



July 22

Welcome

Welcome to Circle's Summer Newsletter, we hope you and your loved ones are keeping well. In this edition we are looking at Community Spirit, showcasing tips and tricks on how you can reduce your household bills alongside useful information for you.

As always, we are here to listen and take on board your feedback. Please do get in touch, via the website or the phonenumber.

Tenant Satisfaction Surveys 2022

Your Input is Valuable to Circle

To better understand what is important to you and where we need to focus our 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 our tenants to ask about your experience of being a Circle tenant. They have also been contacting new tenants, those who had a repair recently completed, and those who raised a complaint with us in order to generate feedback on services delivered.

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

For example, we can see that how Circle listens to and acts on tenants' views is something you generally rate as very important to your overall satisfaction. Similarly, the quality of the home, feeling safe and secure, and finding Circle easy to deal with, are other areas which we can see are a priority for tenants. Feedback such as this, is something we are listening to and taking on board.



Based on the data and feedback coming in we have recently held a workshop with all our front-line teams that deliver services to you. Acuity reported on the data from the surveys conducted over the past six months and we have carried out interdepartmental meetings and workshops between the Customer Services and Repairs, Housing Services, and Asset and Facilities teams to fully understand the questions Acuity ask you and the feedback you have given us. We will be contacting tenants who have given permission for their feedback to be shared so that we can resolve issues for tenants or explain what we will do and how we will be working to resolve the issue.

As the surveys continue, 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 (01273 093939). There is no cost to you for accepting this call.

In March 106 tenants took part in our Satisfaction Survey		March 2022
<p>Almost nine out of ten tenants are satisfied with the services Circle provide. Satisfaction with overall services has increased considerably from the last survey by 9%.</p>		88%
<p>Eight out of nine tenants are satisfied with the overall quality of their home. This has increased by 8% since December 2021.</p>		89%
<p>Four-fifths of tenants are satisfied that their homes are safe and secure. Satisfaction has fallen by 2% since last December.</p>		82%
<p>Seven out of eight tenants are satisfied with the heating and energy efficiency of their home. This is an increase of 14% since last year.</p>		87%
<p>Where Circle provide Estate Services, five out of six tenants are satisfied with the services they receive.</p>		84%
<p>Six out of seven tenants are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live. Tenants' satisfaction with their neighbourhood as a place to live has risen by 5% since the results of the previous survey.</p>		86%
<p>The survey found that over eight out of ten tenants are satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service. This is a 12% increase since our last survey.</p>		82%
<p>Five out of six tenants feel that Circle listens to their views and acts upon them.</p>		83%



Tenant Engagement: Get involved

We have mentioned our Tenant Engagement Strategy in previous newsletters, highlighting the commitment we have to our Tenant First approach. Working with the Tenant Advisory Group (TAG), we continue to develop new opportunities for all tenants to engage. Over the past few months, different tenant led groups have provided their feedback and helped shape and improve our services at Circle.

Take a look at what has been going on:

1. The **Shadow Group** reviewed and approved our Empty Homes Policy.
2. The **IT Focus Group** met to get the first look at the new Tenant App.
3. Two **scheme walkabouts** have taken place.
4. The **Editorial Panel** approved topics to put into this newsletter.
5. The **TAG** had their third meeting of the year.
6. First meeting of the **Intercultural Diversity Coordinating Group** took place online.

We want to thank all tenants that have given time and commitment. We are always looking for more tenants to join the different groups available. There is something for everyone and we want to hear your thoughts. For more information on the groups or how to join, please contact Claire, the Tenant Engagement Officer on TES@circle.ie or calling/texting 086 103 4833.



Saving the trees one newsletter at a time

You asked we listened! We have taken your advice on board and decided that we will no longer be bulk printing and delivering the Circle newsletter from now on. The newsletter will now be available on the website under publications.

We understand that some people like getting a physical copy so please let Circle know if you would prefer the newsletter delivered to you by emailing TES@circle.ie or calling/texting 086 103 4833.

Clean-up day

As the evenings are getting brighter and finally the weather is getting a little warmer, tenants in the Thornton Heights community suggested a clean-up event. So, we listened, and we went to Thornton Heights for a community clean up afternoon. It was great to see our tenants there getting involved. There was also face painting and treats for the kids to enjoy.

Tips on how to reduce your household bills

We all know that the cost of living has gone up, here are some ways that might help you reduce your energy bills:

Is it cheaper to boil water for pasta in an electric kettle or a pan on a gas hob?

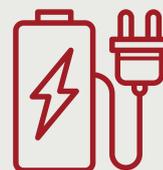
The million-dollar question. A kettle is more efficient than a hob for heating water as it is heated from the inside, whereas the pan is heated from the outside and needs to get warm first. Therefore, kettles will boil water faster and use fewer units of energy. Gas hobs take much longer and use up to three times more energy in unit terms.



Tip:
Boil your kettle first!

Am I wasting energy by leaving my phone charger plugged in?

Yes. Household wi-fi, televisions, set-top boxes and games consoles that sit on standby are all using power – and the older the device, the greater the standby load. However, it is also the unseen chargers, such as those for electric toothbrushes, razors, etc. As soon as your device is fully charged, try to get into the habit of unplugging it.



Can I wash my clothes properly at less than 40°C?

Yes. Modern washing powders and detergents work effectively at lower temperatures. Brands such as Ariel and Persil advertise that their products work at 30°C. Just moving the dial down to 30°C will make a big difference to the cost of running a washing machine – it will cut the energy needed by 40%. Spin your clothes before hanging them out to dry, instead of relying on your tumble dryer too.



Does it always make sense to turn lights off when you leave a room?

Traditional lightbulbs and modern LED lights don't take any extra energy to turn on, so you should always turn them off when you are not using them or when you leave a room. If you do still have any traditional lightbulbs, switching them for LEDs will result in a 69% energy saving.



If you are finding it hard to balance your bills, MABS are a free Money Advice and Budgeting Service that are based all over Ireland. They have drop-in centres or you can call them. MABS is free, confidential and independent. Helpline: 0818 07 2000, Mon - Fri 9am – 8pm.



Meet your neighbours

In Dublin 12, we had a meet and greet within one of our older persons communities in partnership with WALK. It was great to see everyone out chatting about their community, whilst enjoying some tea and cake. The Community Gardaí even popped by to chat about being safe online, overall community safety and what to do when anti-social behaviour happens.

Would you like Circle to do this in your area / complex? Let our Tenant Engagement officer, Claire, know and we can look into it. TES@circle.ie or calling/texting 086 103 4833.



Your Tenancy and Your Rights: Annual Tenancy Registrations

From the 4th of April 2022, new legislation was introduced and required Approved Housing Bodies to register each of their tenancies with the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) every year. Previously, tenancies were only required to be registered again if a tenancy continued into a 'Further Part 4' tenancy, which happened every 6 years.



This means that we will be working hard to register every Circle VHA tenancy this year with the RTB. When we do this, the RTB will issue you with a letter telling you that your tenancy has been registered. This is only to confirm the registration of your tenancy and you do not have to do anything or respond to the letter.

Other Changes to Tenancies

From the 11th of June 2022, Tenancies of Unlimited Duration were introduced into law. Previously tenancies lasted for 6 years and would roll over into a further 6-year tenancy. This change to Tenancies of Unlimited Duration provides more security of tenure for tenants.

It means that, after 6 months living in a tenancy, tenants will have a right to remain in the property for an unlimited duration. This is always subject to the tenant upholding their tenancy obligations and the landlord's right to end the tenancy in accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) 2004.

All new tenancies created on or after the 11th of June 2022 will automatically become Tenancies of Unlimited Duration when:

1. You have lived in the rental property for 6 consecutive months AND
2. A valid notice of termination has not been served by Circle VHA.

If you signed your tenancy before the 11th of June 2022 it will continue under the existing security of tenure rules until the end of the current 6-year cycle of the tenancy. Once the current cycle has ended, they will become Tenancies of Unlimited Duration and may only be terminated under the specific reasons for ending a tenancy.

Further information can be found on the RTB website: <https://www.rtb.ie/tenancies-of-unlimited-duration>



Events over the summer put together by our tenant John



16th May – 4th August. Van Gogh, RDS. The Immersive Journey allows visitors to step inside the paintings of one of the world's most famous artists.



1st June – 30th September. Irish Famine Exhibition. Experience the deeply moving story of the Irish Potato Famine, a catastrophic event in Irish History.



11th – 17th July. Pantoland, Liberty Hall Theatre. Lots of fun, music, laughter and all the usual nonsense you have grown to love at Dublin's Traditional Family Panto! The Liberty Panto. The fairest panto in the land.



24th July. Bray Air Display, 12pm, Seafront Park, Bray, County Wicklow. One of the most popular air shows in Europe and Ireland's biggest air festival in Co. Wicklow seaside town to marvel at amazing aerobatics.



13th – 21st August. National Heritage Week, an initiative by the Heritage Council, celebrates all things heritage. It brings together communities, families, organisations, cultural institutions, academics and enthusiasts, to build awareness about the value of heritage and support its conservation.



17th – 21st August. The Dublin Horse Show, RDS. One of the highlights of the Irish summer, the Dublin Horse Show effortlessly combines sport, style and socialising.



10th – 25th September. Dublin Fringe Festival, Various Locations. Dublin Fringe Festival draws more than 30,000 spectators for 16 days and nights each September, transforming Dublin into an exposé of great creative talent from around the globe.



23rd September. Culture Night, Various Locations. Culture Night is a national moment, celebrating all that makes up the richness and diversity of culture in Ireland today, connecting people to cultural activities locally.



29th July – 31st July 2022 Waterford International Street Arts Festival. This is the biggest festival of the year in Waterford, a city that plays host to several excellent events each year.



6th August. Tinahely Agricultural Show. This is a celebration of the richness of rural Ireland's traditions, its people and their way of life. It is a fantastic family day out with live entertainment for kids and adult.

Get in Touch

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Asset Management

Circle completed our first Asset Management Strategy in 2020, and this will be due for review in 2023. The Strategy sets out the following main objectives for the period 2020-2023:

1. Identify key risks in the management of the existing housing stock and consider mitigating actions.
2. Consider the outcomes from the 2015 Stock Condition Survey and provide a plan to implement the findings for the period 2016-2023.
3. Review current energy efficiency data for existing housing stock and consider future investment needs.
4. Consider the needs for future longer-term planning and determine key actions to support the next phase of the Asset Management Strategy post 2023.

As part of the review that was completed when drafting the Strategy, it was identified that the stock data held by Circle was limited. Housing stock data is important as it allows us to determine timeframes for key component replacement and budget for future planned investment. Planned maintenance programmes for component replacement include such things as door and window replacements, kitchen and bathroom renewals, gas boiler renewals, roof replacements, etc.

All components have a lifecycle, and it is important that the organisation knows the condition of these components

in order to plan when to replace them. As the last survey of components was completed in 2015 and some of that data had gaps in it, Circle is in the process of carrying out a programme of stock condition surveying for all Circle owned housing stock. We plan to have updated stock condition data by the end of March 2023.

This will allow us to plan and procure future planned programmes of work. We expect to be able to use the data gained from the stock condition data collected to date to plan and deliver the first contract for planned maintenance works by March 2023. This should include door and window replacements in some of our older homes that have been surveyed in the last year, as well as some other smaller programmes of work which are still to be determined.

Another key element of the Asset Management Strategy is to review the energy performance of our homes. Circle is planning a programme of energy assessments in the coming year which will inform our future planned investment needs and help us identify what measures we need to adopt to make our housing stock more energy efficient where it is required.

We are still in the early stages of delivering planned maintenance programmes, but by the end of this year, we will have fixed plans for future delivery. Many of our tenants will benefit from planned works over the coming years which will improve their living environment and help lower the organisation's annual maintenance costs. We will keep you updated on our progress.

