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Getting ready for Winter – help us help you

As the summer comes to an end, condensation can become a common problem for households. Condensation and mould often forms on surfaces such as windows and their surrounds, when there is too much moisture in the air. It is however possible to reduce the problem by following some simple steps:

- Where possible dry washing outside or in the bathroom with the door shut and window open, or ensure the extraction fan is on.
- Remove any condensation from window frames or cills with a cloth on a daily basis.
- When cooking ensure that an extractor fan is on and that pans have their lids left on.
- Keep your home well ventilated by using your trickle vents and open the windows slightly. If possible leave windows open for at least 20 min's after showering or bathing.
- Try to maintain a constant temperature throughout your home.



Last year the number of calls coming into our repairs centre increased by four times between September and October. At the same time, our repair orders for gas central heating breakdowns, increased by 200%.

Each winter when households start to 'switch on' their gas central heating systems, many people experience problems

because they have been left turned off for a long time.

To help us help you, we are asking you to **switch your heating on now to make sure it is working**. Turn your boiler onto 'hot water and heating' and run it for at least 1-2 hours, check the hot water taps are running and check the radiators are warm at the top and bottom, also listen for banging noises or

vibrating pipe work.

If you have any problems give our repairs team a call on **0800 694 0159** or **0845 600 1543** to make an appointment for a T Brown engineer to come and fix any problems **before the cold weather sets in**.

Households with oil and electric heating systems should do the same, just to check everything is working ok.

Christmas Opening Times:

Our opening times for the festive period are as follows:

Friday 23rd December – 8.30am – 3pm

Saturday 24th – Tuesday 27th December – CLOSED

Wednesday 28th & Thursday 29th December 8.30am – 5pm

Friday 30th December 8.30am – 3pm

Saturday 31st December – Monday 2nd January 2012 – CLOSED

Tuesday 3rd January onwards – business as usual

Whilst the offices are closed you will still be able to report emergency repairs & ASB by calling **0845 600 1543**, **0800 694 0159** or **01279 714 714**.

This magazine is printed on paper which is obtained from sustainable sources. Please recycle after use.



Circle - Helping You to Save Energy

Find out how to save money and save the planet by logging on to our fantastic new website. It offers some great tips about everything from switching energy suppliers to how to save water!

You can find it now by visiting

www.circleenergy.org.uk



NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Autumn edition of Home Matters, which is sent to all South Anglia Housing Association residents. We hope you find it useful. If you want to get in touch about anything raised in Home Matters, or have an idea about a future article, contact victoria.griffin@circle.org.uk



We recently carried out two surveys, one about your lifestyle and the other about Home Matters. We had a really great response and will be using your feedback to help us shape our communications so that they meet your needs in the future.

Home Matters is also available in Large Print and audio, you can request to be sent a copy in either version if you require.

Another way to contact us



- Circle Digital has given our customers another way of contacting us and allows people without internet access to contact us via digital TV.
- After having the new Circle Digital programme demonstrated at the Access and Customer Care Quality Action Group (QAG), Mr Hearne of Trinity Way went home to use it.
- "It is very useful, especially being able to report a repair" said Mr Hearne, as a result of this Mr Hearne has promoted it to the residents where he lives.
- Another benefit of Circle Digital is you can check on disruptions to local transport and major roads, which Mr Hearne said he would be using on a regular basis as he uses public transport quite a bit.
- Circle Digital provides information related to South Anglia Housing's service, if you would like to know more please contact the Customer Services Department on 0800 694 0159 or 01279 714 14.

How to access Circle Digital

Access via Virgin

- Press the Home button
- Choose Interactive #7 button
- Select News & Info
- Select looking Local #6
- Enter the Quickcode: 'C' (2)
- Alternatively, you can find your landlord by region in the regional menu.

Access via Sky

- Go to the community channel (539)
- Press red
- Enter the quickcode: 'C' (2)
- Alternatively, you can find your landlord by region in the regional menu.

Mobile & Nintendo Wii

- Just tap into the browser:
- www.lookinglocal.gov.uk/circle/

Adventurous Away Day

Over 400 residents attended our annual Residents Away Day, this year held at Adventure Island, Southend. Residents were able to speak to all the departments from South Anglia Housing and there were many of our partner agencies there too. It was a great opportunity for us to get feedback on what we can do to improve our services and we had some really positive comments from those who attended...

Kim from Dagenham

"I am new to South Anglia and this was my first Away Day. My children and I had a fantastic time meeting staff, participating in treasure hunts and enjoying the rides. The weather was great and we had a truly wonderful day.

The day was good for both children and adults alike. I could volunteer to join resident groups and discovered many activities that I am able to get involved with that help shape the way services are provided to South Anglia residents. I could speak with other residents and everybody I spoke to who attended found it useful to meet with staff."

The presence of partner agencies was very useful to many residents. **Bobbie Gollop from Hemel Hempstead** collected information about repairs and complimented Apollo for the good job they did in fixing her kitchen and bathroom. Bobbie also enjoyed talking with Tracy White, South Anglia's Managing Director. Bobbie commented that "She's a very nice



lady who has the residents' interests at heart."

This is a great way to engage with residents. Very well organised and a thoroughly enjoyable day! Looking forward to next year's event."

Focus On: Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is defined by the Home Office as 'any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality'.

Domestic violence is a criminal offence and will not be tolerated. It occurs regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality, economic status, geography or tenure and also impacts upon children, family and the community. We are committed to the belief that every person has the right to be safe from abuse and fear.

At South Anglia we will take any action possible to protect victims of Domestic Violence, from improving the security of a property and installing Sanctuary Rooms, to taking legal action against the perpetrator. In cases where these actions are not appropriate or have not been successful, we may also work with Local Authorities to find alternative accommodation for victims.

We work with partners such as the police, local authorities and support providers to deliver a full response to reports of domestic violence.

If you are a victim of Domestic Violence, please contact the police on 999 or on their non-emergency number – 101. You may also wish to contact the National Centre for Domestic Violence on 0844 8044 999 or text NCDV to 60777.

If you wish to report Domestic Violence to South Anglia please speak to your Neighbourhood Officer, call customer services on 0800 694 0159 or email the ASB Team at ASBSouthanglia@circle.org.uk



2010/2011 the highlights

It's been a year since you received the 'Our Promises To You' document where we told you how we were doing and how we were meeting the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) standards.



Following feedback from residents we have decided not to send this year's report to every resident but give you an overview here. This saves us thousands of pounds which we can put back into improving services. If you would like a full copy you can see this online at www.southanglia.org.uk or request one by calling 0845 600 1543 or 0800 694 0159.

To see how we are doing against other Housing Associations in the area we have compared our performance with:
 Moat
 Estuary
 Swan (Essex)
 Riversmead

Building communities

Highlights from 10/11

We have:

- o appointed new grounds maintenance and cleaning contracts
- o delivered £1.1million of improvement works through our Excellent Estates programme
- o consulted with residents at our Residents Conference to communicate our standards for grading our estates

Plans for 11/12

We will:

- o improve our web pages to ensure residents are kept informed of the services provided by our Environment team
- o collect feedback on service delivery of our new grounds maintenance and cleaning contracts
- o have a new anti-social behaviour team to make sure we are responsive to our residents concerns

Providing Homes

Highlights from 10/11

We have:

- o completed our Allocations and Lettings Policy
- o introduced our 'Australia Days' where Income Officers visit residents who are behind with rent payments, to offer advice and support
- o increased staff numbers to allow us to provide more vulnerable residents with support, in helping them manage their tenancies and finances

Plans for 11/12

We will:

- o work with residents to develop our Income Strategy
- o introduce our 'Moving In Guide' to support residents when moving or providing advice for those wishing to move
- o review our Urgent transfers policy

Looking after your homes

Highlights from 10/11

We have:

- o completed the Decent Homes programme ahead of the Government's target of December 2010
- o achieved 90% customer satisfaction overall with the planned and cyclical works carried out in the home
- o achieved 100% customer satisfaction with minor aids and adaptations carried out in the home

Plans for 11/12

We will:

- o develop our enhanced appointment service so customers can have a two hour appointment slot.
- o continue to increase the number of renewable heating systems we install over the next year, meaning reduced utility bills for our customers

Getting you involved

Highlights from 10/11

We have:

- o carried out our local offers consultation, involving over 1025 residents, helping us to get to know your priorities
- o increased the size of our Tenants Conference and Community Spirit Awards to over 500 residents attending

Plans for 11/12

We will:

- o finalise the establishment of our Resident Scrutiny Panel and ensure that they are scrutinising our performance

Offering Value for Money

Highlights from 10/11

We have:

- o worked with residents through our resident involvement activities to make further service improvements
- o asked residents what their priorities were, to help us plan for improvements
- o improved our rent and service charge collection to help provide resources to deliver our services

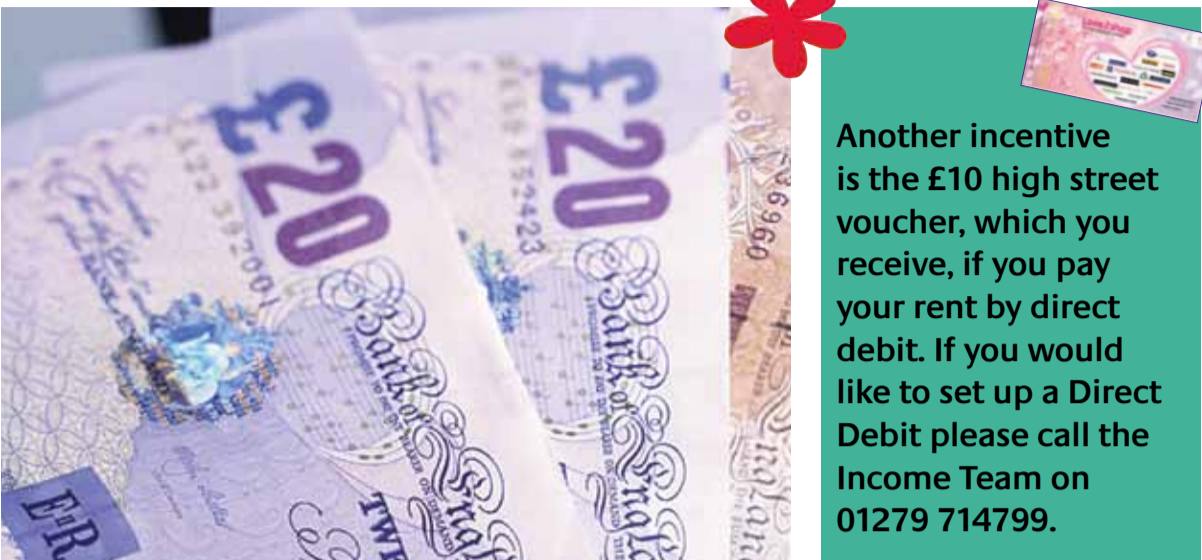
Plans for 11/12

We will:

- o form a plan with residents for improving value for money
- o provide residents with information about the cost of services through our newsletters
- o develop the theme of 'the rent pound', which shows how each pound of rental income is spent



Get cash for paying your rent



Another incentive is the £10 high street voucher, which you receive, if you pay your rent by direct debit. If you would like to set up a Direct Debit please call the Income Team on 01279 714799.

You could be in with a chance of winning cash simply for paying your rent in advance, thanks to the income incentive scheme.

Residents whose account is clear for six months or more will automatically be entered into a quarterly prize draw to win £125. If your account remains clear, you will be re-entered

into the draw again, to be in with a chance to win every three months.

In the first draw of 2011 residents were eligible for two separate prizes of £125. The two winners were Ms

Dorsett from Bayford Close and a Family from Aston.

Ms Dorsett said

"I am due to go to a friends wedding and the money will come in very useful for the travelling costs."

Meet South Anglia's Community Development Team



Left to right: Emma Jackson – Head of Community Development (CD)
Eva Mcllwaine – CD Manager
Ashuk Ahmed – CD Coordinator (Luton and Beds)
Karen Crowley-Farahmand – CD Coordinator (Hertfordshire)
Rob Barrett – CD Coordinator (Essex)

We are committed to improving the life chances, expectations and quality of life of all our residents. We recognise we can help to transform neighbourhoods and get the community working together. To do this, our Community Development team will look at the issues and barriers that communities have in their lives and what can be done to remove these barriers. For example, you may be too frightened to leave your home because of criminal activity, or are unable to find work because of poor qualifications, or are unaware of which financial products and services that may be available to help you.

The team will work in partnership with other key agencies to ensure we deliver projects and initiatives through our five key themes:

- Youth and Young People
- Health and Well Being
- Community Safety
- Financial Inclusion
- Education

Eva Mcllwaine is the Community Development Manager and manages the three Community Development Coordinators to deliver Community development throughout South Anglia.

The three Community Development Coordinators are responsible for developing local initiatives, projects and partnerships, to meet the needs of South Anglia residents. Rob Barrett is the Community Development Coordinator for the Essex area, Ashuk Ahmed is the Community Development Coordinator for Luton and Bedfordshire and Karen Crowley-Farahmand is the Community Development Coordinator for Hertfordshire.

For more information on the work of the Community Development Team, please call customer services on 0800 694 0159 or 0845 600 1543.

Community Spirit Awards

This year's annual Community Spirit awards, were held at the Park Inn Hotel in Southend-on-Sea, on Friday 30th September.

The ceremony was attended by all those who were shortlisted from the huge amount of nominations received. Everyone who attended was treated to welcome drinks and a lovely three course meal to begin the evening's festivities.

Dinner was followed by an inspiring speech from Olympic Swimmer Mark Foster. Mark was then on hand to assist South Anglia's Managing Director Tracy White and SARF (South Anglia Residents Forum) Chairman, Norman Pascoe, in handing awards and prizes to residents that have made a difference to those around them.



Community Champion –
Sponsored by Apollo
Winner – Residents of Dixon Place
Runner Up – Ms Jeffery, Kathy Lenoir and Alan Simmons



Young Achiever –
Sponsored by T.Brown
Winner – Eleanor Care
Runner Up – Molly Pinder and Levi Reid



Inspiring Personality –
Sponsored by Adustus Services
Winner – Bill Baret
Runner Up – Jacinta Hurt and Mrs Cowley



Community Safety Champion – Sponsored by Chigwell construction
Winner – Graham Birch
Runner Up – Edward Cole and Gene Lewis



Outstanding Neighbour Award – Sponsored by Ashford commercial
Winner – Mr Martyn Dorling
Runner Up – Valerie Newbury and Chris Titterall



Outstanding Contribution to Residents Involvement
Winner – Mike Bateman



What is Equality and Diversity?

Equality

is about ensuring that wherever possible, individuals or groups of people have fair access to the same opportunities.

We are committed to paying particular attention to the needs of individuals and groups. The Equality Act 2010, identifies the following characteristics as protected, as they are often subject to discrimination. At South Anglia we work to make sure we do not discriminate against these characteristics:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Gender reassignment;
- Marriage and civil partnership;
- Pregnancy and maternity;
- Race;
- Religion or belief;
- Sex;
- Sexual orientation.

Why is Equality and Diversity important to South Anglia?

We aim to provide the best possible service to our residents, in a fair and accessible way. To achieve this we need to know as much as possible about our residents and their needs.

Diversity

is respecting that individuals and groups have differences and in order to provide equal opportunities, services and processes may need to differ, to ensure that we are not discriminating.

We respect and understand that some people will not want to answer some of the questions that are included in our collection forms, which we use to gather data about our residents. If you do not wish to answer a question, please select the 'prefer not to say' option that is given next to almost all of the questions that we ask.

What will we do with your information?

The information we hold about our residents will be used to plan our services for the future and make adjustments if certain groups or individuals have particular needs, which we are not yet meeting.

For example, if you tell us you have a visual impairment and would like letters sent to you in a larger format, we will do so. Or if you have limited mobility and may take a bit longer to answer the front door, we will make all of our teams aware of that when

they visit your home. Without the information we are not able to make these changes.

All of the information you give us will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

What to do next

If you have not already given this information to South Anglia or your circumstances have changed, there are a range of ways in which you can do so:

- At our office – you can ask for an Equality and Diversity collection form from our receptionists
- Over the telephone – you can provide the information over the phone by calling **0845 600 1543**
- Online – click on Resident Information and then Equality and Diversity (see link below)
- By post – you can ask any member of staff to send you a form in the post to complete and return to us

If you have any questions or would like any more information please contact our Equality and Diversity Officer, Ami Spring on 01279 714782. www.circle.org.uk/south-anglia

New Vans for South Anglia Maintenance Services.

Look out for the Maintenance Services new Fleet of vans for 2011. These brand new vans are well equipped and show off a fantastic new design pictured here:

Pictured: Ronald Gates (Operative) Daniel Stapleton, (Operative) Ben Canfield (Operative) and Tracy Chappell (Repairs Manager.)

Photography by Derryn Thwaits.



Top Tips to reduce energy costs



The cost of energy is expected to increase significantly this winter. There are however a few simple actions you can take, to help reduce the cost of heating and lighting your home.

- Turn your thermostat down. Reducing the temperature by 1°C can cut your heating bills by up to 10 percent, saving on average £50 per year
- Switch off! Always turn off appliances when you leave a room, this can save up to £10 per year
- Only boil as much water as you need when boiling the kettle, this is shown to save £20 to £30 per year
- Use energy-saving light bulbs. You can save around £65 per bulb over the lifetime of each bulb
- Close your curtains at dusk to stop heat escaping through the windows and check for draughts around windows and doors
- Keep your freezer full. This helps to make the appliance more efficient. If necessary, fill spaces with loaves of bread and fill smaller gaps with rolled up newspaper in carrier bags
- Shop around for better deals with utility companies. www.Uswitch.com is an example of just one of the many websites available to help you compare deals

Gas Safety



It is important to South Anglia to make sure our residents are safe. Under UK law we must carry out a service and landlord's inspection every year (within 12 months of the previous inspection) on any gas, oil, and solid fuel appliances in your home. It is also the law that you allow us into your home to carry out these safety tests. Stopping us coming into your home to carry out these tests is a breach of your tenancy agreement and may result in legal proceedings if we are unable to check your appliances. Therefore we ask for your ongoing support in completing these important safety tests.

Ensuring your safety

All operatives carry identity badges that include a picture, licence number, company name and expiry date on the front. If you wish to check that someone is a registered engineer then call Gas Safe on 0800 408 5500.

News from the Resident and Service Users Panel



RASP is one of the few bodies within the Group that has representation from all Group partners. RASP has an important role in listening to the local Resident Scrutiny Panels, seeing where there are areas of concern across the Group as well as good work to be promoted. RASP feeds an overview back to Circle's Strategy Board, as well as making independent recommendations.

One of the most important areas of work we continue to be involved in is the Repairs and Maintenance review. Circle hopes to enhance the current service by standardising the service provided for all residents, achieving efficiencies through this process and offering value for money. Customers are at the heart of the process,

and lots of discussions have already taken place across the Group; please see the leaflet in this issue for an update.

Another area of RASP's involvement has been around improving customer access. This can only be achieved by understanding your needs and preferences so that our customer service teams are accessible and there are appropriate and timely ways to get in touch, including by telephone, computer, television or in person. It is about making it easier for you to contact us, as well as generating ideas to meet the needs and wishes of our customers. RASP has been involved in discussions in to what the future might look like in terms of access, along with some of you who attended consultation events over the summer period.

Don't forget Looking Local has been launched through digital TV, Wii, computer and web enabled mobiles. This is helping to increase the number of ways that you can get in touch with Circle. As well as reporting repairs and other areas, you can also find out about local services and information where you live.

We realise that at the moment the economic climate is difficult with less money around and costs going up for things like fuel and food. RASP will therefore be working with Circle to look at making sure appropriate services are available to best support you.

Alison Hill
RASP chair

facebook

You can now follow Circle Living on Facebook!

facebook.com/circleliving.circleanglia or search 'Circle Living'

Leaseholders and Shared Owners



Is your home Fire Safe?



If you live in a block of flats managed by Circle Living, it is our duty to inspect the building regularly for any potential risk of fire and take steps to eliminate or minimise such risks. We also carry out routine maintenance on all fire fighting and protection systems within the communal areas.

The safety of our residents is extremely important to Circle Living, so we have recently been working very hard to raise fire safety awareness. You may have recently noticed additional fire safety signs appearing in your communal areas and you should have also received letters regarding fire safety issues.

We would like you all to work with us in ensuring your home is fire safe. Below is a reminder of helpful guidance for you to consider in combating fire.

Most of these handy tips also apply to those of you living in houses.

- Do not leave any items in the communal areas, as they can contribute to fire and cause obstruction in the event of an escape.
- Do not smoke anywhere within the communal areas.
- Dispose of refuse in the right manner.
- Take all the necessary care within your home to prevent the incidence of fire.
- Ensure that you are familiar with your building and all means of escape.
- Test and maintain all smoke alarms within your home regularly and follow instructions for the replacement of any batteries.
- On discovering a fire, please call the fire brigade immediately and follow their instructions. If required, go to the nearest exit. Do not use a lift; use the communal stairs to exit.

Keep safe!

Regular inspections are made and items could be removed. If you have any concerns or need any guidance please ring us on 0845 815 7500.

Top Tips to Manage Your Money this Christmas



Christmas is an expensive time of year and there is added pressure to spend money you may not have. Take a look at the tips below on how you can manage your money better this Christmas.

Budget to make your money go further – doing a budget can help identify how much money you've got to spend and help you to stop running up unintended debt

Never use loans sharks – a loan shark is someone who lends money without a licence issued by the Office of Fair Trading. Loan sharks rarely, if ever, give any paperwork and if payments are missed they often use intimidation and violence to get their money. If you have any information on loan shark activity contact the national Illegal Money Lending team – **0300 555 2222**; Text: Loan Shark + your message to **60003**; reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk

Don't forget to pay your everyday bills – keep on top of everyday bills including your rent, Council Tax and utilities, to stop you sliding into debt

Switch energy provider to save money – we have launched a website with all you need to know about saving energy in your home. Visit www.southanglia.org.uk for more information or request a written pack from us if you don't have access to the internet

Start saving for next year – it can be difficult to save when money is tight but once Christmas is over why not see if you can start to save for next Christmas? Even just a small amount like £2 a week adds up to over £100 a year

If you are in debt, or have any money worries, get help and don't panic! – to find out more about any financial issue you may be dealing visit www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk or ring **0300 500 5000**. Or contact South Anglia on **0845 600 1543**.

Also check out www.moneysavingexpert.com for loads of useful budget tips. You can also access a budget planner.



Have you heard of Telecare?

invicta
Telecare



Do you worry about being home alone and having a fall or funny turn?

Do you worry about a loved one not being able to reach you in an emergency?

If you answered yes to these questions, then Telecare might be something to consider. **But what is it?**

Quite simply, Telecare is help at the touch of a button. A telecare unit works alongside a telephone and is simple to install. If you or a relative falls, is taken ill or just needs friendly re-assurance, a telecare operator is there 24/7 to help you or your relative. At the push of a button worn on the wrist or on a pendant, the unit will automatically connect to an experienced Telecare team.

Like us, Invicta Telecare is part of the Circle Group and provides this vital service to over 97,000 people already. They answer all sorts of calls and literally save lives. Joyce Benstead, an Invicta customer living on her own in one of our homes, recently told us of her own personal experiences.

"I have been a client of Invicta Telecare for over 14 years now and I wouldn't be without it. I suffered a heart attack in the early hours of the morning



a few years ago, and I am certain that the telecare advisor saved my life!"

If there is a problem they will contact a chosen friend or family member and ask them to pop in to check, or if necessary, they will call the emergency services.

For families it can take away a lot of anxiety, especially when a loved one lives alone. As local services are feeling the pinch, Telecare is a low cost solution that allows people to remain independently in their own homes.



An alarm unit, pendant, monitoring service and keysafe is just **£3.35 a week**. **Interested?** To find out more call **0845 601 8523** and quote Home Matters.



How are we doing? Performance for July 2011

Rent & Service Charge collection

Re-let time (for all managed stock)

18.7 days

Tenant satisfied with the way the Landlord dealt with their last repair

93.9%

Emergency repairs completed in target

97.2%

Current tenant arrears

3.6%

Routine repairs completed in target

99.4%

Complaints resolved at first stage

91.0%

De-clutter for your own safety

Take a few minutes to make sure your items are not causing a hazard

After a recent inspection of the internal communal areas, in our blocks of flats, our inspectors were concerned to find some residents' belongings were causing a hazard. These items were either a fire hazard or could get in the way if someone was trying to escape from the block in the event of a fire.

When items are found in shared halls, landings or stairways, we will be asking residents to remove them. Examples of items found on our inspections include:-

Bikes
Buggies
Loose carpets and door mats
Plants
Tables
Chairs
Boots and shoes
Recycling bins

To ensure that residents live in a safe and pleasant environment and to make sure we are not breaking the law, we have to ensure that all personal items

are removed. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires that there are no flammable items or items that might obstruct your exit from internal shared areas in the event of a fire.

We are aware you may have young children and find it difficult to find a suitable place to keep your buggy or may have placed plants in hallways to make the area feel more homely. If you have items in your lobby or hallway and have concerns about what you should do, please contact your Neighbourhood Officer for advice. As we carry out further inspections we will be contacting residents if personal possessions are found. If there are large items which are no longer needed, we may be able to help you have them removed.



Home Ownership may be cheaper than you think!

Circle Living has a number of New Build Homebuy properties available for sale on part buy part rent basis, also known as Shared Ownership from as little as £450 per month.

To be eligible for this scheme you will need to meet the following criteria:

- You do not currently own another property.
- Your income is not sufficient to buy a property on the open market.
- Your total household income is between £18,000 and £60,000.
- You are in permanent employment.
- You have savings of at least £2,000 to put towards the deposit and purchasing expenses.

If you would like to find out more about this scheme, please contact our friendly Team on: 01279 714763 or 078247 409 705.



If you require this publication in large print, audio, Braille or an alternative format, or you need this document translated into a different language, please call 0845 600 1543 or 0800 694 0159 and we will do our best to help.