



Autumn 2022

## Welcome to Circle's Autumn Newsletter

We hope that all our tenants and their families are well as the summer comes to an end. This newsletter will look at everything from safety online, national anti-bullying month and community events. We hope there is something for everyone.

A reminder that if you would like this newsletter printed and posted, please let us know by calling **01 407 2110 (Ext. 2)**, or by email **info@circlevha.ie**

### 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?
<b>General Perception Survey</b>	Quarterly (every four months)	A portion of tenants.
<b>Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)</b>	Monthly	All tenants who have had an ASB case completed in the previous calendar month.
<b>Complaints</b>	Monthly	All tenants who have had a complaint completed in the previous calendar month.
<b>New Lettings</b>	Quarterly	All tenants who have signed a tenancy agreement in the previous calendar month.
<b>Responsive Repairs</b>	Monthly	All tenants who have had a responsive repair completed in the previous calendar month.



We want to thank everyone who has taken part so far for their time and feedback. 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.

The following is a selection of results from one of our most recent surveys:

Quarter 2 General Perception Survey		
	Almost nine out of ten tenants are satisfied with the services Circle provide. Satisfaction with overall services has only dropped 1% from the previous survey.	<b>87%</b>
	More than eight out of ten tenants are satisfied that their home is safe and secure. This figure has increased by 2% since the previous survey.	<b>84%</b>
	In terms of grounds maintenance provided by Circle, nearly nine of every ten tenants effected are satisfied with the services they are receiving. This shows a 4% increase from the Quarter One survey.	<b>87%</b>
	This quarters survey found that almost four-fifths of tenants are satisfied that Circle listens to their views and acts upon them. This saw a slight decrease of 4% from our previous survey, but is still an improvement from 2021 when we scored 69%.	<b>79%</b>

We are working to create more detailed reports on our survey results, which will be published and available via our website in the coming months.

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

Our teams have been, and will continue to, make contact with tenants to get a better sense of how we are doing and where we can improve the services we offer you.

As the surveys continue we would encourage all tenants, if they are happy to do so, to please take part.

The company conducting the calls are based in the UK and there is no cost to you for accepting this call. Your call display will show a UK number with a Brighton area code **(00441279 093939)**.

## Your Tenant Advisory Group (TAG)

### TAG NEEDS YOU

#### What is TAG?

The TAG works alongside Circle staff and give their feedback and suggestions on how we can improve the services we provide to all tenants. They report directly to the Circle Board and request information on certain topics. They also review the Tenant Communication and Engagement Strategy and make sure it's on target.

#### When and where is it?

The TAG meet online via Zoom up to six times a year.

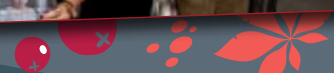


We will also have in person training coming up. We would love to see new members come along.

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

#### Who do I contact for more details?

Contact your TSO or Claire McDonnell, Tenant Engagement Officer on 086 103 4833, or email [TES@circlevha.ie](mailto:TES@circlevha.ie)



## Quality in our Diversity Project, a Piece from Marie the Intercultural Diversity Coordinator

Circle's Intercultural and Diversity project work continues to develop and grow with the first in-person gathering and workshop of the Coordinating Group hosted in the Ashling Hotel in Dublin on the 5th of September.



The Coordinating Group consists of tenants who have volunteered their time, along with Circle staff from across departments and from across the country.

It was lovely for the group to finally meet in person, to get to know each other and to start the journey of helping Circle embrace, celebrate, and understand the strength and value of the diversity and intercultural nature of our estates and communities, and how we can do things better. Tenants are the experts within their own communities, and we really appreciate the help and commitment of the tenants that have volunteered so far on this journey, along with staff.

Since the beginning of this journey, we have heard and understood from tenants how, if we can provide a service to those tenants who come from outside of Ireland, this will naturally improve services for all tenants.

Amongst the issues that came up, for example, was the language barrier and how important it is for us to make sure tenants fully understand all they need to know about their tenancy and the processes in place. As a result of hearing this we are already looking at how we can assist with language needs, and what language assistance might be helpful for new and older non-English speaking tenants when we interact and communicate.

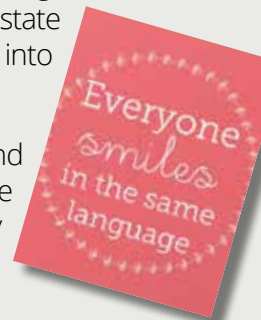
Another key issue that was raised was the emotional rollercoaster of moving into a new home. This is an issue that affects everyone no matter where they come from. The work of the Coordinating Group will allow us to explore and understand that experience and put in place systems and responses to make the process as easy as possible.



Personally, my favourite suggestion was the idea of developing/working on a better welcome pack available in different languages. This could be very helpful in removing some of the stress experienced and could also help new tenants with the difficult settling in process.

I think we have made a great start so far and I'm looking forward to the upcoming challenge of promoting the project across our communities and estates over the next few months. Part of the work involves surveying and enquiring further from all tenants about how we can be better at understanding all cultures, and what we can do to promote intercultural diversity and learning. I would love to hear your suggestions for our estate days, for example, and putting them into action.

We are still actively recruiting members and people for focus groups and surveys for the inquiry stage of the project, and we warmly welcome feedback and suggestions from all to help us build more inclusive and welcoming communities for all.



Feel free to contact me at any time for further information or clarification.

**Marie Corr**  
Intercultural Diversity Coordinator  
[mcorr@circlevha.ie](mailto:mcorr@circlevha.ie)  
01 407 2110





## Events

This was Circles first year of rolling out coordinated events across our communities. We will be looking at getting a schedule of events for next year soon. If you would like your estate to be included and have some ideas about what we can do, please get in touch. Your opinions and thoughts are always wanted.

*"I became friends with two more neighbours at the event."*

Dunlavin, Wicklow Event



*"Getting to mingle with other tenants."*

Dunlavin, Wicklow Event



Dunlavin, Wicklow Event



*"I liked the kid's entertainer along with having opportunity to meet and talk to the neighbours."*

Dunlavin, Wicklow Event



*"The community coming together and watching how happy the children were seeing the animals and enjoying their treats and getting their faces painted."*

The Walk, Waterford



The Walk, Waterford



The Walk, Waterford



Sean Treacy & Peader Kearney, Dublin



Sean Treacy & Peader Kearney, Dublin



*"I liked the ability to meet and interact in person with representatives of different departments in Circle and that it was personal."*



## Scheme Walkabouts – Improving your Scheme/Neighbourhood

This year, we have completed five scheme walkabouts. This is where relevant staff members and tenants walk around the area to identify any issues and consider potential solutions together.

If you would like this to be done in your area next year, please get in contact with your TSO or Claire McDonnell, Tenant Engagement Officer on **086 103 4833**, or email **TES@circlevha.ie**

## Community Funding Available







Are you part of a community or tenant group and looking to source funding for a project or activity in your area? Many organisations offer funding or small grants to local groups, you just need to put together a nomination.

Some examples of funding that tenant groups have received in the past include:

- Tesco Community Fund
- Community Foundation of Ireland
- Get Ireland Growing
- National Lottery Community Fund
- Local Authority Community Grant
- Heritage Council – Community Heritage Grant
- Aldi Community Grants Programme
- AIB Community Fund



As our tenants we care about you, and we want you to live happily in your home. Unfortunately, as energy costs continue to rise this can impact on your happiness as increased energy bills can lead to sacrifices being made in other areas of your spending. For some, the costs can lead to anxiety and worry, so here are some tips to try keep those energy costs down:

	<b>Boilers and cylinders:</b> We service gas boilers annually, so if yours has not been done yet please contact us and we will tend to it. Also, make sure your cylinder is properly insulated and if it isn't, then let us know.
	<b>Immersions:</b> If you use an immersion to heat water, turn it off when not needed. It's simply not true that turning it on and off uses more energy.
	<b>Educating children:</b> Educate children to conserve heat by closing doors behind them when going out or coming and going with their friends. Heat escapes an open front door very quickly, meaning your system must work harder to re-heat the home.
	<b>Dishwashers:</b> Believe it or not, your dishwasher is more efficient than you. In fact, a full dishwasher uses less than half the energy you do when washing dishes by hand and uses less water too. Just make sure you only turn it on when you have a full load to do.
	<b>Washing machines:</b> If it's not dirty, drop it to 30! Washing clothes at 30 degrees saves a huge amount of energy compared to a 40 degree wash and it gives the same results. Only use higher temperatures where heavy soiling is clear and make sure to wash full loads.
	<b>Thermostats:</b> 20 degrees should be more than enough. If this leaves you a little cold, put on an extra layer of clothing instead.
	<b>Appliances:</b> If you are buying new appliances, check their energy rating. 'A' rated appliances may be a little more expensive to buy, but will save you money in the long run.
	<b>Timers:</b> Relatively cheap to buy from hardware stores, you can set these to turn your lights and appliances on and off. These also double up as a security measure as they can turn on the lights when you're not home.
	<b>Low-energy light bulbs (LED):</b> These use way less electricity than standard bulbs and can also last ten times longer. Also, when leaving the room turn off the light. Like immersions, turning the light on and off does not use more electricity.
	<b>Kettles:</b> Who doesn't love a cup of tea or coffee? While we love tea and coffee, the kettle doesn't love our pockets. Only boil what you need and if you drink a few cups a day then consider a thermos flask to keep the water warm so you don't have to re-boil each time.
	<b>Pull the plug:</b> Standby mode on appliances still draws electricity. Plug appliances out when not in use, not only is it more efficient but it is safer.
	<b>Draughts:</b> Keep doors closed between heated and unheated rooms and use a draught excluder behind hall doors if you can feel a draught. These are relatively cheap to buy at most major homeware stores.
	<b>Meters and tariffs:</b> Check with your energy provider if you are on the most suitable tariff for your needs. Also check with them about a smart meter. A smart meter can check your electricity usage and help keep costs down.



## And finally, some of the most important things to consider with your energy bills:

**Shopping and switching:** Switching is the quickest and easiest way to reduce your energy bills. You could save hundreds of euros a year on your bills by switching supplier, as companies often offer a discount or deal to keep you as customer. With this said, be careful of pricing. While a provider may offer a cheap unit rate, they may also have a high standing charge. Standing charges apply daily no matter how much electricity you use, so keep that in mind.

If you need help with switching providers, you can give us a call and we will guide you. Alternatively, you can go online at [www.bonkers.ie](http://www.bonkers.ie) and they can help you switch.

**Are you a vulnerable customer?** The answer is "yes" if you are critically dependent on electrically powered equipment. This includes (but is not limited to) life protecting devices, assistive technologies to support independent living and medical equipment, or if you are particularly vulnerable to disconnection during winter months for reasons of advanced age or physical, sensory, intellectual or mental health.

Energy suppliers must provide customers with a free and easy way to register as a vulnerable customer. You should contact your supplier to discuss how you can register as a vulnerable customer.

**Arrears and affordability:** Always speak to your provider about your ability to pay your energy bills and plan for any upcoming energy cost increases. You should contact the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) if you need help with budgeting.



**MABS**  
Helpline: 0818 07 2000  
Mon - Fri 9am - 8pm

## Maximizing Your Income

### Family Income Supplement

This is an additional payment for those who are working but on low pay.

#### Eligibility requirements include:

- You have one or more children.
- You work 38 hours or more per fortnight in paid employment. You can also combine your weekly

hours with your partner's hours to help meet the requirements.

- You are the higher earner in your relationship.
- Your employment is expected to continue for at least 3 months.
- Your income is calculated to be below a certain threshold.

Apply online at [www.mywelfare.ie](http://www.mywelfare.ie)

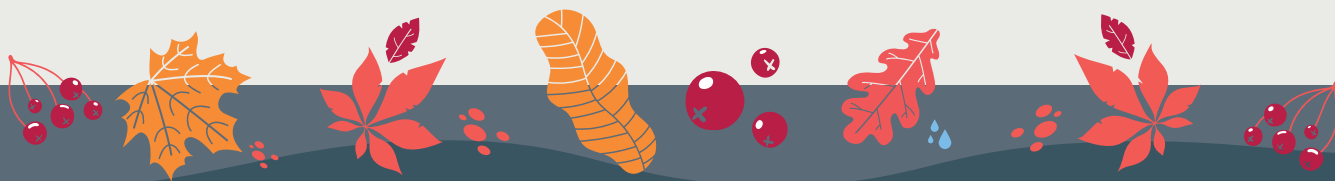
## Additional Needs Payment

Additional Needs Payments are available to help with an expense that you cannot pay from your weekly income. For example:

- An increase in your fuel or electricity costs.
- Essential repairs to your property, including motor vehicles and replacing household appliances and furniture.
- Funeral costs.
- Bedding and cooking utensils if you are setting up home for the first time.
- Recurring travel costs to hospital.
- Visiting a relative in hospital or prison.

You can apply for this payment through your local community welfare office (CWO).

<b>Living Alone Increase</b>	<b>Telephone Support Allowance</b>
<b>Contact your local Intreo office for more information on these payments.</b>	



## October is National Bullying Prevention Awareness Month.

### Let's Be Kind and Be Aware



National Bullying Prevention Awareness Month is here to educate and raise awareness about bullying and cyberbullying prevention. Tackling bullying is something that everyone can address and prevent, so let's tackle this together and not just for this month, but every day!

Children and youths who experience bullying should always reach out to a trusted adult to talk about it and to get support.



There is a lot of resources out there for parents and children on the following websites:

<https://www.sticksandstones.ie/bullying/>

<https://www.webwise.ie/youth/>

[https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Teenagers\\_coping\\_with\\_bullying\\_d5.pdf](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Teenagers_coping_with_bullying_d5.pdf)

## Stay Safe this Halloween

It's that time of year where Halloween is fast approaching. In the interest of fire safety and keeping your loved ones and furry friends safe this Halloween, we are asking all our tenants to be vigilant about the accumulation of bonfire material in the vicinity of the complexes where you live.

If you do notice an accumulation of bonfire material, please check on your local authority website and information on who to contact to remove this material should be available. For those living in the Dublin area you can email [southcentralpublicdomain@dublincity.ie](mailto:southcentralpublicdomain@dublincity.ie)



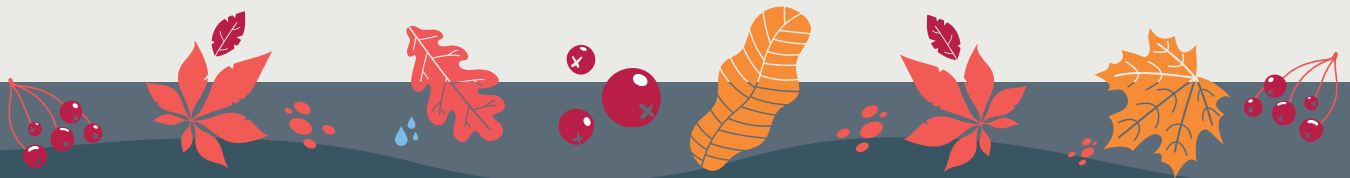
### Halloween Competition

**We are running two spooky competitions this Autumn.**

**The first one is for best dressed Halloween costume and the second is for best Halloween front door/window.**

**All you have to do is send a picture to [competitions@circlevha.ie](mailto:competitions@circlevha.ie) by Friday the 4th of November to be in with a chance to win a €50 voucher for Smyth's Toy Store.**

**The winners will be featured in the next newsletter along with their spooky pictures.**



## Surfing the Web Safely

Cybersecurity is a growing issue for individuals as well as organisations. Below are some tips and tricks on how to keep your information safe while browsing the internet.



1. Secure your Wi-Fi - Make sure that your home Wi-Fi has a secure password that only people in your household have access to. Your internet provider can advise on changing the Wi-Fi password if needed.



2. Strong Passwords - Make sure that your passwords are a mix of numbers, letters, and special characters. Don't use simple passwords such as '12345', as they can be easily guessed by hackers.



3. Two-Factor Authentication (2FA) - When creating an online account, once you have created your strong password it is also advised that you set up two-factor authentication. You will not only need your password to login, but a code sent to your mobile phone. This provides an extra layer of security so even if a hacker has discovered your password, they will not be able to access your account.



4. Click Carefully! - Browsing the internet can be like walking through a landmine. Websites may look legitimate, but if they have many pop-ups and you click on the wrong one this can download malware to your computer. Only browse trusted websites and read any pop-ups carefully before clicking.



5. Update your computer - Developers are constantly updating their operating systems to make them more secure so it is a good idea to update your computer or laptop whenever you get a notification that a new update is available.



Expected Visual of Richmond Place when finished.

## Development

Circle's Development Team are delighted to announce our first two construction projects are now underway.

We have officially broken ground on Richmond Place, located in a historic part of Dublin 8, as well as Railway Court which is in the heart of Dublin 1. These two exceptional schemes will provide integrated and innovative homes to the local community. This is a major step forward in the delivery of housing for Circle.



### Get in Touch

Circle Voluntary Housing Association  
Phoenix House, 32 - 34 Castle Street, Dublin 2

**Phone:** 01-4072110

**Email:** [info@circlevha.ie](mailto:info@circlevha.ie)