



Happy New Year to all our tenants and your families.

As 2024 starts off, we hope you will enjoy our Spring Newsletter. It has some information about new activities, such as taking part in a free training course, reading some eBooks or even volunteering some of your time with Circle's tenants engagement groups.

The new year is always a good time to try something new. So go on, be brave and get out there!



Something Different To Get Moving

Do you live in Dublin and always wanted to get into running? Well here is your chance. **Inner City Running Club** started up in 2020 during Covid lockdowns and has only grown in numbers since then. It is for all abilities and takes place on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays.

For more information, have a look at their **Facebook page** or email them on **innercityrunningclub@gmail.com**

There are over 350 running clubs in Ireland, to check out what clubs are in your area **click here** or if you would like something a little more casual and fun, Gym and Coffee have listed out nine social running groups around Ireland too, **click here** to find out more!

Have you heard of Borrow Box?

Click this link to find out more

<https://www.borrowbox.com/>

With BorrowBox, your library is in one app. Borrow eBooks and eAudiobooks free from your library using the BorrowBox app.

Say hello to your future library, wherever you are, whenever you are for free.

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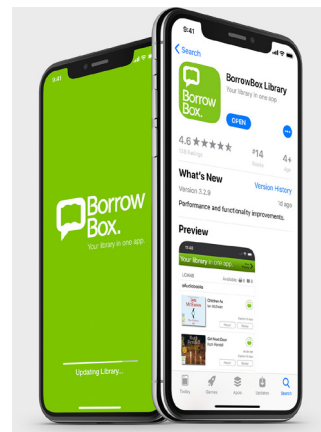
Select your library service.

Step 4:

Activate with your library membership.

Step 5:

Borrow free eBooks and eAudiobooks.





New Staff Members

Hi! My name is **Liz O'Connor** and I started working with Circle as a Tenancy Services Coordinator in early January. I have worked in the voluntary housing sector for several years: in tenant relations, tenancy management and estate management. I'm now delighted to be working for an Approved Housing Body (AHB) with strong core values and where everything that we do comes from putting tenants first. I'm passionate about ensuring that everyone has a good home, feels safe in their environment and always feels heard. I'm looking forward to meeting many of you in the coming months.

*Uhoo I'm Liz
Looking forward
to meeting you.*



Hi, I'm **Margaret Spinda**, the Senior Property and Facilities Officer. I joined Circle VHA as a Senior Property and Facilities Officer in June 2023. I am responsible for delivering industry-leading property management services for the Circle VHA portfolio. This includes providing a range of occupier and other facilities management services for multi-unit developments, and I am also responsible for managing the external spaces across our estates. I have over 15 year's experience in facilities management, both in the public and private sectors. I am passionate about new and innovative technologies in the industry and sustainable development projects. I recently graduated from the Atlantic Technological University in Facilities and Property Management. In my free time, I enjoy running, hiking, and tasty food.

*Hi. I'm Margaret.
I love to run and
enjoy good food...
Let's chat soon*



My name is **Bitto**, and I have recently started as Income Administrator in October last year. Although my background is finance and I have no prior experience in housing, it's been a privilege to understand this sector and the incredible impact that Circle has and will continue to make where tenants are our focus, and their wellbeing is priority. I truly admire this vision and I am thrilled to be part of this thriving organisation and I am looking forward to working with you all!

*I'm Bitto.
Looking forward to
being part of the
Circle Family*



Tenant Satisfaction Surveys 2023 Recap




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

Our tenant satisfaction surveys are still running on both a monthly and quarterly basis, and we continue to use this information to better understand where improvements can be made, and where we are performing well.

With the conclusion of our 2023 surveys, we are now able to share our results from the year as a whole, and compare them to the results from previous years.

To see the survey results in detail, you can find our survey reports for each quarter of the year, within the 'About Us' section of our website, under '**Publications**'. Please have a look and let us know what you think!

As an example, some of our results include the following:

Survey Question	2023	2022
 Almost nine out of ten tenants were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live in 2023.	85%	83%
 Where Circle are directly responsible for facilities management services, nearly seven-eighths of tenants were satisfied with their waste collection services during the year.	86%	83%
 By the end of 2023, where tenants had reported a responsive repair, the majority were satisfied with the ease of reporting the repair.	95%	95%

The feedback you are providing through these surveys is vitally important and is something we are listening to and taking on board. We are making real progress across the teams in terms of studying the responses being received and implementing changes based on the survey responses, to ultimately improve the services we're providing you.

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). We would encourage you to save this number to your phone so you recognise Acuity when they call. There is no cost to you for accepting this call.



Lucan Gardai Community Clinic

Starting the 10th of January 2024, the clinic will be held: Every Wednesday, 19:30pm-21:30pm, in Adamstown Youth and Community Centre.

Did you know the Gardai have an Instagram page?

Give them a follow to find out more about your local area. They can be found under: An Garda Síochána (@gardainsta)

We have launched a Tenant Portal!

Sign up to it to be in with a chance to win a €50 One For All voucher.

In order to sign up to the new portal the email address we have on file for you must match the email address you sign up for the portal with. If you're having difficulties please get in contact with us so that we can update your contact details.

Sign up
to be
in with a
chance to
WIN

WE HAVE LAUNCHED A TENANT PORTAL

Circle Voluntary Housing Association are thrilled to announce the launch of our new Tenant Portal.

You can access your statements, log a repair or view an array of tenant documents at the touch of your fingers!!

By utilising the portal which you can add as a shortcut on your phone you can obtain an array of information in a timely manner.

For those who sign up and use the portal you will be entered into a chance to win a €50 One For All voucher!!

Well? What are you waiting for get yourself logged in now!

For more information on how to use the portal continue reading.



How to access the Portal

1. To log on to the Tenant Portal you can log on to the Circle VHA website at:
<https://circlevha.ie>
2. Then follow the link to Tenant Portal.

How to log into the Portal

1. You need email address you have provided to Circle to log in.
We realise that some tenants may not be using the original email supplied on your application form. If this is the case, you can update your email address by forwarding your new or preferred email to:
tenancy.officer@circlevha.ie

2. Your Tenancy Reference Number is your password. Your Tenancy Reference number can be found on the top right hand corner of your rent Statement.
If you need assistance with this you can contact your tenancy officer by emailing:
tenancy.officer@circlevha.ie

You can also call Circle VHA on **01-4072110** and speak to any member of our tenancy, rents or customer service teams.



The Training Corner

In 2023 we started a trial training programme, offering training opportunities to tenants. The training included SafePass, Manual Handling, Fire Safety and First Aid. Some of the training sessions were merged with staff training, meaning our tenants and staff were learning together. This is what some of the people who did the training had to say about it:



Joanne completed First Aid Training in Dublin:

I attended First Responder (first aid) course in Ayrton training centre Tallaght. It was so interesting, literally everything has changed since my last course with work years ago. We had an exam on the last day. I got 19/20 (delighted with myself!) because it's the first exam in donkeys! It's been years since I did a first aid course, so it's been on my to do list to do a refresher's course. Being self-employed (makeup artist) it's good to have the knowledge on what to do if someone has an accident/stroke/fall when I'm working with them. Plus, having ageing parents, it's good to know what to do in that situation if ever it arose.

I learned how:

- To do CPR (that it's also nothing like on telly!),
- How to use a defibrillator,
- What to do if someone's having an asthma attack, faints, and loads of other information on situations that might occur.

Hopefully I will never have to put any of the training into practice, but I'm already passing on the relevant info to family and educating them on things that they should know for emergencies, like where to locate their closest defibrillator.

Thanks so much for sending me on the course and all your help, I really appreciate it, and couldn't recommend it more!



Brian completed a Fire Safety Course in Wexford:

I felt there was a need to learn more about fire hazards in the building. The training was worthwhile. It would probably be a good idea for everyone to be trained in on fire safety.



Niall completed Safe Pass in Dublin:

I needed revalidation of my safe pass card, and it was next to near impossible to get approved to get revalidation off my employer. It was totally worthwhile; safe pass is a standard requirement for specific employers. I got on fantastic in the training, was a long day but very well run.

If you would be interested in attending these short courses or similar, get in touch with Claire, the Tenant Engagement Officer via email at: cmcdonnell@circlevha.ie

March is ANTI RACISM Month

#ARM2024

Circle is a proud member of the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR). This is what INAR says about the month of March:

March is an important month for both Irish and global Anti-Racism Movements due to various international celebrations focusing on combating racism and celebrating diversity taking place.

21st March marks the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. On that day in 1960, the Apartheid regime's police opened fire and killed 69 Black people at a peaceful demonstration for equality and against apartheid laws in Sharpeville, South Africa. Since this date has been declared, in remembrance of the harmful impact of racism on individuals and communities, people across the globe on that day show their opposition to racism and solidarity with those affected by it. Every year the day has a different focus to mark the most burning anti-racism issue.

The week leading to 21st of March marks the European Action Week Against Racism celebrated annually under different slogans.

Additionally, to the above dates, the week following 21st March marks the UN Week of Solidarity with the People Struggling against Racism and Racial Discrimination.



<https://inar.ie/march-the-anti-racism-month/>

As part of Circle's work in building awareness of cultural diversity we are planning a calendar of webinars aimed at enhancing all of our staff members understanding of the challenges people face and how we can support.

We're also interested in hearing from you!

We want to create and deliver a calendar of cultural events nationally with our tenants. If you have ideas or would like to get involved please get in touch with us.



Spring Cleaning Tips

You can clean almost anything with baking soda, vinegar, lemon and water.

Put it in a bottle, make a paste with it, use it for your drains. It's a power mix of natural products that are wonderful for cleaning.



For Cleaning Your Appliances

The Fridge

Clear out all the items inside, shelves and drawers included. If possible, leave the shelves and drawers to soak in warm water and dish soap, whilst cleaning the inside.

Mix a paste of one part baking soda to 7 parts water and add in a few drops of lemon juice for smell.

Smear the paste around the inside and let sit for a minute or two (working top to bottom) then wipe clean with a warm damp cloth.

Give the shelves and the drawers a good scrub, especially into the corners and crevasses, then rinse with warm water and put back in.

Did you know by leaving a small jar, open with baking soda in it, is a great way to get rid of bad smells in your fridge.

Defrosting The Freezer

You should defrost your freezer if the ice build-up is more than ¼ inch thick.

Check your owner's manual for specific instructions on how to defrost your freezer as some more modern freezers defrost themselves.

Turn off and unload the freezer, clean out the drawers and give them a soak in hot soapy water.

Put something down, like a cloth or towel to catch the melting ice, and let it melt. Once melted, give the inside a wipe with some baking soda/water/lemon drop mix.

Reminder to turn your freezer back on when you're finished cleaning!

The Oven

Pre heat the oven to 225 degrees. Cut 3 lemons into thirds, squeeze into an oven safe dish and add some water in. Place the cut lemons into the dish. **When the oven is hot, pop the dish inside and let the steam work it's magic – roughly 15 mins. This can also be done in the microwave – put lemons in a bowl and put on for about 10 mins.**

For tougher to clean ovens, remove shelves and leave to soak like with the fridge – mix up some wonder paste: 2 cups baking soda, 2 cups lemon juice plus some warm water in a bowl, and smear around the inside of the oven. Leave it sit for a good 25 minutes. You may need some form of a scrubbing brush for this to ensure all grease and grot is removed. Then wipe clean with a warm wet cloth. This method can be used on the stove too.



Washing Machines and Dishwashers

Put a cup of vinegar on the top shelf of the dishwasher/into the drum of the washing machine and run on a full cycle. This will help eliminate bad odours from your machines.

To give them a deeper clean, mix a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of vinegar with warm water and a few drops of lemon juice. Use a toothbrush to get into the hard to reach parts including the detergent dispensers, the rubber seals and all the areas needed, then wipe with a warm wet cloth.

Drains

To keep those drains moving freely and unblocked - every week, throw down some boiling water. Every other week put half a cup of baking soda followed by half a cup of vinegar and let sit for 15 minutes. Then rinse it through with boiling water.

Use wire unblockers to scoop out any unwanted hair or debris before you attempt the above to ensure no overflowing. You can also get wire snakes to keep the toilets unblocked.

Remember:

- Never put anything down a drain that shouldn't be there - this includes the toilet.
- Set oil/grease into a cup/piece of tinfoil to dry out then dispose of it in the bin.

- Don't scrap food waste into the sink - this can build up and cause the sink to block.
- Sanitary waste should never be put in the toilet, wipes included!

Drains are your responsibility as a tenant, but if you would like some advice on how to keep them clear or have any questions, please call customer services.

Carpets

To spruce up any carpets or mats in your home - sprinkle them with baking soda and let it sit for 30 minutes then Hoover up. This should eliminate any nasty odours hanging around.

Trickle Vents

The main benefit of a trickle vent is the ventilation that allows a potentially sealed room to have a natural flow of air to help reduce moisture in the air. Cleaning them is very important.

To clean them:

- Use a Hoover
- Damp cloth
- Microfiber duster or
- Paper cloth.

Improving The Tenant Experience

We are delighted to introduce animated video content to our website to showcase different elements of your tenancy in video format!

You will find a range of videos on the 'My Home' section of the website. This will include videos from 'how to log a repair' to 'identifying mould within your home' and the steps you can take to report it or remove it. Watching these short videos will hopefully address your queries in relation to your tenancy and home.

We are delighted to have launched these videos and will be bringing more to your screens regularly, so keep your eye on our website!!



How to find the videos:

- Visit **www.circlevha.ie**
- Click on the 'My Home' section of the website:
<https://circlevha.ie/my-home/>
- Scroll slightly and you will find the "Tenant Videos" section of the site.
- Press play and enjoy!

For those who are receiving a printed copy of this newsletter, you can follow the steps above by visiting www.circlevha.ie and tapping the 'My Home' tab found at the top of the screen. Alternatively, you can scan the QR code here using the camera on your phone – open the camera app on your phone, hold it in front of the code and follow the link that pops up on screen.

Mould Brochure

Many homes in Ireland are affected by damp and condensation, which can lead to mould growth. Certain activities can increase the problem but good practices can prevent this from becoming a bigger problem.

We want to ensure that you have a warm and safe home to live in, so we have developed a Mould Brochure for tenants to reference. This brochure outlines the causes of mould growth, tips on how to reduce the chance of mould growth in your home and Circle's response to reports of mould. **The brochure is available on our website by following this link - CircleMouldBrochure**

If you notice mould in your home, please contact our Customer Services Team on **01-4072110**, option 2. You can also email us at **repairs@circlevha.ie** or log a repair via our new Tenant Portal.



Spring Clean In Lamba Apartments

Tenants and staff were hard at work giving this area a spring clean. It was great success and tenants removed all the unwanted items from the corridors and their outside area. The pictures speak for themselves. Well done to all who took part!

If you would like some support organising this for your complex/area, get in touch with your Tenancy Services Officer (TSO) via email tenancy.officer@circlevha.ie or by calling 01 407 2110



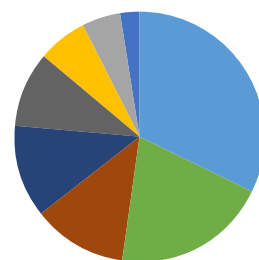
Development

The Development Team had a busy 2023, delivering 231 homes in our communities. This was broken down into 67 Cost Rental and 164 Social and consisted of 43 one bed, 59 two bed, 117 three bed and 12 four bed homes.

These new homes were delivered in the greater Dublin area, Cork area, Waterford, Louth and Limerick.

We are looking forward to a busy 2024 with a target to deliver 300 new homes, including 99 from our ongoing construction projects in Dublin 1 and Dublin 8

Total Homes Delivered by Local Authority



- Cork City Council
- Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown
- Louth County Council
- Cork County Council
- Fingal County Council
- SDCC
- Dublin City Council
- Limerick City & County Council
- Waterford City and County Council

We are delighted to let you know that ALONE, Circle Voluntary Housing Association (VHA), Dublin City Council and the Health Service Executive (HSE) will be launching our:

Housing with Supports homes at Richmond Place, St. Michaels Estate, Inchicore, Dublin 8 in September 2024.

We are holding community information session at Richmond Barracks on the 20th March, to answer any questions people might have between 1pm and 3pm, or between 4pm and 6pm.

The 'Housing with Support' model will provide a supportive environment that enables older people to live full lives in their own homes within their own community. The 52 homes are owned and managed by Circle VHA, and the support services will be provided by ALONE in collaboration with the HSE. All homes have been designed to promote independence and reduce the need for older persons in the community to move into long term residential care.

Every home within the scheme has been designed with older people's needs at the centre, each home is fully independent, and residents can avail of social and care supports which will be provided onsite.

Eligibility:

If an older person is interested in one of these new homes, they must meet the following criteria to be considered:

- Be 60 years of age or over.
- The older person must have been assessed as being qualified for social housing support by Dublin

City Council and be placed on the Housing List, or.

- The older person must have been successfully assessed as being qualified for Dublin City Councils Financial Contribution Scheme.
- The older persons current housing is not suitable for the current and future housing needs (housing too small or large and cannot be easily adapted to meet current or future care and housing needs).
- Have care and/or social support needs due to a recognised vulnerability that would prevent the older person from remaining living in the community.

For further information in relation to the Dublin City Council Housing List and Financial Contribution, please call 01-222 2201. If an older person would like to express an interest in the housing, they may also contact the relevant agency below for more information and advice.

ALONE

email: eo@alone.ie

Tel: 0818 222 024

Circle VHA For tenants of Circle VHA

email: info@circlevha.ie

Tel: 01-407 2110

Dublin City Council Allocations Team

Tel: 01-222 2201



Smoke and Carbon Alarms

It is VERY important to check both these alarms are working correctly for health and safety reasons.

You can test your smoke alarm by pressing the button until the alarm sounds. If it doesn't sound, you need to replace the battery.

If your smoke alarm starts to beep or "chirp" on a regular basis, you will need to replace the battery immediately. Never leave them disconnected! Because alarm sensors wear out, they will need to be fully replaced at least every 10 years.

Please contact the Repairs Team if, after changing the batteries, you still have an issue with your smoke detector.

Carbon monoxide alarms detect poisonous gas and help provide an early warning.

To test your carbon monoxide detectors, press and hold the test button on the alarm. The detector will sound 4 beeps, a pause, then 4 beeps for 5-6 seconds.

If the alarm does not test properly, install fresh batteries, make sure the batteries are installed correctly, be sure the alarm is clean and dust-free, and then test the detector again. If it still does not test properly, contact the Repairs Team and notify them.

It is important to test your CO detectors monthly to ensure they are working properly.



Tips To Get Your Garden Up And Running This Spring

Whilst it is your responsibility as a tenant to look after your garden or balcony, we understand that many people are beginners at tending a garden of their own, so here are a few tips to get started.

Yes, it's cold but spring is the time to put in the work to have a great looking garden in summer.

It might be a little early to start cutting grass, but there are plenty of jobs that can be done now that will make your garden look good throughout the year.

- Clear out all rubbish and leaves, sweep around pathways and driveways.
- If you are looking for a neat looking lawn, cut around the edges, along lawn edges and paving. This will make it easier to keep the edges during the summer when grass is growing.
- Cut back trees and shrubbery now, so they will flourish in summer time.

- Spring is a good time to plant perennials like pansies, primroses, carnations, which are all bright, colourful and give your garden (and pots) immediate life.
- Introducing some brightly planted pots at this time are instant colour without having to dig.

Remember, if you like daffodils or tulips, the bulbs need to be planted in September/October to see the results in spring – bare this in mind for later in the year. March and April are a good time to plant wildflower seeds. These look amazing during the summer months and are bee friendly too.

Apartment and duplex dwellers can also get in on the act. Brightly planted pots and containers are great for balconies or entrance ways!





Pictures From Over the Holiday Period

Some pictures from the
Christmas Panto in Dublin and
Cork, along with the winners of
tickets to see Elf in Waterford.

Thanks to everyone who entered
and then shared their pictures.
Great to see all the smiling faces.