

Welcome to Circle's Summer Newsletter.

It's hard to believe we are halfway through 2023 already. The time really does fly.

Circle have been remarkably busy with new properties and projects that we are excited to tell you about.

If you have any thoughts, comments or feedback please do get in contact. We want to hear from you. Email Info@circlevha.ie or call us on **01 407 2110**.

A reminder that you can get this newsletter printed and posted to you, just let us know.

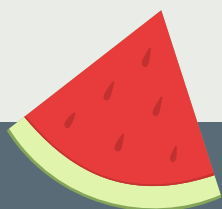
New Staff Member

Hello, my name is Kieran and I'm Circle's newest staff member. My new role will be as a Senior Asset and Estates Officer.

I have over 16 years' experience in the residential property management industry, including Residential Block Management, and I am a holder of a PSRA Licence. In my previous role I was involved in the management of private rented sector (PRS) schemes. I am committed to providing high standards of customer service and look forward to meeting you in your estates over time.



Kieran



Tenant Satisfaction Surveys 2023

Hi, my name is Aoife and I'm the Housing Insights and Policy Officer here in Circle. My role came about at the beginning of 2023, as Circle wanted to dedicate a specific person to cover particular areas of operations. Some of these key areas include:


- Monitoring and analysing the feedback being received from tenants, in particular through our various satisfaction surveys.
- Monitoring and reporting on learnings and actions being taken on foot of feedback received from tenants.
- Coordinating the review of internal housing related policies and procedures, to ensure the best possible service is being delivered to our tenants.

Now half a year into this role, I'm glad to say that we're making real progress across the teams in relation to the above. For example, from the results of our satisfaction surveys a selection of process improvements have been made. These include the weekly monitoring of work orders, to ensure repairs are carried out in line with response times, and informing tenants who log a repair what the response times will be, so there is no disappointment or dissatisfaction if a repair isn't completed as quickly as expected.



Aoife

The following is a selection of results since the beginning of 2023, compared to the final quarter of 2022:

General Perception Survey		Q4 2022	Q1 2023
	More than four out of five tenants are satisfied with the overall services offered by Circle VHA. This is an increase of 1% from Q4 2022.	83%	84%
	Almost nine out of ten tenants are happy with their neighbourhood as a place to live. Satisfaction in this regard has increased by 11% since the previous survey.	75%	86%
	Where Circle VHA offer facilities management services, the majority of tenants in these schemes are satisfied with the services they are receiving. This is an improvement of 6% since the end of 2022.	80%	86%

We have also created a series of more detailed survey reports for each quarter of the year, which are now available in the 'About Us' section of our website, under 'Publications'. Here you will find a more detailed breakdown of the results from each of our surveys. Please have a look and let us know what you think!

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

In June, Circle tenants and staff attended the first ever All-Ireland Tenant Engagement Conference.

It was great to meet colleagues and tenants from other housing bodies and learn from their tenant engagement experience.

On the day, our Director of Services, Liz Clarke, along with two of the TAG members, Lorraine and David, spoke about the importance of tenant engagement and their personal journey of why they got involved. They also spoke about the tenant to board member process and how the TAG is working towards having a board committee that reports to the board on tenant services.

We are very proud of them, getting up and sharing their stories in front of 250 people in the sector and look forward to next year's event.

We would love more tenants to come along and see what tenant engagement is all about. Please call or WhatsApp the Tenant Engagement Officer (TEO) on **086 103 4833** or email **tes@circlevha.ie**



Go Purple Day and What it Means for Us All

Friday 29th of April saw 'Go Purple Day' promoted across the country in conjunction with An Garda Síochána, raising much needed awareness of domestic violence and the need for a zero-tolerance approach to it. While we like to bring you good news stories and be as cheerful as possible, it is unfortunate that domestic violence does happen nationwide, and it is not a conversation we should shy away from.

We want to support those who are currently experiencing domestic violence, or have experienced it, and those who may know someone who is experiencing it. We share the belief that there should be a zero-tolerance approach to domestic violence and want to encourage and support our tenants to report to the Gardaí and support services. We understand that relationships can be complicated and while you may not be experiencing domestic violence, you may know someone who is and not know what to do, or believe it is none of your business.

Did you know that a continued increase in levels of domestic violence saw Gardaí attend almost 54,000 incidents in 2022 alone, which is a call to An Garda Síochána every ten minutes. The extent of the problem is everyone's business, and we want to make sure we are doing our very best to make sure people are not afraid to report or ask for support. It is important to note that domestic violence can affect everyone.

If you feel that you or someone you know might be experiencing domestic violence and you don't know

where to go or what to do, reach out to us. Your Tenancy Services Officer (TSO) will be able to guide you in the right direction on how and where to report it.

Please also see below resources and supports available for anyone who may want to report domestic violence or might want to know more about the issue and how it presents itself.

Women's Aid - Nationwide

24 Hour National Freephone Helpline 1800 341 900

Interpretation Service Available

Men's Aid Ireland - Nationwide

Confidential National Support Line: 01 5543811

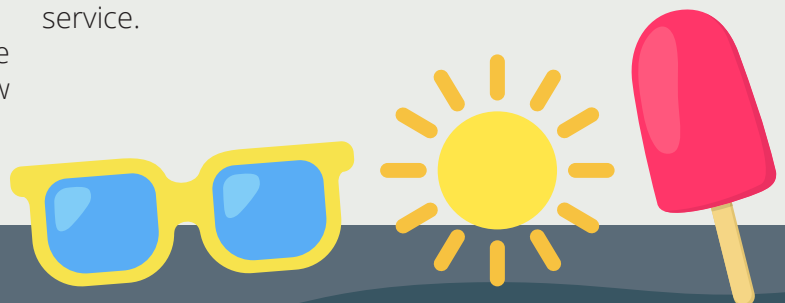
Open: Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. Voicemail and return call service outside of these hours. Confidential support e-mail: hello@mensaid.ie

Safe Ireland - Nationwide

Online directory of nationwide domestic violence support services online: www.safeireland.ie

Boots Pharmacies - Local

Women who are experiencing domestic abuse at this time can now go into their local Boots Pharmacy where there is a 'Safe Space' consultation room. From there they can assist you in contacting a relevant support service.





Help To Save Ireland's Pollinators, including our Wild Bees

A piece by our Dublin tenant Derry-Ann

It is difficult not to notice the increase in wild flowers throughout our communities recently. Our open green spaces, parks, etc., are arrayed with beautiful colourful plants, which all too often we are too quick to discard as weeds. However, these common native species, for example dandelions, oxeye daisies, red clover, birds foot trefoil, self-heal etc., have a very important role to play in our ecosystem.

Birds, bats, bees, butterflies, beetles and other small mammals that pollinate plants are responsible for bringing us one out of every three bites of food. They also sustain our ecosystems to produce our natural resources by helping plants reproduce.

According to Biodiversity Ireland, Ireland's wild bees are in trouble and need our help. There aren't enough flowers in our landscape to give the bees pollen and nectar that they need. We can all do something no matter how small to help increase Ireland's native wild bees.

The following are some of the things we can do to help:

- Leave an area on the lawn uncut. This will encourage wild plants to grow.
- Even if you don't have a lawn you can help by adding pollen and nectar herbs like thyme, chives or oregano to a pot or window box.
- Avoid using insecticides, fungicides and herbicides.
- Create nesting habitats for pollinators.

To find out more, contact **www.pollinators.ie**

**A Poem by our
Dublin tenant
Elizabeth**



Summer

**I remember the summer past
With vivid memory
The soft summer wind
The different melodies of the birds
First thing at dawn**

**As the days went by
Trips were made to sea
To collect seashells and play
Amid surf and sand
Boats went sailing by and
Light aircrafts flew overhead**

**Visits to the county side were made
The wildflowers in the meadow
sprang up everywhere of every colour**

**The cows grazed in the
fields and sheep bleated**

From a far

**We went into a
Shaded stop in the trees, to a little clearing
Where there was a holy well**

With healing water

That a monk from days past had started

A trip to stables

With polo mints in hand

For eager horses

Dogs and cats scurried around

Summertime has filled

My head with memories.





Clean Up Days

In April, our tenants in Dunlavin and Mount Neil were busy spring cleaning as part of National Spring Clean month. It was great to see all ages get involved and we got lucky as the sun was shining both days.

Both Wicklow and Waterford County Councils supported by providing bags and litter pickers, along with collecting the rubbish after the event.

If this is something you would like in your area, please do get in touch with your TSO or the TEO. We would be more than happy to support this in your community.



New Circle Website

www.circlevha.ie

Circle are delighted to announce that we have launched a brand new, easy-to-use website for our tenants.

The new website provides a host of information at your fingertips and allows you to use the quick link services at the tap of a button! These options including paying your rent, logging a repair and more.



We wanted to deliver a website which is inclusive for all, by incorporating new features such as the 'Recite Me' toolbar, which allows for different accessibility options, including translation services, text to speech and many more tools.

Our site is now inclusive for all our tenants with vision impairments, hearing impairments and neurodiversity. We have been granted WCAG Compliance (Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications of Public Sector Bodies) in accordance with the European Union Regulations 2020. Our certificate of compliance has been accredited by the National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI) and Inclusion and Accessibility Labs (IA Labs).

We are proud to hold this accreditation as the first company within the social housing sector in Ireland to deliver this type of website.

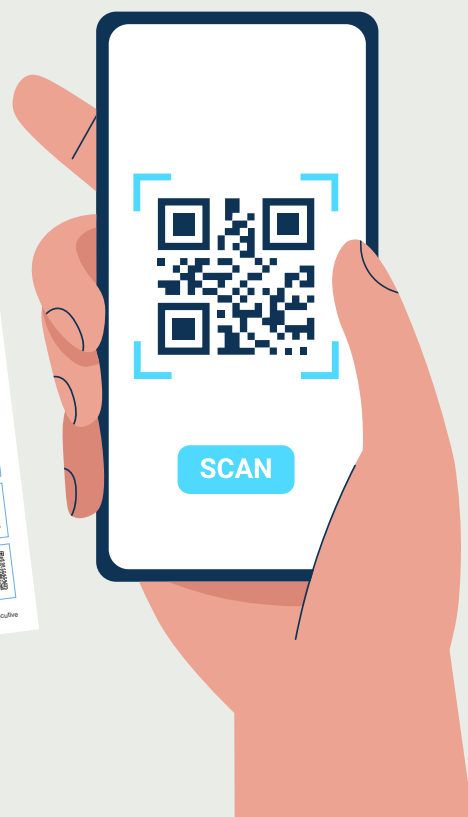
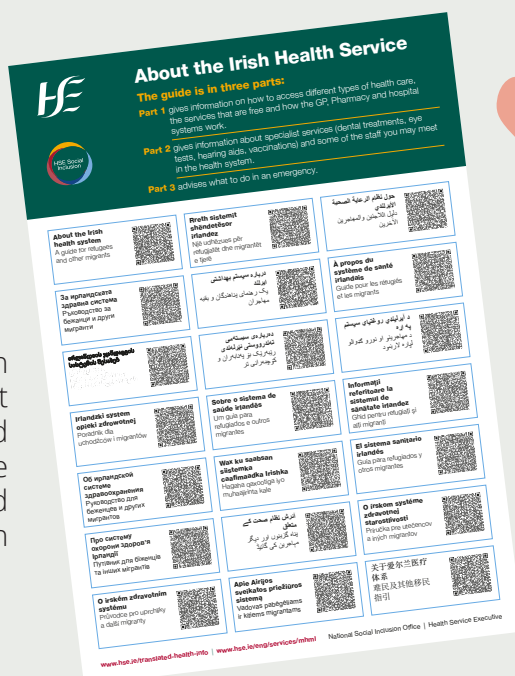
We hope you enjoy the new digital experience delivered by Circle, and we look forward to your feedback in the future. If you have any questions regarding the new website or the usability of the Recite Me toolbar you can contact: info@circlevha.ie



HSE Health and Translation

It can be hard understanding a health system, especially if English is not your first language. The HSE created this poster where you can scan the QR codes with your smart phone and it will bring you to a booklet that is in your language.

<https://rb.gy/l8ux7>

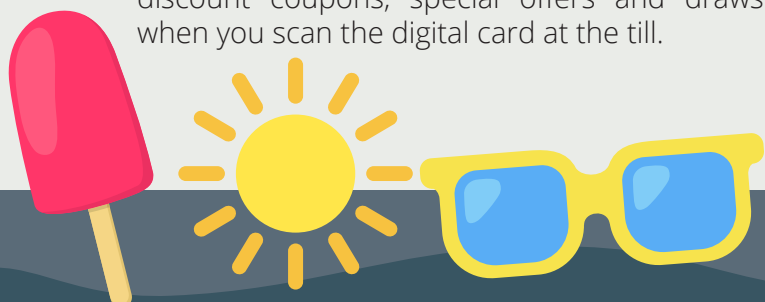


Tips for Saving - Cost of Living Crisis

Considering the current cost of living crisis in Ireland, we understand how tough these times can be when you must keep on top of your rent, bills, and general day to day living. Here are some tips that may help you balance your finances and make some savings.

- **Review your subscriptions** and direct debits. Do you really need them? It may be time to cancel some of your shopping/music/television subscriptions.
- **Shop around** for the best deals on broadband and phone plans.
- **Take advantage of supermarket incentives** like club cards and money off vouchers. Tesco has great deals on their products if you get a club card, which can also be used easily as an app on your phone. Dunnes Stores prints money off vouchers which can be found at the end of your receipt. Lidl have their Lidl Plus app which you can download to your phone to get discount coupons, special offers and draws when you scan the digital card at the till.

- **Set a budget and track your spending.** Calculate the amount of money coming in and leaving your account. You could use the free online budget planner provided by the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS): <https://mabs.ie/money-tools/my-budget/>. Once you are aware of your spending, you can figure out how much you could save if you stopped buying unnecessary products.
- **Reach out for debt advice.** You can call MABS on **0818 07 2000**, or visit their website at www.mabs.ie. They are extremely helpful and have already helped many of our tenants.
- **Avoid 'express' supermarkets.** Doing your weekly grocery shop at a large supermarket can often be far less expensive than their smaller, local express equivalents if you're looking for affordable prices.





Development: Railway Court has Topped out!

Circle are pleased to announce that we are making fantastic progress at our Railway Court development and 'topped out' at the beginning of June. A topping out ceremony is a construction tradition that has been occurring, in some form or another, for centuries and signifies that the structure has reached its maximum height. The origins of topping out are believed to date back to pre-Dark Age Scandinavia, where folklore suggests there was a practice of placing a tree on the top of a new building to appease tree dwelling spirits. In modern construction, topping out ceremonies are celebrated in different ways around the world:

- Jordan: Builders hold a religious ceremony followed by a feast.
- Denmark: The roof of the building is decorated with evergreen garlands.
- America: The final structural piece is often painted white and signed by members of the construction team.
- Germany: Laurels are hung around the chimney of a new house to acknowledge its 'birth'.

- Brazil: Branches and leaves are fixed to the building.
- Spain: A flag is raised, and all workers are invited to a lunch by the boss.

For the topping out ceremony at Railway Court, we didn't think the on-site canteen could accommodate a feast and were more concerned about branches getting in the way than we were about tree dwelling spirits! Therefore, completion of the roof was captured by drone and has been shared on our social media platforms. Although some of the examples above certainly seem like fun!

The Railway Court development consists of 47 apartments for social rent, on a key brownfield site in the centre of inner-city Dublin. Due to complete in early 2024, and with an 18-month build programme, the project is being delivered through direct construction with Circle acting as developer. Monami are contractor and the design team are being led by Sean Harrington Architects.

47
APARTMENTS
INNER CITY
DUBLIN

COMPLETE
2024



Information on Silverfish



If you've spotted small silver bugs in your home then they are likely to be silverfish – a wingless creature that can be found in paper, soap residues and even dust. While a silverfish infestation can be frustrating and give you the shivers, the good news is that they are harmless to you and there are lots of home remedies you can try to help eradicate them.

What are silverfish?

Silverfish are little nocturnal insects and get their name from their colour and their fish-like movement, thanks to their tapered tails and antennae. They move quickly, so can often out-run predators (and humans) and like to burrow in dark places. They particularly like slightly damp places which is why they are most often seen in the bathroom or kitchen.

What attracts silverfish to your house and why do I have silverfish?

If you have silverfish in your home, they have probably been there a very long time, living in the spaces between walls and under floorboards and causing no serious harm. Silverfish are attracted to food sources and look for dark, moist and warm places to hide, like behind furniture or in damp spaces like bathrooms.

They will stay in these voids and only venture out into living spaces if the areas are cool and damp, which is why they occasionally come out into our kitchen and bathrooms. Keeping these areas dry and clean will help to deter them as will regular vacuuming to remove anything that would attract them out such as small particles of food and dust.

What you can do to eliminate silverfish!

There are a number of home remedies that can help get rid of silverfish. Try these kitchen cupboard essentials to help you get rid of a minor silverfish problem:

- **Cinnamon** – We humans may love the smell of cinnamon, but silverfish despise it. Put ground cinnamon, cinnamon oil or cinnamon sticks in infected areas.

- **Citrus fruits** – Silverfish also dislike the citrus scent of orange and lemon peel. If you use peel you must replace it regularly. You can also make a citrus spray using lemon juice and water and spray the area.
- **Cucumber peels** – Silverfish also hate the smell of cucumber. It can be used as above.
- **Cloves** – Dried cloves contain eugenol which repels silverfish. Place whole cloves in the infected area.
- **Salt** – Silverfish are attracted to salt, but eating it will cause them to become dehydrated and die. Salt will also absorb damp in the area.

It's a great idea to use essential oils to clean your home or as a home fragrance (such as candles and diffusers) to keep them away.

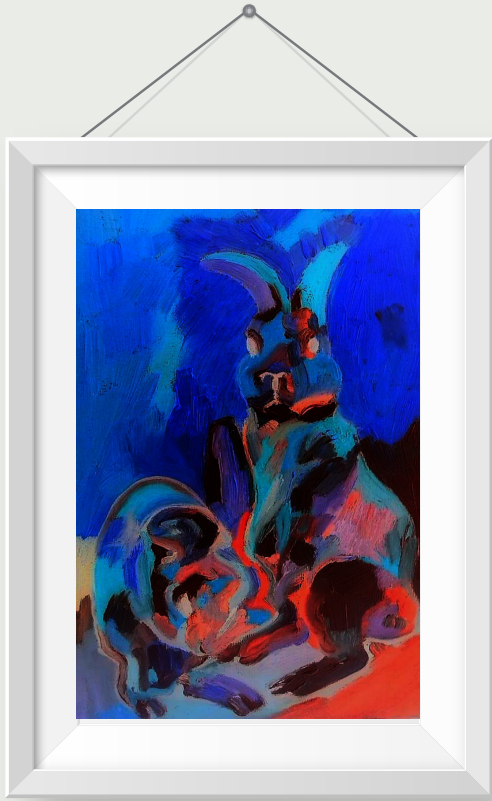
How do you prevent silverfish returning?

Fixing damp problems can help prevent silverfish returning long-term. That means sealing leaky pipes, increasing ventilation (think extractor fans in bathrooms), installing dehumidifiers and regularly opening the windows. Silverfish tend to feed on dust and debris, so regularly vacuuming carpets, clearing away clutter like magazines and papers, and dusting can make all the difference to eradicating and preventing a silverfish infestation. Ensure dried foods like pasta, pulses and cereal are also stored in airtight containers.

If in doubt call our Customer Services Team who can advise you on pest control options



Competition Section



Thank you

*to all who entered the easter
art competition.*

*The winner was Stephen
with his
Easter Rabbit picture!*

Circle's Summer Picture Contest

As we talked about the wildflowers and bees earlier in the newsletter, we would like to see your gardens or outdoor spaces that have flowers, trees or even some wildlife.

Use your camera or smart phone to take a picture and send it to competitions@circlevha.ie, or WhatsApp it to 086 103 4833 by the 31st of August to be in with a chance of winning a One For All voucher and being featured in the Autumn Newsletter.

