and Procedure.

If you would like to have an input on how we update Policies and Procedures here in Circle, please get in touch with the Tenant Engagement Officer, as going forward our Shadow Group will be doing this.



Since the Acuity surveys began in July 2021, Circle have closed 9 complaints cases submitted by tenants, and Acuity have been able to survey 5 of these individuals for feedback on their experience of the process.

Circle received 26 official complaints from both tenants and external stakeholders throughout the course of 2021.



## Say hello, get to know, help the relationship grow. A message from your TSO!

We would firstly like to wish you a happy new year and hope that 2022 brings you lots of success and happiness. Many of us set goals and new year's resolutions and for us one of our main goals for the new year is to get to know you. Some of you told us recently that you did not know who your Tenancy Services Officer was. Well, we would like to change that as we would like you to get to know us and of course, we want to get to know you. You can call us your TSO for short, which stands for Tenancy Services Officer. We often get to meet you when you sign for your tenancy, or when we visit our schemes, but for tenants who are with us longer this does not always happen until there is an issue, and that is not always the best time to get to know someone. There are many reasons you may not have met your TSO, such as staff changes or organisational expansion. While we would love to inform all tenants of moves like this, there are vast numbers of tenants, which makes informing each tenant almost impossible. So now we are asking you to let us know if you don't know who your TSO is. There are a few ways you can do this, such as:

- You can call us at the office and simply ask "who is my TSO" and the phone operator will inform you.
- If you feel like having a chat, that's great, just let the phone operator know you would like to get to get to know your TSO.
- If you see us out and about in your scheme/location, feel free to have a chat with us (please be mindful of social distancing measures).
- You can write us a letter.
- You can email us, just ask the operator for our email address if you don't already have it.
- Have a chat with us during your annual property inspection.
- So, let's make 2022 the year of saying hello, getting to know and helping your relationship grow with your TSO!



## Springtime Planting

Last year several residents in the Dublin 8 area came together to work on their rooftop garden. This has been an ongoing project, from stand-alone sunflowers and lilies to vibrant flower boxes, it really was a great success. If you would like to start planting some flowers in your complex or communal and indoor space, please contact the Tenant Engagement Officer, Claire McDonnell, and we will try to help with some planting supplies.



# Development

We have recently purchased 8 apartments in Portmarnock, Co Dublin. 6 x 1-beds and 2 x 2-bed apartments within a local development. The homes are A-rated and utilise gas fired central heating. They are extremely energy efficient which is good for the environment and the cost of utility bills. The properties are finished to a high standard and come with basement parking. We hope the new Circle tenants there will be very happy in their new forever home.



# Chartered Institute of Housing, All-Ireland Housing Awards 2022 Finalists

The CIH All-Ireland Housing Awards recognise and celebrate the creativity, passion, and innovation of housing organisations and individuals from across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Circle are delighted to say that we have been short listed for two awards.

The **'More Than Bricks And Mortar'** award for our Tenant Communication and Engagement Strategy. The **'Housing Hero'** award for two tenants who have been involved with the focus group and now the TAG.

Hopefully the awards will take place in person on the 27th of May 2022 and fingers crossed we win!



Chartered  
Institute of  
Housing

# Rents

## Annual Rent Re-Assessment Time

Circles annual rent reassessment has come around again. Circle, in line with our rent policy, conduct yearly rent assessments. The rent assessment is generally based on your income and the area you live in.

**You can complete the rent assessment in a couple of ways:**

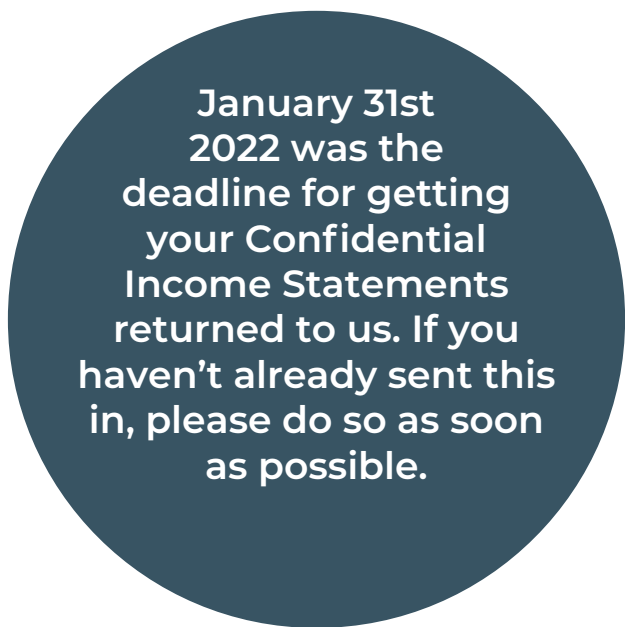
*Online – Via our website  
(you need your occupancy code for this).*

*Through the Post – You can request a paper version of the assessment form by phoning us on 01 407 2110 and pressing 1.*

### **Paying Rent – Remember you can pay via Payzone now**

You can use your rent cards at any Post Office and any Payzone location. You can search for a Payzone location online at <https://www.payzone.ie/consumer/agent-finder>.

Rent cards, standing order, household budgets and online are all ways to pay your rent. For more information on these options, please contact your Income Management Officer on 01 407 2110 and press 1.



### **Some common questions:**

#### ***What is my occupancy code/where can I find it?***

Your occupancy code (also known as your Tenancy Reference) is the unique code for your occupancy and allows us to identify you. You can find it on any rent statements we post to you. It is also listed on any letters we issue to you. Your Tenancy Reference can be found on the top right of your rent statement.

#### ***What income details should I send?***

All household income details should be sent back to us.

If you are claiming social welfare, you can ask your local office to fill out the last page of the form and get it stamped.

You can request a Social Welfare Statement for 2021 by calling 01 889 9500 and asking for the relevant department, or by logging into your My Gov account via [www.mygovid.ie](http://www.mygovid.ie), or you can provide three social welfare slips if you are getting your payment through the Post Office.

If you are working you can send us your employment detail summary for 2021 which can be found on your online revenue account at [www.revenue.ie](http://www.revenue.ie). Simply log in and click on 'Review Your Tax 2018-2021' and navigate to 'view employment details summary'.

For queries on your Confidential Income Statement or anything rent related, call us on 01 407 2110 and press 1.



# Tenant Satisfaction Surveys 2022

## Your Input is Valuable to Circle – Thank You, and Please Continue to Take Part

To better understand what is important to you and where we need to focus energy and resources, we have commissioned Acuity, an independent research company, to carry out surveys on our behalf. Since July 2021, Acuity have been contacting tenants to ask about your experience of being a Circle tenant. They have also been contacting new tenants, those who have had a repair or gas servicing recently completed, and those who have raised a complaint with us.

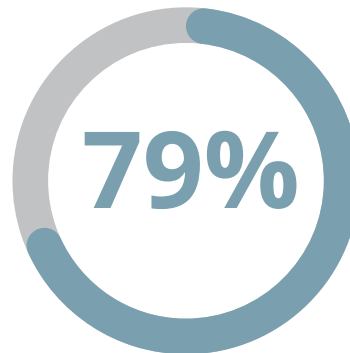
We want to thank everyone who has taken part so far for their time and feedback. These surveys allow us to review and hopefully improve the services we offer you. So far, we can see that improvements have been made since our 2019 survey, but there are areas where further work is needed.

**We have seen an improvement in satisfaction with Tenant Communication and Engagement (from 79% to 83%) When asked about recent repairs, there was an 89% satisfaction rate from tenants.**

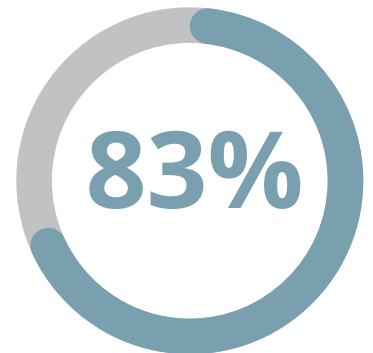
We have already been following up with tenants and taking action based on the survey results.

The surveys will be continuing over the coming months, and we would encourage all tenants, if they are happy to do so, to please take part.

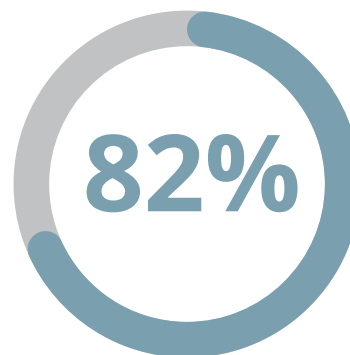
If you have call display on your phone, the call display will show a UK number with a Brighton area code (+44 1273 093939). There is no cost to you for accepting this call.



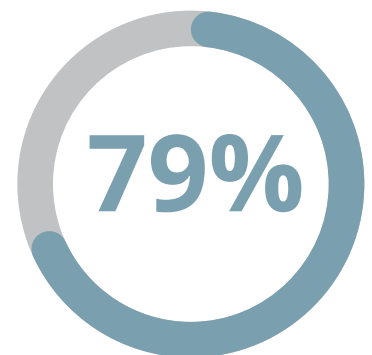
**Tenant satisfaction with the overall services provided by Circle**



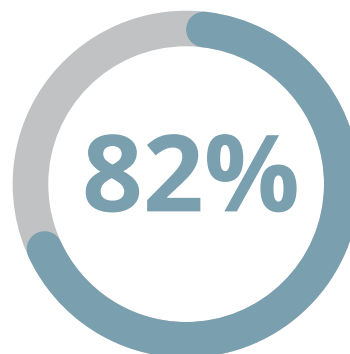
**Tenant satisfaction that Circle is easy to deal with**



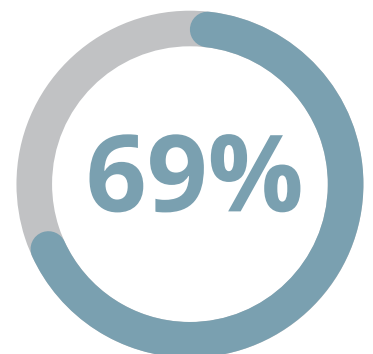
**Tenant satisfaction with the overall quality of their home**



**Tenant satisfaction with their neighbourhood as a place to live**



**Tenant satisfaction that Circle provides a home that is safe and secure**



**Tenant satisfaction that Circle listens to their views and acts upon them**

# Extra Bank Holiday this Year

In 2022, an extra once-off public holiday will take place on Friday, 18th of March.

From 2023, there will be a new annual public holiday in early February to mark St Brigid's Day. The public holiday will be the first Monday in February, except where St Brigid's day (1st of February) happens to fall on a Friday, in which case that Friday 1st of February will be a public holiday.

## 2022 Holiday Calendar

1st of January	6th of June
17th of March	1st of August
18th of March	31st of October
18th of April	25th of December
2nd of May	26th of December



## Spring Clean

With the days lengthening and weather warming, spring is a good time to tackle some jobs, both indoors and outdoors.

### Indoors

- Test carbon monoxide and smoke detectors.
- Replace any electrical goods that have fabric or flex that is worn or frayed.
- Unclog bathtub and sink drains throughout your home.
- To avoid water damage, re-apply new seals to bathtub, shower, and sink.
- Clean cooking hood filters on a regular basis (or replace when required)
- Keep the cooker clean – grease can cause fires.
- Clean wall vents – Hoover and wipe with a damp cloth.
- Keep your house ventilated. The best way of tackling mould is to reduce condensation levels and prevent it growing in the first place.

### Clean Window and Doors

- Clean frames using water and a mild household detergent annually.
- Wipe off any glass cleaning product which gets on the uPVC or on the gaskets.
- Keep moving parts (hinges, locks, handles, etc.) clean and free of grit, dirt or mortar.
- Apply an acid free oil, Vaseline or a silicone lubricant to the moving parts annually.

### Outdoors

- Clean gutters and downpipes.
- Clean gully traps.
- Trim any climbing plants and don't let them grow across windows or guttering.
- Unclog drains.
- Clear moss from around the home. Moss and algae on exterior horizontal surfaces are not only an eyesore, but they are also slippery, therefore dangerous.
- Reseal exterior woodwork, e.g. fences, gates etc.
- Maintain sheds and garages, fencing and boundaries.
- Keep the garden and hedges tidy.



# Spring Fun Facts

<p>1</p> <p>If you are born in the month of March, your birth flower will be the daffodil.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Honeybees are most likely to swarm in the spring. Even though it sounds scary, they are actually at their friendliest when they are swarming.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>In the North Pole, when spring starts so does a whole six months of daylight with no darkness.</p>
<p>4</p> <p>In the South Pole the complete opposite happens and when spring starts, so does six months of darkness with no visible sun.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>The first flowers of springtime are usually lilacs, lilies, daffodils, dandelions and irises.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>In India, Holi, the festival of colours, falls in the spring.</p>
<p>7</p> <p>Christians celebrate Easter in the spring, which is a holiday that celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>In Poland, people burn an effigy (a big model of a person) and throw it into the river on the first day of spring.</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Easter happens on different dates because it falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon that happens after the Spring Equinox.</p>

## Pancake Tuesday Competition

Pancake Tuesday is on the 1st of March, and we would love to see your pancakes. To be in with a chance to win a prize, please send us a picture by 5pm on Friday the 4th of March. Send us a picture of you making the pancakes or your decorated pancakes via this email:

[Competitions@circlevha.ie](mailto:Competitions@circlevha.ie)



### Pancake Recipe (makes 6)

300g self-raising flour  
1 tsp baking powder  
1 tbsp caster sugar  
2 medium eggs  
1 tbsp maple syrup, plus extra to serve  
300ml milk



#### STEP 1

To make the pancakes, get a little helper to weigh out and tip the flour, baking powder and sugar into a large bowl with a small pinch of salt. Crack in the eggs and whisk until smooth. Add the maple syrup and milk while whisking.

#### STEP 2

Heat a splash of oil and a small knob of butter in a non-stick frying pan until sizzling. Add spoonfuls of batter to make pancakes the size you like. We made 20cm pancakes for a serving size of one per person, or if you are very hungry, two per person. Cook until bubbles start to form on the surface, then flip and cook the other side. Eat straight away or keep warm in a low oven while you cook another batch.