



Tenant Newsletter

Welcome to Circle's End of Year Newsletter

From everyone here in Circle, we wish you a Happy Holiday and a Happy New Year.

We are always trying to improve our services and listen to you, the tenant. If you have any comments, thoughts or want to get involved, please get in contact.



Winter 2022

A message from our CEO, John Hannigan

Dear Tenants,

It's been a very busy year in Circle and like you, we are looking forward to Christmas and preparations for another busy year next year.

In the last 12 months we have pushed on with our Tenant Communication and Engagement Strategy and you will see reference to that in this newsletter. I want to thank all the members of the Tenant Advisory Group and the other associated tenant groups who have helped us to understand better what we need to do better and what needs to change within Circle. We still don't have things right, I am not sure that we will ever get them fully right, but we are committed to continuing to improve and change, for the better.

Over the coming 12 months we will be rolling out more of our home improvement works and delivering a significant number of new homes. Our aim is to ensure that we also address outstanding repairs and deal with the difficulties that our tenants face in their communities. Circle are the driving force behind a project on Intercultural Diversity and we hope that this project will embed a greater understanding in our staff and in our communities of the difficulties families

and individuals from other countries face living in Ireland. From Circle's point of view, we will be stepping up our anti-racism efforts to ensure that everyone understands that racism is not acceptable in any way.

Finally, we will continue to seek your views on how we are doing on repairs, and on our services through our survey process. We hope to launch our new Tenant Portal, allowing tenants to pay rent on-line, report a repair, check their information and send us messages through their phones. Not everyone will want to use this service, so, to ensure everyone has the opportunity to make contact, we will be launching a new website and improving our phone services. Your views matter and count and we will continue to ask you how we can be better.

I'd like to thank all our staff for the great work they do and for the commitment they have shown in delivering our services to you, our tenants.

Have a great holiday break and I look forward to hearing from you and to working with you and your representatives over the coming year.

Best wishes
John



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 an independent research company to carry out surveys on our behalf. There are five different surveys which we carry out:

Survey Name	Frequency of Survey	Who is included in the Survey?
General Perception Survey	Quarterly	All tenants.
Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)	Monthly	All tenants who have had an ASB case completed in the previous calendar month.
Complaints	Monthly	All tenants who have had a complaint completed in the previous calendar month.
New Lettings	Quarterly	All tenants who have signed a tenancy agreement in the previous calendar month.
Responsive Repairs	Monthly	All tenants who have had a responsive repair completed in the previous calendar month.

We have been carrying out surveys each month since July 2021, and in this time, we can see where improvements have been made, and where further work is needed.

The following is a selection of results from 2021, compared to our targets and what we've actually achieved in Q3 2022:

General Perception Survey		Q1 - Q4 2021 Actual	Target	Q3 2022 Actual
	Net Promoter Score (the likelihood of recommending Circle VHA to someone else, on a scale of 1-10).	39%	45% (By Q4 2022)	59%
	Almost nine out of ten tenants are satisfied with the services Circle provide. Satisfaction with overall services has increased 9% since 2021.	78%	80% (By 2022)	89%
	More than eight out of ten tenants are satisfied with the quality of their home. This has increased by 5% since last year.	81%	85% (By 2022)	86%



We are working to create more detailed reports on our survey results, which we are hoping to have published and available via our website in the coming weeks.



The feedback you are providing us through these surveys is vitally important and is something we are listening to and taking on board.



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 (00441273 093939)**. There is no cost to you for accepting this call.



Tenant Engagement Update

The TAG finally got to meet face to face for the first time since Covid-19.

They had two sessions to discuss their goals and what they would like to achieve in 2023, including planning how Circle tenants can work towards becoming board members of Circle VHA.

If you like to meet new people, are passionate about your community and want to make a positive impact, then please get in touch. New members are always welcome!

Contact your TSO or Claire McDonnell, Tenant Engagement Officer, on 086 103 4833, or email TES@circlevha.ie



A few words from some of our TAG members:

"We are just normal tenants working together as we want to make improvements for the future. Everyone's voice matters and we listen to everyone in the TAG."

Lorraine.

"I really enjoyed our training days with my fellow tenants, Circle and Supporting Communities. It was run over the course of two days. I am so inspired by how as a group we gelled together. I'm looking forward to the future with Circle as a tenant and as someone who is going to work to make all tenants feel heard. Overall, we are a group that is respectful towards everyone's views and have some craic along the way."

April.

"I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the entire team of Circle for organising a joint training with staff and the TAG members. Two separate days of training were informative and resourceful. I feel it's an indication that Circle is determined to meet its commitment and follow up on implementing its Tenant First strategy. The training was a road map for innovation, a key to a successful and progressive organisation that is creative, ensuring that staff, volunteers and tenants will work together and hear the tenants' thoughts. In the end, TAG is optimistic that training skills will play a vital role in working with Circle staff, to address the evolving complex challenges of all tenants"

David.

"It was an amazing experience and great to meet face to face with staff and the TAG members. Everyone was welcoming. And it was good to learn the relevant policy and practice for the group so everyone is on the same page."

Brightness.

A big thank you to all the tenant led groups



This has been a very busy year for our tenant led groups, who have given their time to improve the services we provide to all tenants. Volunteering your time and energy can be difficult in today's busy life, so thank you to all tenants who have helped.

We hope in time that more will join these groups and help us improve as we move into 2023.

Just to give you an idea of the work that has been done:

- ▶ The Shadow Group approved six policies that Circle staff use.
- ▶ There were five schemes walkabouts done in different areas with tenants.
- ▶ The Editorial Panel edited and approved four newsletters this year.
- ▶ The Intercultural and Diversity working group met twice, along with one catch up meeting.
- ▶ The IT Focus Group are monitoring and overseeing the development and roll out of the Tenant Portal.

Intercultural and Diversity Group

Looking back on 2022 and looking forward to 2023 as we come to the end of this year.

This year much progress has been made by Circle in the development of the Quality in Our Diversity Project. Our project Coordinating Group was formed and is made up of a strong group of staff and volunteer tenants giving their time and expertise to come together and look at a tenant's journey with Circle and to look at all the things that are working well and all the ways that we can improve.

Sitting down together to have conversations and working shoulder to shoulder with tenants has been really valuable. It has been helping Circle to understand the key challenges for tenants, for example language barriers, understanding our systems and how to simplify, how we can help improve the sense of community on estates, etc.

The ideas that our volunteer tenants have come up with are incredibly helpful. The experience of meeting face to face and online has proven to be a very rich experience all round, hearing one another's perspectives and sharing ideas has been a powerful tool. I would really like to thank all the tenants who have volunteered their time so far and would love to hear from others who would like to get involved.

Our aim with this project is to build inclusive, welcoming, safe and flourishing communities. Looking at the engagement and efforts of our tenants and staff team to date, I can say there are a lot of positive changes on the horizon.

Some of the work that is underway include creating a language support strategy and improving our translation supports through a variety of means. I would urge any tenants who have additional languages skills or who have ideas on this to consider getting involved to help deliver our language strategy. This will really help to improve the lives of many tenants who have English as a second language.

We are also looking at ways to celebrate and create awareness of different cultures. Through Circle's estate days this year we had excellent involvement from tenants and with your help we look forward to ensuring an intercultural aspect to all gatherings and community events next year. Celebrating together through food, music, dance, art, etc. are always successful. We are interested in hearing your ideas on how to do this, so please free to get in touch and let us know.

The Coordinating Group will continue its work by learning about cultures, unconscious bias, racism and ways to prevent and deal with it. Circle is an anti-racist organisation and has funded this project as part of its ongoing Intercultural and Diversity work. **Please feel free to contact me to get involved on 086 107 5089 or mcorr@circlevha.ie**

Whether you are celebrating Christmas, Kwanza, Yule (Winter Solstice), Hanukkah, Las Posadas, different cultural practices or no cultural practices, I would like to wish you Happy Holidays and hope during this holiday season, and I look forward to working with you in 2023.



Things to Keep in Mind this Winter Season

Checking In On Vulnerable Neighbours

The Holidays are a time to be with our loved ones and celebrate each other. However, for some people in our communities it can be a very lonely time. It is important to continue to show the same community spirit which has helped the most vulnerable in our society to come through the COVID Pandemic, this Holiday season.

So please check in on your vulnerable neighbours over the Holiday's.



Christmas Lights

Coming into the Holiday season we will all be starting to put up our decorations. We would like to remind tenants that this time of year can increase the risk of fires in your home. When putting up decorative lights please be mindful not to leave the lights on overnight or when nobody is home, and not to use broken lights.

With this in mind we would ask any tenants that do not have a fire blanket to contact our Repairs team immediately and we can organise one for you.



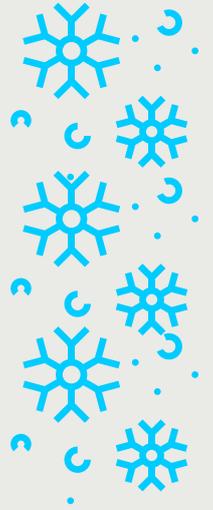
Contents Insurance - What Is It?

Although we insure the structure of your home, you are responsible for insuring your possessions against accidental damage, fire and theft including furniture, clothing, appliances, carpets, curtains and flooring and anything you keep in the garden or shed. Especially when you have any expensive gifts in your home for the Holidays, contents insurance would be a good idea.

You can contact **An Post, many Credit Unions and Insurance Brokers for a quote.** We would advise you to get three quotes to ensure that the insurance cover you decide on best meets your needs.

Cold Weather and Your Water Pipes

While the weather has been extremely mild for this time of year, it should be getting cold in the next few weeks. If you are going away over winter, please keep your heating on low, at 15 degrees celsius, to prevent pipes from freezing and bursting. Alternatively, you could turn off the water at the stopcock, open all taps (including showers) and flush all toilets before you leave. It is also advised that if your home has an attic space, you leave the attic trap door open to prevent pipes freezing in the roof space.



Mould

Help Keep Your Home Free from Mould

Damp can cause mould on walls and furniture and make timber window frames rot. The growth of mould and mites can increase the risk of respiratory illness. Some damp is caused by condensation. The following explains how condensation forms and how you can keep it to a minimum, so reducing the risk of dampness and mould growth.

What Causes Damp?

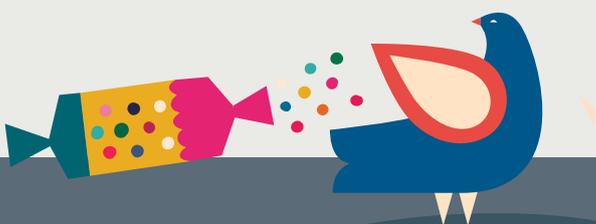
Condensation

There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. If the air gets colder, it cannot hold all the moisture and tiny drops of water appear - this is condensation. You notice it when you see your breath on a cold day, or when the mirror mists over when you have a bath. Condensation occurs mainly during cold weather, whether it is raining or dry, it does not leave a 'tidemark' and is normally accompanied by the development of mould. It appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air. Look for it on external walls, in corners, on or near windows, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards.

Leaks, Penetrating or Rising Damp

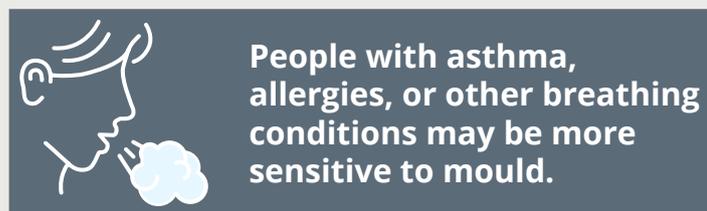
Condensation is not the only cause of damp. It can also come from:

- ▶ Leaking pipes, wastes or overflows.
- ▶ Penetrating damp from rain seeping through the roof (where a tile or slate is missing); spilling from a blocked gutter; penetrating around window frames or through damaged brickwork.
- ▶ Rising damp due to a defective/breached damp-course or because there is no damp-course. These causes of damp often leave a 'tidemark'. If your home is newly built it may be damp because of water used during its construction (for example, in plaster) and is still drying out. It can take weeks of heating and ventilation to dry out a new home. A dehumidifier will help.



Why is There Mould and How to Tackle It

Mould will grow on most surfaces where there is moisture. It will colonise walls, ceilings, windows, fabrics, clothing and furniture. Mould does not usually grow on walls which are affected by rising or penetrating damp. When damp moves across a wall it causes salts from within to come to the surface and these salts stop the mould from growing. The only way of permanently getting rid of mould is to deal with the underlying condensation problem.



Treat the Existing Mould

To kill and remove mould, wipe down walls and window frames affected with a fungicidal wash. Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully. Dry-clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets. Distributing mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning can increase the risk of respiratory problems.

After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould recurring. Note that this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper.

Produce Less Moisture

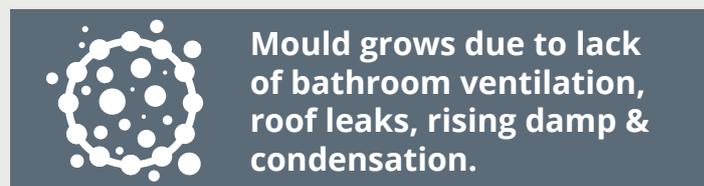
Some ordinary daily activities produce a lot of moisture very quickly. Did you know that the average household produces over twenty pints of moisture in one day?

- ▶ Cover cooking pans in use and do not leave kettles boiling.
- ▶ Avoid using paraffin and portable flueless bottled gas heaters as these heaters put a lot of moisture into the air.
- ▶ Dry washing outdoors on a line. If this is not possible put it in a single room (ideally the bathroom) with the door closed and the window open and/or extractor fan on.
- ▶ Tumble dryers should be vented to outside, unless it is the self-condensing type.
- ▶ When running a bath, run the cold water first and then add the hot water second as this produces less steam than running hot first or at the same time.

Ventilate Your Home

You can ventilate your home without making draughts:

- ▶ Keep a small window ajar when someone is in and keep trickle ventilators open all the time.
- ▶ Ventilate kitchens and bathrooms when in use by opening windows wider.
- ▶ Close the kitchen and bathroom door when these rooms are in use, even if your kitchen or bathroom has an extractor fan. Closing the door will help prevent moisture reaching other rooms (especially bedrooms which are often colder and more likely to get condensation).
- ▶ Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes. Avoid overfilling them as this stops the air circulating.
- ▶ Wipe off wet surfaces, for example where condensation has formed on windows, or after using the shower. This means that the ventilation will be more effective in removing the remaining moisture.
- ▶ If you can, try keep your heat on for a few hours in a row, even at a low temperature and especially in the early morning when the air is the coldest. This will reduce condensation build up.



What Not To Do

- ▶ Do not block permanent ventilators.
- ▶ Do not draught-proof rooms where there is condensation or mould.
- ▶ Do not draught-proof rooms where there is a cooker or a fuel burning heater, e.g. gas fire.
- ▶ Do not draught-proof windows in the bathroom and kitchen.
- ▶ Do not wait until it starts to turn cold before putting your heating on. Leaving the heating off until the weather gets cold will result in the walls losing all their stored heat. It will take a lot longer (and it will cost more) for the heating to warm them up sufficiently for you to feel comfortable.
- ▶ Do not put your heating on for one hour or less as this can make the problem worse. The air absorbs



water vapour more quickly than the walls can warm up. When the heating is turned off the air cools rapidly and condensation quickly occurs, cooling the walls further.

Application to Transfer

We understand that tenants need change and that your current home may not be suitable for you and your family's needs anymore. Our Tenancy Service Officer (TSO) Debbie has put together some information on the transfer process.

Even though you are a tenant of Circle, you must still make an application to the local authority (Council) where you reside to apply for a transfer. Unfortunately, we cannot transfer tenants directly to another property, even if this property is owned or managed by us, with approval from the local authority. Your local authority must approve your transfer request and nominate you to a Circle VHA home.

All local authorities require a completed housing transfer application form. This can be found on their websites. You can apply to move to another approved housing body or local authority property. You can also transfer to another local authority area or any other part of Ireland, once you have met the criteria for that local authority.

All local authorities criteria to transfer are:

- ▶ Be a tenant for a minimum of two years.
- ▶ Clear rent account (no arrears).
- ▶ Maintained your home to a good standard.
- ▶ Not engaged in anti-social behaviour.

You can also transfer under Exceptional Social Grounds (ESG). This is a priority transfer Criteria for ESG are:

- ▶ Overcrowding.
- ▶ Where older persons and other households wish to move to smaller accommodation (downsizing).
- ▶ Medical or compassionate reasons.
- ▶ On grounds of being a victim of anti-social behaviour, if proved, where the local authority's Estate Management Unit and An Garda Síochána support the transfer application.
- ▶ Other exceptional circumstances.

You may also consider registering your interest in www.homeswapper.ie and create an account with a view to contacting other applicants seeking transfers. If you are successful in finding a match, and all criteria is satisfied, it may decrease your waiting time on the Transfer List.

If you wish to apply for a transfer or to receive further information, please contact your Tenancy Service Officer at Circle or your local authority. Some local authorities criteria may differ slightly to information given here, but you will find all relevant information on their websites.

Two People Active for one day		3 pints
Cooking and Boiling a Kettle		6 pints
Having a Bath or Shower		2 pints
Washing Clothes		1 pint
Drying Clothes		9 pints
Using a Paraffin or Bottled Gas Heater		3 pints
Total amount of moisture produced in your home in one day		24 pints

We're Here To Help and Support

Get in touch with our Customer Services team. They will offer you tips on prevention and products that might help. If the mould is persistent, we'll assess your home to see what the cause is and discuss treatment and next steps with you.

Call our Customer Services team on 01 407 2110 or email us at repairs@circlevha.ie



Senior Alert Scheme

- ▶ Are you aged 65 years or older?
- ▶ Living alone or living with another person who meets the eligibility criteria?
- ▶ Would benefit from a free personal monitored alarm?

You could be eligible for the *free pendant alarm* and free first year's monitoring, with a yearly monitoring fee of €66 thereafter.

If interested, please see the information leaflet on how to apply, or call 01 5117 222 for more information.

<https://www.pobal.ie/app/uploads/2019/03/Seniors-Alert-Scheme-leaflet-2018-1.pdf>

A Message from the Income Team

The Income Management Team want to use this opportunity to say thank you to all our tenants who have been paying their rent consistently this year. Consistent rental income means that Circle can maintain the quality of its homes, carry out repairs and maintenance, as well as investing in new homes.

Rent Payment at Payzone Locations

Are you aware that this year Circle have added Payzone as an agent for rent collection? You can now use your rent card at any Payzone location nearest to your home. This means you can use your rent payment card both at Payzone locations and the Post office. **If you do not have a rent card, simply call us on 01 407 2110 to request one.** To pay your rent in any Payzone locations in the country, details can be found here:

<https://www.payzone.ie/consumer/agent-finder>

Government Payments

Don't forget that the Government announced in the 2022 budget that all electric account holders will receive a total credit of €600 to their accounts in three instalments of €200. You should see the first payment in your accounts now.

There are two more €200 electricity credits scheduled to help combat the cost of living. These will be issued in January and March.

You can find information about the electricity credits, what date you needed to be signed up with your energy provide to receive the credits, information about prepay meters and much more via the citizens advice website below:

https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/consumer/utilities/electricity_account_credit.html

Additionally, a one-off double payment of child benefit will be paid by November, as well as a one-off payment of €500 for those getting Disability Allowance, Invalidity Pension and Blind Pension, so make sure to check you have received all your entitlements.

Additional Needs Payment

If you are struggling financially, you can apply for the Additional Needs Payment. This is a one-off payment for increased costs of heating and electricity, furniture and bedding if you are setting up a home for the first time, funeral costs, and recurring travel costs for hospital appointments.

You can find out more here:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/4eb45-additional-needs-payment/>

Energy Costs

As energy costs are very high and with everyone trying to keep their bills down, we thought this table might be useful. This is purely a guideline, as differing suppliers will have differing tariffs and costs, so please check in with your own energy provider before making any major changes.

Appliance Type	Average Energy Usage (Wattage)	Running costs per hour	Cost breakdown example
Power Shower	9000	€3.33	10 minute shower = €0.56
Tumble Dryer	3500	€1.30	15 minutes of drying = €0.19
Hand Wash Oversink Water Heater	3000	€1.11	15 minutes of water heater = €0.28
Electric Heater Fan	2500	€0.93	1 hour of heating = €0.93
Steam Iron	2350	€0.87	1/2 hour of ironing = €0.43
Immersion	4500	€1.67	2 hours to heat tank = €3.34
Electric Kettle	2100	€0.78	5 minutes of kettle boiling = €0.06
Hair Blow Dryer	2000	€0.74	1/2 hour drying hair = €0.37
Electric Hob	2000	€0.74	1 hour of cooking = €0.74
Bread Toaster (4 slice)	1850	€0.68	10 minutes of use = €0.11
Microwave	1750	€0.65	5 minutes of microwaves = €0.05
Induction Cooktop	1700	€0.63	1 hour of cooking = €0.58
2 Ton Air Conditioner	1650	€0.61	4 hours of air condition = €2.24

Oven	1575	€0.58	30 minutes using air fryer = €0.28
2 Ton Inverter Air Conditioner	1500	€0.56	4 hours of air conditioning = €2.24
Air Fryer	1500	€0.56	30 minutes using air fryer = €0.28
Electric Mower	1500	€0.56	1 hour of mowing = €0.56
Espresso Coffee Maker	1400	€0.52	15 minutes of use = €0.13
Dishwasher (C rated)	15000	€0.65	Standard 65 Cycle
Washing Machine (C rated)	1000	€0.43	Standard 40 Cotton Wash
42 Inch LCD TV	120	€0.04	1 hour of TV = €0.04

Costs are based on a unit rate cost of 37 cents as of 7th October 2022

Have You Recently Changed Your Mobile Number or Email Address?

If the answer is yes, we want to make sure we have your most up to date contact details.

Sharing your mobile number and email address with us will allow us to keep you more informed. We hope that keeping you informed will improve your experience with us. **If you have recently changed your number/email address, please let us know. Contact us at www.circlevha.ie or call us on 01 407 2110.**

Breaking News from Development

The Circle Development team held the official ground-breaking event on the 17th of October 2022 for our new development, Richmond Place, Dublin 8, with The Lord Mayor, Caroline Conway and Minister of Housing, Darragh O'Brien, in attendance.

This project is being delivered in collaboration with ALONE, the HSE, Dublin City Council, the Department of Health and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.



Housing with Support (HwS) is a new model of housing and care provision in Ireland. The 'Housing with Support' model is intended to set a new standard for the future of housing for older people and to act as an exemplar for others to follow.

Halloween Competition Winners

We had winners from Dublin and Waterford who received a voucher for Smyths Toy Store. Well done to all. The pictures were very spooky.





Christmas Panto Lottery

As the festive season is fast approaching, have you heard the news about the Circle Christmas Panto Lottery?

Following the departure of most Covid-19 restrictions, we are delighted to say the Christmas Panto is back on the agenda this year. The tickets are limited, so to be in with a chance of securing tickets you will need to be quick!!!

To get your name in the pot you will need to send your name, address, contact number, and family composition (how many adults and how many children are in the household) to competitions@circlevha.ie or **WhatsApp 086 103 4833 before the 8th of December at 5pm**. Entries after this date will not be considered, so don't delay with your entry to avoid disappointment.

The draw will take place on the 9th of December any of the lucky players will be contact with details of how to access the tickets! Good luck to all!

So don't delay and as they say, "oh no you don't".



Non-Alcoholic Mulled Apple Cider

Smells great, it's tasty and it's also great for aiding a sore throat/cold like symptoms! Add some lemons in for extra vitamin C!

2 bottles of unfiltered apple juice (fresh not concentrate)

4 bags of Schwartz "Mulled Wine spice packet"

2-3 slices of fresh ginger

1 Naval orange, sliced and studded with cloves

Place all in a saucepan and bring to a gentle boil, then let simmer for as long as possible. Leave steeping overnight or put all ingredients into a slow cooker on low temp for the max time. The smell of Christmas this creates in your house is divine!

If it's not spicy enough for your taste, add the following until right!

****But strain in a sieve before drinking to reduce any possible grittiness!**

Quarter teaspoon of:

Ground cinnamon

Ground nutmeg

Ground ginger

(if not using fresh ginger use more ground)

Ground all spice



Holiday 2022 Opening Hours

With the Holidays fast approaching we are making plans for our phone lines. **We will be closed from 5pm on Thursday 22nd December and will reopen at 9am on Tuesday 3rd January.**

Our out of hours service will handle all **emergency call outs during this period, so please call us on 01 407 2110 for emergency repairs during this time.**



Get in Touch

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Phoenix House, 32 - 34 Castle Street, Dublin 2

Phone: 01-4072110

Email: info@circlevha.ie