

## Free Home Repair Service for Older People -

### Age Action's Care and Repair

Getting small repairs done at home can be difficult, especially as we get older. Age Action's Care and Repair service helps older people by doing small jobs around the house, making homes safer and more comfortable to live in. This free service is available in Dublin, Cork and Galway, as well as in other areas through local community groups.

#### What Can They Help With?

Care and Repair offers help with small DIY jobs that might be tricky to do alone.

These include:

- Changing light bulbs
- Installing smoke alarms
- Fitting handrails
- Moving light furniture

The Care and Repair team does not do large jobs like plumbing or electrical work, but they can recommend trusted tradespeople if you need bigger job done.



## Help for People Leaving Hospital

If you or someone you know is coming home from the hospital, Care and Repair can help make the home safer. They can remove trip hazards, install handrails, or even move a bed downstairs to make things easier.

#### How to Get in Touch

If you need help, you can call Age Action to arrange a visit:

- **Dublin: 01 475 6989**
- **Cork: 021 206 7399**
- **Galway: 091 527 831**

You can also email [careandrepair@ageaction.ie](mailto:careandrepair@ageaction.ie) to find out if the service is available in your area.

#### Is the Service Free?

Yes! The Care and Repair service is free. You only need to pay for any materials needed, such as light bulbs or smoke alarms.

#### Trusted and Safe

All Care and Repair staff and volunteers are trained and Garda vetted. They carry official photo ID and will only visit after an appointment is made.

What's inside...

Win an Easter Hamper!  
Join our TAG team  
Gardening Tips  
See our upcoming events  
Become a secret shopper!

# New Website Helps People Find Housing and Support Services

A new website called Home and Supports Hub has been launched to help people find information about housing and support services in Ireland. It is designed for people who need extra support to live independently, including older people and people with disabilities.

The website was created by The Housing Agency as part of the National Housing Strategy for

Disabled People (2022-2027). It brings together useful information in one place, making it easier for people to find the help they need.

## What can you find on the website?

The Home and Supports Hub is easy to use and includes information on:

### Renting a home

- How to apply for social housing
- Renting from a private landlord
- Cost rental housing (homes with lower rents than private rental)



### Owning a home

- How to buy or build a home
- Grants and supports available for buying or adapting a home
- Information on selling a home if needed



### Making your home work for you

- How to apply for grants to adapt your home
- Ways to make your home safer and more comfortable
- Assistive technology and equipment that can help with daily living



### Support services

- Health and care supports available from the HSE
- Advice on well-being and mental health
- Information on advocacy and legal rights



### Housing rights and rules

- Information on housing policies and laws in Ireland
- Government plans and strategies to improve housing
- Your rights as a tenant or homeowner



### Real stories from real people

- The website also shares personal stories from people who have found housing and support through different services.



## Why should you use this website?

The Home and Supports Hub makes it easier to understand housing options and find support services. Instead of searching different websites, you can find everything in one place. The website is designed to be simple, clear, and easy to read. If you or someone you know needs help with housing, visit:

[www.homeandsupportshub.ie](http://www.homeandsupportshub.ie)

This website can help you find the right information to make informed decisions about your home and support needs.

*I could have ended up being a crisis case, but now I don't have to worry.*



**Home and Supports Hub**

# How To Use Your Air to Water Heat Pump Efficiently

Many homes now use an air to water heat pump instead of gas or oil heating. This system heats your home and provides hot water using electricity. If you used to have separate electricity and heating bills, you would now have one electricity bill.

## What is a heat pump?

A heat pump is a heating system that takes heat from the air outside and uses it to warm your home and provide hot water. It is an energy efficient alternative to gas or oil because it only uses electricity.

## How your heat pump works

- The heat pump takes heat from the air outside and uses it to warm your home's radiators and hot water.
- It runs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to keep your home at a steady temperature.
- The system is energy efficient. To keep costs low, it is best not to switch it on and off frequently.

## Keeping your home warm

Your home's thermostat controls the temperature. The heat pump keeps a steady heat in your home.



## Key things to remember

- Radiators will feel warm but not very hot. This is normal.
- Keeping the system running as it was set up is the most cost-effective way.
- If your home feels too hot or too cold, adjust the thermostat by 1 degree at a time. It may take up to 24 hours to feel the change.
- Do not turn radiators off in some rooms. This can make the system less efficient and may increase your electricity bill.
- It is okay to open windows for fresh air but do this for short periods.

## Hot water and your heat pump

Your heat pump also provides hot water to your home.

- It heats water to 48°C to make sure you always have hot water.
- If a lot of hot water is used, the system may prioritise refilling the hot water tank before heating your radiators. This is normal.
- Once a week, the system runs a special high-heat cycle to kill bacteria (legionella protection cycle). This heats the water to 60°C at night, so your hot water may feel hotter than usual on that day.

## Using your heat pump in different seasons In Summer

You do not need to turn off the heat pump in summer, instead:

- Lower the thermostat to 18°C so the system only turns on if your home gets colder than this.
- If you go on holiday, lower the thermostat instead of switching the system off. This saves energy.

### In Winter

Heat pumps work well in cold weather.

- You may see steam (condensation) coming from the outdoor unit - this is normal.
- Sometimes, ice can form on the outdoor unit, but the system has a built-in defrosting function to remove it.
- Do not turn off the heat pump in winter. If it is off, the defrosting function will not work, and the system could stop running properly.

### Frequently asked questions

#### Do heat pumps use a lot of electricity?

Heat pumps use electricity but replace the need for gas or oil, making them more energy efficient.

#### Are heat pumps noisy?

No, heat pumps are not very loud. They sound similar to a fridge or a gas boiler (40–60 decibels).

### Should I keep my heat pump at a steady temperature?

Yes. It is best to keep it at the same temperature all the time. Turning it off and on or up and down can use more electricity.

### Looking after your heat pump:

Your heat pump will be inspected every year, but you can help by:

- Not covering your radiators or blocking the outdoor unit.
- Checking the outdoor unit in winter and gently removing snow or ice.
- Cleaning the outdoor unit if it gets dirty. Use a soft brush or a garden hose.
- Trimming bushes and trees to keep the unit clear and working properly.
- By following these simple steps, your heat pump will run efficiently and keep your home warm.

## Our Customer Service Team is Always Here to Help with Your Queries

If you have a repair issue in your home that is not your responsibility, we can assist you. If you are unsure about what repairs you are responsible for, you can check page 20 of your [Tenant Handbook](#) for full details.

We encourage you to report any issues as soon as you notice them. This helps prevent further damage and ensures repairs are carried out as quickly as possible.

We also strongly recommend getting contents insurance when you move in. This covers the cost of damage to your belongings, for example, if you have a leak and it damaged your flooring, Circle does not cover these costs.

### Important Information for Emails and Web Submissions

If you are contacting us by email or through our website, please always include your:

- Name
- Address
- Contact number

This information helps us assist you faster and ensures we can verify your request under GDPR regulations. We are required to have at least three pieces of identifying information to keep your details secure and up to date.

If you forget to include this information, we will have to ask for it before we can help you. This may cause delays, so please make sure to include your name, address, and contact number in your email subject line or in the required fields on the web submission page.

### We are always here for you

Our phone lines are open Monday to Friday 9 AM to 5:00 PM and our team is always ready to assist.

We are always working to improve our service by listening to your feedback. Our goal is to help you stay safe, warm, and comfortable in your home. If you need us, do not hesitate to get in touch, we are happy to help!



# New Homes on the Way: What to Expect in 2025

Elaine, Circle's New Business Manager, shares an update on exciting new developments ahead. 2025 is set to be one of the busiest years yet for our New Business and Development Team. We are currently working with our developers to bring new housing projects to the contract stage. This will help us deliver much needed social homes from 2025 to 2028.

Right now, our pipeline includes 43 projects, which could provide over 2,700 homes in the next 2 to 3 years. Our mission is simple, to provide quality homes for people with different housing needs. But it's not just about building homes, it is about making sure they are in the right places, at the right price, and designed to the highest standards. One project that made a real difference before Christmas was Fearach Cnoic, Milehouse in Enniscorthy, Co Wexford.

The first phase of 17 homes was completed just in time for families to move in and celebrate Christmas in their new homes.

This phase included:

- **6 two-bedroom homes**
- **11 three-bedroom homes**

These homes were allocated to families nominated by Wexford County Council. And the good news doesn't stop there!

- **Phase 2 (20 more homes) is set to be completed in middle of 2025**
- **Phase 3 (33 homes) will follow in 2026**

This new development meets the highest building and environmental standards, resulting in A-rated energy efficient homes. These superb homes stand out for their high-quality design and finish, making them great places for families to live.

Constructed by Arcona Developments, the scheme is ideally located just off the Milehouse Road in Enniscorthy, with easy access to Enniscorthy town and the M11 motorway. We are proud to work with Arcona Developments on this project and look forward to delivering even more quality homes in the coming years.



# Have Your Say – Join Our Tenant Advisory Group (TAG)!

Do you want to make a difference in your community? Do you have ideas on how to improve services for tenants? If so, we want to hear from you!

We are looking for passionate tenants to join our Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) – a group that shapes decisions and helps improve the way we do things at Circle.

## Why Join?

- **Your voice matters** – influence the decisions that affect you and your neighbors.
- **No experience needed** – we provide ongoing training and support.
- **Flexible and easy** – only 6 meetings a year, mostly online.
- **Circle will cover any expenses if you need to travel to meetings.**
- **Meet new people** – connect with other tenants and build a strong community.
- **Make real change** – help improve services and make life better for all tenants.

## What's involved?

- **6 meetings a year** – mostly online, with two meetings in person.
- **Share ideas, raise issues, and help find solutions**

Interested? Get in touch today!

Email [tes@circlevha.ie](mailto:tes@circlevha.ie)

Your Voice  
Your Community  
Your Impact!

## What Events Would You Like in Your Area?

We want to bring fun, useful, and engaging events to your community, but we need your ideas!

Would you like to see clean-up days, gardening projects, or family-friendly activities in your area? Maybe a skills workshop, social meet-up, or fitness class?

Here are some ideas – but tell us what you think!

- **Community clean-up days** – help tidy-up shared spaces and make your area shine.
- **Planting and gardening projects** – add greenery and brighten up the neighborhood.
- **Cooking and nutrition workshops** – learn easy, affordable, and healthy meal ideas.
- **DIY and repair workshops** – fix and upcycle furniture, bikes, or household items.
- **Arts, crafts and culture events** – creative workshops, music, or storytelling sessions.

- **Health and fitness activities** – walking groups, yoga, or fun sports for all ages.
- **Social meetups and coffee mornings** – get to know your neighbours.
- **Seasonal events and family days** – Christmas fairs, Halloween fun, or summer barbeques.

What do you want to see? Tell us what events you would like in your area! If you have ideas or suggestions, we would love to hear from you.

Get in touch today! [Tes@circlevha.ie](mailto:Tes@circlevha.ie)



# Understanding OMCs and How They Affect You as a Tenant



If you live in a home provided by Circle, you may have heard about OMCs (Owners' Management Companies). But what are they, and what do they do?

This guide will help explain what OMCs are, how they work, and how they affect your home and your building's maintenance.

## What is an OMC?

An OMC is a company set up to look after shared areas in apartment buildings or housing estates.

This includes things like:

- Hallways and stairs in apartment buildings
- Lifts and common outdoor spaces
- Car parks and bin storage areas

Every homeowner in the building is usually a member of the OMC and they pay a service charge each year. This money is used for cleaning, repairs, insurance, and other upkeep of shared spaces.

## How Does This Affect You as a Tenant?

Circle, as your housing provider, can manage properties in two different ways:

### 1 When Circle Manages the Whole Building

In some developments, Circle is fully responsible for the building and all common areas.

This means Circle:

- Look after repairs inside your home and in shared spaces.
- Organises maintenance for lifts, lights, doors, and other common areas.
- Collects rent and ensures the building is safe and well-maintained.
- If something is broken in your apartment or in the building, you can report it to Circle.

### 2 When OMC is in Charge of the Building

In other developments, an OMC is responsible for the shared areas, and Circle only looks after your apartment.

This means:

- Circle will fix repairs inside your home like your heating, taps, or doors.
- The OMC looks after shared areas like lifts, hallways, and parking.
- OMCs charge a service fee to cover costs but Circle, as a landlord, pays this fee, not you.
- If there is an issue inside your home, you report it to Circle. But if there is a problem in a shared area, Circle may have to ask the OMC to fix it, and this can take longer.

## Who Do You Contact for Repairs?

If you are unsure who is responsible for a repair, you can check this simple guide:

Type of Repair	Who Fixes It?
Broken tap, heating, or toilet	Circle (report as usual)
Broken lift, hallway lights or parking gate	OMC (report to Circle)
Rubbish collection or cleaning common areas	OMC (report any issues to Circle)

## Why Does This Matter?

Understanding how OMCs work helps you know who is responsible for repairs and why some issues take longer to fix. It also helps explain why some buildings are managed differently than others.

If you ever have questions, you can always contact Circle for more information.

# Meet Agata,

## Circle's Financial Controller

Behind the scenes at Circle, the finance team plays a key role in keeping everything running smoothly. We spoke with Agata, who is our new Financial Controller, to learn more about her role, what makes finance interesting, and how her team contributes to building thriving communities. From breaking the myth that finance is just about numbers, to sharing her love for the outdoors, Agata gives us a glimpse into her work and what inspires her.



### What do you like to do in your free time?

I like reading books and spending time outdoors. If you know of any good hiking trails let me know!

### What is one piece of advice you would give to someone starting in finance?

A career in finance can be as challenging and rewarding as you want to make it. Make sure to align your career with your interests and the sky really is the limit!

### Can you tell us a little about your role in the finance department?

In a nutshell, my role as a Financial Controller is to ensure the smooth running of the finance department.

### What do you enjoy most about working in finance?

No two days are the same and there are plenty of challenges along the way.

### What do you think is important for tenants to know about the finance team?

We are a team of people with a common purpose, and it is to make our contribution through the work we do towards building thriving communities for Circle's tenants.

### What is one thing people might not realise about your job?

It is not boring! Yes, there are elements that are predictable, but finance is so much more than that. I interact with a lot of people outside the finance department regularly, so it is not just about numbers. Building and maintaining relationships with internal and external stakeholders is just as important.



# Meet Damian –

## Our new Assets Repairs Manager

We are delighted to introduce Damian, who recently joined Circle VHA as our new Assets Repairs Manager. Damian brings a wealth of experience from the world of commercial property and facilities and has hit the ground running since joining the team. Keep reading to find out more about Damian.

Hi Everyone,

I'm Damian, and I'm thrilled to introduce myself as the new Assets Repair Manager for the Assets team at Circle VHA. I joined the team in January, and what a journey it has been! Transitioning from the world of commercial property and facilities to the realm of social housing has certainly kept me on my toes.

From day one, the pace has been incredible, especially with the rollout of our corporate Strategy "Niti-Plan 27." I feel fortunate to be surrounded by an outstanding team that go above and beyond in their roles. The warm welcome I've received across all departments has made the transition smooth, and I truly appreciate the fantastic working environment here.

A little bit about me outside of work I'm married to my amazing wife Pearl, and together we have three beautiful daughters. When I'm not at Circle, I have a passion for motorcycles that I channel into organising charity events.



One of my proudest moments is running the Grand Tour event, which raised an impressive €38,000 last year for Jigsaw, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health. This year, the event kicks off on June 11th, and I'm excited to have support from some of our Circle staff. Anthony Golding and Kevin Gallagher will join me on this adventure, while Anthony rides alongside, Kevin and his son will be in the support van, ready to assist the team of 45 motorcyclists over their 1500km journey.

I believe in the importance of giving back, and with the motorcycle community's help, I have raised over €150,000 in the last three years for those in need. If you'd like to support the Circle VHA team, please email me at [ds Sheridan@circlevha.ie](mailto:ds Sheridan@circlevha.ie) and I will send you the details.

Thank you for welcoming me into the Circle Team. I'm looking forward to working with each of you and making a positive impact together.



# Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) – What You Need to Know

We know that dealing with anti-social behaviour (ASB) can be stressful, frustrating and sometimes frightening. ASB covers a wide range of things, from noise and nuisance to serious criminal behaviour. This short guide gives a brief overview of what to do if you experience ASB and how to report it. Knowing the right steps can help make sure the problem is dealt with properly.

## Step 1: Is it a crime? Call the Gardaí first

If the behaviour you are seeing is criminal, like drug dealing, violence, threats, or serious vandalism, the first step is to call the Gardaí on 999 or 112. Your safety, and the safety of others, comes first. Once you have reported the crime to the Gardaí, you should also let your Tenancy Services Officer (TSO) know if the person involved is a tenant or visitor to a tenant.

## Step 3: Witness accounts can really help

If other tenants saw what happened, ask them to come forward as witnesses. We understand this can feel uncomfortable, but first-hand witness statements are very strong evidence in ASB cases.

## Step 4: Be prepared – these cases take time

It is important to know that dealing with ASB can be a slow process. In many cases, the TSO will need to gather a lot of evidence before they can take action. This can be frustrating and we understand that, but strong cases are more likely to succeed.

## Step 2: Report the ASB to your Tenancy Officer

If the ASB is not criminal, or if it involves a tenant or their visitors, you can report it directly to your TSO.

When reporting ASB, try to provide:

- A clear description of what happened.
- The date, time, and place of the incident.
- Who was involved (if you know).
- Any evidence you have – like photos, videos, or CCTV, if available.

Your TSO will aim to keep you updated as the case progresses, so you are not left wondering what is happening.



## What counts as ASB?

ASB covers a wide range of behaviour, including:

- Noise problems (late-night parties, shouting, loud music)
- Verbal abuse or threats
- Intimidation or bullying
- Damage to property
- Drug use, drug dealing, or criminal activity
- Nuisance caused by visitors

Not every annoyance counts as ASB. Everyday living noises, such as children playing, DIY during reasonable hours, or cooking smells, are not usually considered ASB.

## We are improving how we handle ASB

We are currently updating our ASB policy with input from tenants to make it clearer, fairer, and easier to follow. Our goal is to deal with ASB more effectively and to support tenants better when they are affected.

## Need help or advice?

If you are unsure whether to report something, or if you are feeling unsafe, your TSO is here to support you. You are never alone in dealing with ASB – we will work with you to find the best way forward.

# Money and Budgeting Advice

## Did you know

You can access free advice from MABS (the Money Advice and Budgeting Service) about maximising your income, budgeting and dealing with debt. For more information have a look at their website - [www.mabs.ie](http://www.mabs.ie)

You can call their freephone number from 9 AM – 8 PM Monday to Friday on: **0818 072000** to speak to an advisor. You can also request a call back or email them at **[helpline@mabs.ie](mailto:helpline@mabs.ie)**

## Tips on how to maximise your income

1.



### Fuel Allowance, Living Alone Allowance and Telephone Allowance

These are just some additional payments that you may be entitled to. Check [www.mywelfare.ie](http://www.mywelfare.ie) for a full list of entitlements or call into your local social welfare office for more advice.

2.



### Household Benefits Package

This is a payment to help with the cost of your electricity or gas bill and the TV licence. Check with your local social welfare office for eligibility criteria or check online at <https://services.mywelfare.ie/en/topics/pensions-and-older-people/household-benefits/>

3.



### Family Income Supplement

This is a means-tested payment for people who are employed and have dependants. Check <https://services.mywelfare.ie/en/topics/parents-children-family/working-family-payment/> for more information.

4.



### Back to Education Allowance

If you are already in receipt of a social welfare payment and you are thinking of returning to education, you may be entitled to the Back to Education Allowance. This is a weekly allowance which is paid throughout the academic year. For more information check <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/418e3f-back-to-education-allowance/>

5.



### Additional Needs Payment

If are struggling with covering the cost of additional unexpected expenses, you may be entitled to the Additional Needs Payment. This is a once off payment for people who cannot reasonably meet expenses out of their weekly income, such as funeral costs. Check eligibility criteria at <https://services.mywelfare.ie/en/topics/community-welfare-services/additional-needs-payment/>

For all rent queries, or to pay your rent over the phone, call the Income team from 9 AM to 5:00 PM Monday to Friday on **01 4072110** and press '1'. Alternatively, you can email **[rent@circlevha.ie](mailto:rent@circlevha.ie)**

# Stay Safe Online:

## Simple Cybersecurity Tips

We all use the internet every day - for shopping, banking, work and keeping in touch with friends and family. However, online scams, hacking, and fraud are becoming more common. It's important to know how to protect yourself.

### What is Cybersecurity?

Cybersecurity is about keeping your personal information safe online. It helps stop hackers from getting into your email, social media, or bank accounts. The most common online dangers include:



- **Phishing scams** – fake emails or messages trying to trick you into sharing personal details.
- **Viruses and malware** – harmful software that can steal or damage your data.
- **Weak passwords** – simple passwords that hackers can easily guess

### How to Stay Safe from Online Scams

Phishing scams are a common trick where scammers pretend to be someone you trust (like your bank or a delivery company) to steal your details. Here's how to protect yourself:

- **Be careful with emails and messages** – if you get an email or text asking for personal details, don't click on any links. Look out for spelling mistakes or strange email addresses.

- **Check if it's real** – if an email looks like it's from your bank, don't click the link. Instead, go directly to the official website or call them to check.
- **Use strong passwords** – avoid easy-to-guess passwords like 123456 or password. Use a mix of letters, numbers, and symbols. A password manager can help you keep track of them.
- **Turn on extra security** – Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) adds another layer of protection. This means you need a second step (like a code sent to your phone) to log in.
- **Keep your software updated** – always install updates on your phone, laptop, and apps. They help fix security problems and keep hackers out.
- **Check your bank and online accounts** – keep an eye on your bank statements and online accounts. If you see anything suspicious, report it right away.
- **Final Tip** – if it looks suspicious, do not click it! Scammers are always finding new tricks, so staying informed is the best way to protect yourself. Take a free cybersecurity course and learn how to stay safe.

If you would like to learn more about cybersecurity, here are some free courses:

- **Coursera** - offers beginner-friendly courses like Cybersecurity for Everyone. Visit: [coursera.org](https://www.coursera.org)
- **edX** – provides free courses from universities like Harvard and MIT. Visit: [edx.org](https://www.edx.org)
- **Open Security Training** – A good option if you want to dive deeper into cybersecurity. Visit: [opensecuritytraining2.github.io](https://opensecuritytraining2.github.io)

# Journaling For Your Mental Health

## So what is journaling?

Journaling is a self-care exercise that involves recording your life events and related feelings and thoughts. It can be a way to declutter your mind and cope with stress, anxiety, and depression. As you put your experiences into words, you can begin to organise thoughts, express and process emotions, identify patterns, and reflect on ways to improve your well-being.

## The benefits

Talking about your thoughts and feelings to other people can have many benefits, especially when you're going through tough times. It can give you a chance to unburden yourself, get feedback, and brainstorm solutions. When a friend, family member, or therapist isn't available or sharing isn't an option, journaling can be a helpful alternative. Journaling allows you to confront past issues and organise your thoughts. It can also be a tool for gaining insight. As you reflect on your experiences and emotional reactions, you may notice patterns emerge. Journaling can be particularly useful for people struggling with issues they don't want to share with others or feel they can't talk freely about.

## Types of Journaling

**Expressive writing:** otherwise known as 'written emotional disclosure', expressive writing involves writing down your thoughts and emotions about a situation. Writing non-stop for several minutes, you disclose your deepest thoughts regarding an upsetting or traumatic event, helping you to process your feelings and gain insight.

**Gratitude Journal:** this type of journaling encourages you to focus on positives to cultivate a sense of gratitude and improve your mood. Some research shows that gratitude journaling can increase feelings of life satisfaction, lower stress, and serve as a buffer from stressful life events. Gratitude itself is linked to a decrease in worry and rumination and an increase in optimism and motivation.

**Visual:** with this style of journaling, instead of using words, you make drawings, paintings, or other visual art that represent your experiences.

**Bullet Journaling:** this journaling approach involves creating separate logs for future, monthly



and weekly tasks and tracking your progress. Writing down your tasks and goals may help you to better manage your time and responsibilities, reducing stress in the process. Keeping a bullet journal can be an especially beneficial style of journaling if you have ADHD or a similar disorder that makes it difficult to stay on task.

## So how do I start?

**If writing things down on paper isn't your style, you can also:**

- Type yourself a message in an email app, text message, or notes app on your phone, tablet, or laptop.
- Talk into a recorder, such as using the audio recording function on your phone.
- Video record yourself on your phone.

**If you are struggling and don't know where to begin, try some of these prompts to start:**

- Describe a setback you experienced in life. How did you grow from that experience? What lessons did you learn?
- Write a list of several things you would like to accomplish tomorrow. Make sure the items on the list are realistic and measurable.
- Write a narrative about your best possible future self. In this scenario, consider where you are in life, and what goals you have yet to accomplish.
- Write a letter of gratitude to people in your life. Write about treasured memories with these individuals and the ways in which they've made your life brighter and fuller.
- Write three good things that happened to you (either recently or throughout your life). How did they improve your life? What caused those events to happen?
- What are the five top things that make you happy?
- What advice would you give to yourself if you could go back in time as a teenager?
- If money didn't matter, what would you choose to do with your life?
- Describe the happiest day of your life.
- What's one thing your parents have thought you that has never left you?



# A New Chapter for Tenant Engagement





On March 24th, we officially launched our Tenant Communication and Engagement Strategy 2025-2027 at Richmond Barracks, marking the start of an exciting new chapter for tenant engagement. The event brought together tenants, staff, key service providers, developers, and local council representatives to discuss the importance of working together to build stronger, more connected communities.

A key highlight of the event was a panel discussion exploring why tenant engagement matters and how different voices and experiences shape the services we provide.

The panel included

<b>Piter Birsam</b> Member of Circles Tenant Advisory Group (TAG)
<b>Breda Harty</b> is a Family Liaison Officer with CENA representing Traveller Led AHB
<b>Brian Dillon</b> is the CEO of CENA representing Traveller Led AHB
<b>Mary Murphy</b> is a Policy Analyst with AGE ACTION
<b>Reuben Hambakachere</b> Intercultural Facilitator

## The TCES 2025-2027 is built around four key areas:

 <b>Communication:</b> Ensuring tenants have clear, accessible, and timely information.	 <b>Work Together:</b> Strengthening relationships between tenants, staff, and partners.
 <b>Inclusivity, Equality and Diversity:</b> Making sure all tenants, regardless of background, feel heard and represented.	 <b>Learning and Development:</b> Creating opportunities for tenants to build skills and get involved in shaping services.

This launch event was just the beginning and we look forward to working closely with all our tenants and partners to bring this strategy to life. Over the next three years we will be putting these commitments into action, so stay tuned for updates and ways to get involved!

# It's Competition Time!

## Win an Easter Hamper!

Spring is in the air, and Easter is just around the corner! To celebrate, we are giving away a fantastic Easter hamper filled with seasonal treats. Entering is easy – answer this simple Easter-themed question:

**What do children traditionally hunt for at Easter?**

Send your answer along with your name, address and contact details to **TES@circlevha.ie**, **WhatsApp 086 103 4833**, or post your entry to Phoenix House, 32-34 Castle Street, Dublin 2, D02 WR44 by 5PM Friday 18th April 2025.

**One lucky winner will be chosen at random.**

**GOOD LUCK, AND HAPPY EASTER!  
THE WINNER WILL BE NOTIFIED.**





# Sorting Out Problems with Your Neighbours – A Simple Guide

We all want to live peacefully and get along with our neighbours, but now and then, small problems can crop up. It could be something like children playing loudly outside, or a neighbour playing music early in the morning. Most of the time, these types of issues can be sorted out by talking to each other without needing anyone else to get involved. We encourage all tenants to try and sort out small problems directly, if it's safe to do so.

If you are having a problem with a neighbour or their visitors, here are some simple steps you can try. Remember, if you need advice or support at any stage, your Tenancy Services Officer (TSO) is always happy to help.

## 1 Try to see things from their side

Sometimes neighbours are not aware they are upsetting you and what feels like a personal dig is just someone going about their day. Before jumping to conclusions, it can help to ask yourself:

- Do they know this is bothering me?
- Could something else be going on in their life?
- Would I want them to speak to me first if the situation was reversed?

**A little understanding can go a long way.**

## 2 Take a breather before you talk

When you are upset, it is easy to say something you might regret later. If you can, take a bit of time to calm down before you speak to your neighbour. Unless someone's safety is at risk, it's always better to wait until everyone is calm.

## 3 Explain the problem calmly and clearly

When you are ready to talk, try to:

- Stay calm and polite.
- Avoid blaming or saying things like "you always" or "you never".
- Be clear about what's happening. For example: "I hear you singing in the shower at 6AM on Sundays."
- Explain why it's a problem for you. For example: "It wakes me up, and I can't get back to sleep."
- Suggest a possible solution. For example: "Would you mind keeping the singing down or showering a bit later?"

## 4 Listen to their side too

This part is not always easy, especially if you are annoyed. Listening does not mean you have to agree, it just shows you are willing to hear them out.

People are much more likely to meet you halfway if they feel listened to.

You could say something like: "I understand you like to sing in the mornings, but it is waking me up. Can we find a way that works for both of us?"

## 5 Try to agree on a simple plan

You do not need to be best friends, you just need to live peacefully beside each other. A few helpful things to agree on:

- A compromise you can both live with.
- How you will handle small issues in the future.
- If the conversation becomes unsafe or disrespectful, politely end it and walk away.

### What if this does not work?

If the problem does not improve after you have tried talking, you might need help from a mediation service. Mediation is when a neutral person helps both sides come up with a fair solution.

If you would like to know more about mediation or need help contacting a service, your TSO can





# Balcony Gardening:

## Create Your Own Green Space

You do not need a big garden to grow plants, your balcony can be a perfect spot for a little green haven. Even in Ireland's unpredictable weather, you can grow flowers, herbs, and even vegetables with a bit of planning.

### Check Your Balcony First

Before choosing plants, look at your balcony:

**Is it sunny or shady?** Some plants love the sun, while others prefer shade.

**Is it windy?** Strong winds can dry out plants, so you may need sturdy pots or windbreaks.

### Choosing the Right Plants

**For sunny balconies:** try tomatoes, strawberries, or herbs like rosemary and thyme.

**For shady balconies:** ferns, pansies, and fuchsias grow well in low light.

**Hardy choices:** lettuce, spinach, and parsley can handle cooler temperatures.

**Climbers for small spaces:** sweet peas, ivy, or clematis can grow up a trellis.

### Picking the Right Pots

Make sure pots have drainage holes to prevent water from collecting at the bottom.

Plastic pots hold moisture well, while terracotta pots look great but dry out faster.

Use good-quality compost made for pots – it helps plants grow better.

### Caring for Your Balcony Garden

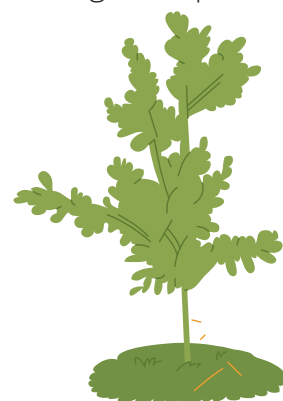
Water regularly, especially in warm weather, but do not overwater.

Feed plants with plant food every few weeks to keep them healthy.

Add colour with flowers like geraniums, petunias, or trailing plants in hanging baskets.

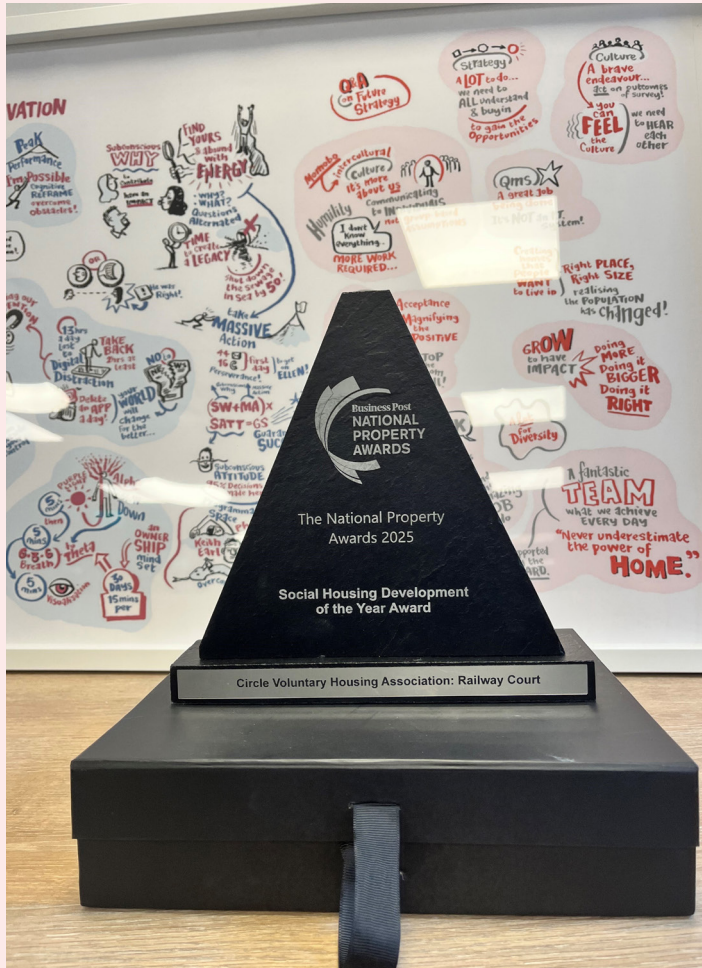
### Enjoy Your Green Space!

Balcony gardening is a fun way to bring nature into your home. Whether you grow herbs for cooking or flowers for a splash of colour, it's a great way to enjoy the outdoors, even in the city. So, get planting and enjoy your little green space!



# Circle Wins Prestigious Award for Railway Court, Dublin

We are excited to share some fantastic news: Railway Court, Railway Street, Dublin, has won **'Best Social Housing Development'** at the Business Post National Property Awards!



This is a national award that celebrates the very best housing projects across Ireland, so it is a huge honour for everyone involved in bringing Railway Court to life, including you, our tenants who now call Railway Court home.

## What makes Railway Court so special?

Railway Court is more than just a housing development, it is a place where people and families can really feel at home. The development offers 47 modern, high-quality apartments, with a mix of 1, 2 and 3-bedroom homes to suit different family sizes. It was designed with community in mind, giving tenants a safe, welcoming place to live and connect with neighbours.

## Some of the special features that helped Railway Court win this award include:



Own-door access for ground floor homes, giving a real sense of ownership and community.



A beautifully designed courtyard, providing a shared outdoor space where neighbours can relax, children can play, and everyone can enjoy time outside.



Smart design choices like secure entrances, good lighting, and carefully planned shared spaces that help build a friendly and safe community.

## A proud moment for Circle and our tenants

Railway Court is Circle's first ever direct construction project, meaning we worked directly with designers and builders to make sure everything met the highest standards.

This award shows what can be achieved when we work together – tenants, builders, designers, and housing providers – to create not just homes, but great places to live.

## What's next?

We are proud of Railway Court and the positive community that is growing here. We look forward to building even more high-quality homes in the future, learning from the success of Railway Court, and continuing to put tenants at the heart of everything we do.

If you would like to know more about the award or Railway Court's journey, feel free to get in touch with the Tenant Engagement Team. We are always happy to chat.

# Tenant Satisfaction Surveys 2024 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. 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 2024 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:

The feedback you are providing us 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.



Survey Question		2024	2023	2022
	The majority of tenants in 2024 were satisfied that Circle provides a home which is safe and secure.	90%	85%	83%
	Almost nine out of ten tenants were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live in 2024.	89%	85%	83%
	Throughout 2024, most tenants were satisfied with the helpfulness of Circle's staff.	90%	84%	89%
	By the end of 2024, where tenants had reported a responsive repair, the majority were satisfied with the repairs service they received.	92%	89%	94%

If you have call display on your phone, the call display will show the number 01 699 4503. 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.

# Repairs: What you are responsible for

Our Customer Services Team often receives questions about repairs that tenants are responsible for. To help, we have outlined some of the most common queries below. You can also find a full list of tenant responsibilities in your Tenant Handbook CVHA-Tenant-Handbook.pdf (pages 20–23).

## Blocked Drains and Toilets

If your drain or toilet is blocked, it is your responsibility to clear it. Most blockages happen because unsuitable items have been flushed or put down sinks, such as:

- Wipes (including “flushable” wipes)
- Nappies
- Kitchen roll or blue paper towels

To prevent blockages, only flush toilet paper and avoid pouring grease or washing food scraps down the sink.



## Pest Control

Issues with mice, silverfish, or other pests are the tenant's responsibility.

- For silverfish you can use ant powder or other treatments available in supermarkets or hardware stores.
- For mice you will need to manage the issue yourself or contact a pest control company.

If pests have entered due to gaps or holes in walls or cupboards, we will repair the damage after you have dealt with the infestation.

## Bath/Shower Seals and Doors

If the seal around your bath, shower, or shower door is loose or has gaps, it is your responsibility to reseal it as soon as possible.

A broken seal can cause leaks, leading to damage. If this happens, you may be charged for repairs.

Fences

If your fence is damaged, even due to storms, strong winds, or overgrown hedges, it is your responsibility to repair or replace it.

We recommend speaking with your neighbour to arrange repairs together and share costs where possible.

## Damage Caused by a Tenant

If any fixtures in your home are damaged, for example:

- A hole in the wall
- A cracked toilet or sink
- Broken glass

You must report it to us immediately. These repairs will be recharged to you, but addressing them early can prevent further damage and higher costs.

## Damage After a Leak

If a leak causes damage to your flooring, Circle does not cover replacement costs. The flooring should be covered under your content's insurance, which we recommend arranging when you move in.

**What Circle will repair:** plastering, electrical repairs, and any structural damage caused by the leak.

**What is your responsibility:** replacing flooring and redecorating, such as painting.

# Bringing Communities Together:

## A Look Back at Recent Events

Over the past few months we have been out and about in our communities, bringing tenants together for coffee mornings, information sessions, and practical workshops. These events are a great way to meet your Tenancy Services Officers (TSOs), connect with neighbours, and get useful advice on different topics.

### Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Clinic in Castletroy, Limerick

In Castletroy, we held an ASB clinic, giving tenants a chance to ask questions and raise concerns in a safe and supportive space. The session helped provide guidance on reporting ASB issues and what steps can be taken to improve the community.



### Joint Coffee Mornings in Peadar Kearney and Railway Court, Dublin

We teamed up with local groups in Peadar Kearney House and Railway Court for a coffee morning where tenants could chat with staff, share ideas, and build a sense of community. These mornings are a simple but important way to stay connected and informed.



### Meet Your TSO Coffee Morning in Donabate, Dublin

We also hosted a 'Meet Your TSO' event in Donabate, giving tenants the opportunity to put a face to a name, ask questions about their tenancy, and discuss any local issues.



### Composting and Kitchen Waste Workshop in Thornton Heights, Dublin

At Thornton Heights, tenants learned about composting kitchen waste and how small changes at home can make a big difference for the environment. To support greener living, Panda waste provided free kitchen caddies to help tenants start composting straight away.



### Afternoon Tea in Youghal, Cork

Our tenants in Youghal came together for a relaxing afternoon tea, offering a chance to socialise, catch up with neighbours, and enjoy some well-deserved refreshments.



### Consultation Coffee Morning in Deerpark, Tallaght, Dublin

At Deerpark, we held a consultation coffee morning, where tenants could share ideas on what activities and events they would like to see happen within their development. Your voice matters, and these sessions help us understand how we can better support you.



We were delighted to see so many tenants getting involved in these events and look forward to meeting more of you at future gatherings.

# Join Us at Our Upcoming Events!

We have more events planned in the coming weeks and we would love to see you there! Whether you want to meet your TSO, learn something new, or just enjoy a cuppa with your neighbours, there is something for everyone.

If you are interested in attending an event, come along and join us!

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to our team.



Event	Type of event	Where	When	Time	TSO
<b>Easter Event</b>	Social Seasonal Event	Wicklow Fairgreen Manor	14 <sup>th</sup> April	11:00-14:00	Philip
<b>Kilkishen Planting Day</b>	Community Improvement	Clare, Kilkishen	15 <sup>th</sup> April	11:00-15:00	Conon
<b>Castletroy Planting Day</b>	Community Improvement	Limerick, Castletroy	16 <sup>th</sup> April	10:30-15:30	Conan
<b>Easter Event</b>	Social Seasonal Event	Dublin, Lanestown	17 <sup>th</sup> April	13:00-15:00	Carole
<b>European Neighbours Day</b>	Cultural Awareness Day	Dublin, Parknoe House	8 <sup>th</sup> May	12:00-15:00	Eoin
<b>Estate walk-about followed by tea/coffee</b>	Community Improvement	Waterford, Butterfield	22 <sup>nd</sup> May	11:00-15:00	Helena
<b>Neighbours Day</b>	Social Event	Dublin, Brickfield	18 <sup>th</sup> June	11:00-13:00	Debbie
<b>Healthy Eating Classes</b>	Educational	Dublin, Tallaght, Deepark	TBC	TBC	Sophie
<b>Summer Party</b>	Social Seasonal Event	Dublin, Rathers Lane	11 <sup>th</sup> June	11:00-13:00	Mary

# Nature and Biodiversity at Richmond Barracks Garden



**Meet Polly, the Gardener and Garden Programmes Facilitator at Richmond Barracks in Inchicore, Dublin. Polly has been working to expand the garden's biodiversity, creating a space where both people and wildlife can thrive. Through workshops and community efforts, the garden has become a welcoming green space for tenants and visitors to enjoy.**

Polly said, thanks to participants in a recent eco-gardening and native Irish trees workshop, we have planted 15 more native Irish trees, expanding our hedgerow habitat. These new additions help support biodiversity, creating a richer environment for birds, insects and other wildlife.

Speaking of wildlife, the real stars of 2025 so far have been the birds.

Each morning and evening, Brent Geese soar overhead in their striking V formations, breaking up the winter sky. A Buzzard can often be seen navigating the air, chased by a trio of Herring Gulls, while a charm of Goldfinches (Lossair Coille) brightens the leafless Silver Birch, bringing flashes of colour to the garden.

If you are ever in Inchicore, Dublin, or live close by, you are welcome to visit the garden at Richmond Barracks, say hello to Polly, and enjoy this peaceful green space. Families with children can also pick up a biodiversity activity sheet at reception, perfect for young nature enthusiasts!

Polly and her team look forward to welcoming you.



# HELLO EVERYONE!

## I'm Cónan...and I'm new!



**Cónan here, Tenancy Services Officer, working with Circle since July 2024.** I enjoy working in Housing, it's such a fast-paced and dynamic working environment. Like any job it has its ups and downs, good days and bad days, but it's incredibly rewarding to be involved with providing safe and secure homes for families and individuals across the country. Giving out keys of a new home to a family that were living in homelessness is an unparalleled feeling!

In my down-time one of my favourite activities to do is travel! I am very lucky over the last few years to have been able to visit some amazing places across the world together with my girlfriend.

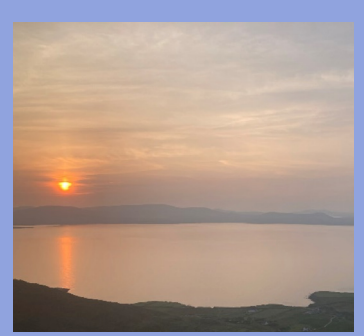
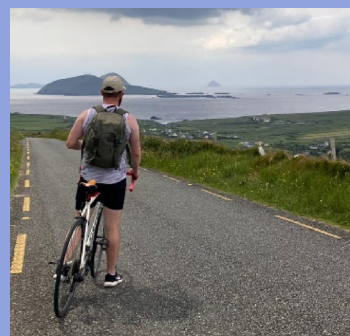
However, if I'm being honest, my favourite place to travel is Ireland (weather permitting). I would trade all of the far-flung holidays for a summer of sun along our coast and on our mountains.

Among my favourite counties to visit is Kerry, from the mountains of Killarney to the stunning Ring of Kerry, with a special shoutout to the stretch between Caherdaniel and Waterville, which rivals any coastal route in the world, and is cycling, snorkelling and kayaking heaven!

But my own Hook peninsula, Fethard On Sea in Co. Wexford is by far (in my completely unbiased opinion lol) the most scenic part of the country, with endless secret swim spots, caves and beaches to explore. If I could live one more day on this earth, it would be on a sunny day down here.



**The Galtee and Comeragh Mountains aren't half bad either.**



# March is **ANTI-RACISM** Month

March is Anti-Racism month and this year organisations involved in combatting and addressing racism used the hashtag **#ARM2025** to highlight all events and activities online. Although March is a time where we can plan Anti-Racism actions and show support for those affected by it, racism happens every day and it is up to us all as individuals to show support and reject racism in all its forms.

On the 21st of March each year the UN observes the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This year is the 60th anniversary of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and you can find out more about this on the UN's website [www.un.org](http://www.un.org).

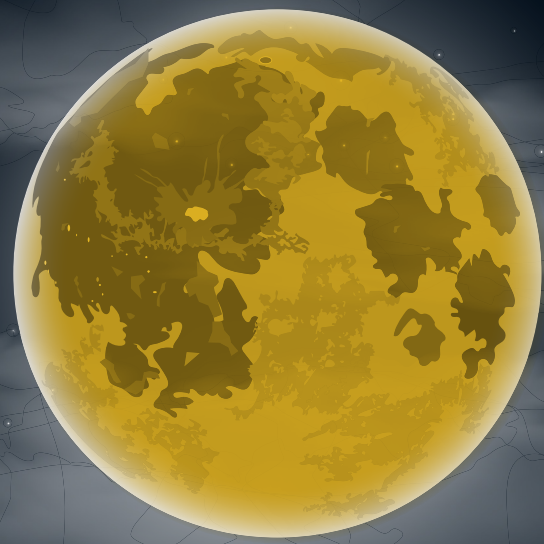
Circle is a proud and very active member of INAR, the Irish Network Against Racism. Through the work carried out by the Quality in Our Diversity team, Circle is very clear about how we can rise to the challenge of racism in all areas of life - our spheres of influence, in work, in our communities, with our families and friends and throughout all of the networks we are part of. Anti-Racism month is a time where we can all take opportunities to highlight ways to combat racism, as well as embracing and celebrating diversity.

In previous years we have hosted webinars and participated in events to mark and bring awareness to Anti-Racism month, as well as understand the ways in which we can contribute as an organisation and individuals to addressing racism. This year we have invited the Hope and Courage Collective to talk to staff about their research and the work they do to help communities respond to hate and division.

We would love to hear from tenants who are interested in helping with the work of the Quality in Our Diversity team.

If you are interested in hearing more, feel free to contact us at [intercultural@circlevha.ie](mailto:intercultural@circlevha.ie) or give us a ring!

#ARM2025



## GOLDEN MOON

*I saw a golden moon*

*It hung there in the sky*

*It beams its light proud*

*And when the stars came out*

*They looked like silver*

*Shining in the midnight blue sky*

*The golden moon shone its light on  
the street and foot paths*

*And I could see my shadow from the  
light*

*It was Summertime and the weather  
was good, and you could hear the owl  
hooting from the trees, mother and  
daddy long legs flew around in the  
summer night and you could hear a  
dog barking in the distance.*

*A vixen fox came out to look for food  
and all this happened under the golden  
moon that night*

*E Beatty*

## REPORTING REPAIRS



### Why?

It is very important to report any repairs in your home to our repairs team as soon as they arise. Prompt reporting helps prevent unnecessary damage to the property and reduces potential safety risks to you and your household.

As a tenant, you have a responsibility to report all repairs in a timely manner. Failing to do so is a breach of your tenancy agreement.

### Who?

All repairs issues, big or small, should be reported to our repairs team

You can reach us at:

✉ [repairs@circlevha.ie](mailto:repairs@circlevha.ie)  
☎ 01-4072110

### When?

#### Don't wait—report repairs today!

Prompt action helps prevent further damage and ensures your home remains safe and well-maintained.

### Did you know?

**Tenants can be recharged for any repair work in their home that was not reported in a timely manner. Delayed reporting can lead to further damage and unnecessary costs.**

**Protect your home and avoid extra charges—report repairs as soon as they arise!**

CIRCLE VOLUNTARY HOUSING  
PHOENIX HOUSE  
32-34 CASTLE STREET  
DUBLIN 2



## Join Our Tenant Secret Shopper Panel!

We are looking for tenants to participate in our Secret Shopper Panel, a unique opportunity to share their experiences and help us improve our services.

As a Secret Shopper, you will test different aspects of our services, such as contacting customer services, using our website and portal, or attending events, to provide honest feedback. Your insights will help us identify what is working well and where we can improve.

No special skills are needed, just a willingness to participate and share your views. It is a great way to get involved, have your say, and make a real difference!

If you are interested or want to learn more, contact our Tenant Engagement Team **TES@circlevha.ie**. We would love to hear from you!

