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Circle 33 Housing Trust

## Meet your new Tenant Scrutiny Panel

**Y**ou may recall reading about the new Tenant Scrutiny Panel in our spring issue of Home Matters. The group has been formed from tenants volunteering their own time to work with staff across Circle 33, to look at and scrutinise the services that we provide to you all.

They have been busy since their new role started in February 2011. The group went on an away day to get to grips with the work that they are required to review. They have also had their first meeting and attended a number of training sessions, from complaints panel training to housing law, covering all aspects of the rights of both the tenant and also that of the landlord. So busy busy busy, and there is still more to attend.

Please remember they are here to work with us and also for the good of all tenants. They join us with a wealth of knowledge and experience and they would like to share this with you all.



Turn to page 4 to meet the panel

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## Circle news at the touch of a button!

Circle Digital is a new, easy way to access your landlord and local services, using Virgin or Sky TV, mobile phone, Nintendo Wii or PC. From checking out local events, reporting repairs, looking up bus times to booking a doctor's appointment - Circle Digital gives you more choice in how you contact us.

You can find information from your landlord, such as:

- repairs information and reporting
- anti-social behaviour advice and reporting
- home improvements and adaptations
- home ownership and transfer options
- news
- how to get involved
- rent and benefits advice

You'll also find local area information, such as:

- Jobcentre searches
- GP and NHS services
- Travel information
- Choice-based lettings

Additional services will be added so be sure to keep an eye on it.

Want to know more? Contact your landlord to find out more about the great new interactive service.



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## MD welcome



Welcome to the summer edition of Home Matters. In this edition we highlight Tenant Involvement and Empowerment.

Last year almost 2000 tenants engaged with us in some way and now we want more of you to work with us to improve our services.

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel is an exciting innovation

and the hard working members will really help us to drive forward improvements. We will report on their work from time to time.

I hope you all have a good summer.

Best Wishes

**Jeff Baker**

Managing Director,  
Circle 33 Housing Trust

## NOTE FROM EDITOR



Hello and welcome to the Summer edition of Home Matters.

We have been working hard over the past few months to ensure that you are receiving Home Matters in the format that you want, whether it's in large print or audio we can provide this.

If you do require this newsletter in a different format please let us know by emailing [residentcomms@circle33.org.uk](mailto:residentcomms@circle33.org.uk) or write to Marketing Communications Team, Circle Housing Group, 6 Central Avenue, St Andrews Business Park, Norwich, Norfolk, NR7 0HR.

If you wish to opt out of receiving this newsletter in paper format and receive it via email instead simply log on to [www.circle33.org.uk/optout](http://www.circle33.org.uk/optout) and fill in the short form.



## Resident Welcome

My name is Tammy and like you I am a resident of Circle 33. I have recently become a member of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel. This panel has been created to allow residents to become involved in services provided by Circle 33, and allows members to make recommendations for changes in service provision. I strongly believe that service user involvement in the development of services can create opportunities to improve the quality of life for Circle 33 residents.

Circle 33 has taken positive steps to enable service user participation, by

creating a scrutiny panel and taking residents' views on board. As residents of Circle 33, you may agree that our environment and the communities in which we live are important areas that can have either a positive or negative impact on all our quality of lives. This includes issues like anti social behaviour, the quality of our homes and community development projects, and how we as residents find the provision of services offered by Circle 33 impacts on our experience.

Since obtaining a place on the scrutiny panel I am pleased to say Circle 33 have provided our panel members with training like, Housing law training, Complaints training and Finance training. Personally I'm undertaking a degree covering areas of law, working with children and families and adult health and social care. Lastly I will look forward to working closely with Circle 33 and panel members, to highlight the positives and contribute to positive change for residents.

## Do you need to move for work?

Residents now have more opportunities to move home with Circle 33 being part of an exciting new scheme called 'London Moves'.

We are one of fifteen of London's largest social housing providers taking part in the pilot project which aims to break down the obstacles social tenants face when needing to move for work or training.

To register for the scheme you need to be:

- Unemployed with a job offer in writing for 16 hours or more a week, and close to the potential location of your new home
- OR
- In full time education or training linked to a firm job offer in writing for 16 hours or more a week

If this is you then register for the scheme online at [www.g15londonmoves.org.uk](http://www.g15londonmoves.org.uk) or call Cherelle Wishart on 020 7447 3171 or Francis Becque on 020 7447 3078

OR

- In employment for at least 13 weeks but the distance from your home to work is making it hard to keep your job.

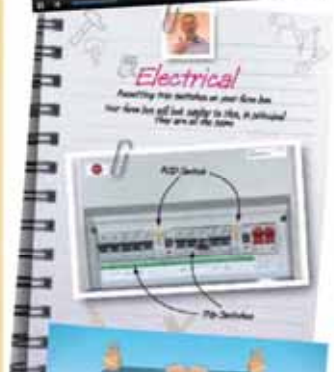
OR

- You need to downsize. Is your home too big for you? To register for this part of the scheme you will need to be giving up at least one bedroom, the more bedrooms you give up the higher your priority and an incentive payment will be made to you in line with the existing scheme when you move home.

### Am I eligible?

To register for this scheme you need to be:

- A Circle 33 tenant (or tenant of another G15 housing provider)
- A secure or assured tenant
- A tenant for at least a year



Check out our website [www.circle33.org.uk](http://www.circle33.org.uk) for our latest videos which offer some top tips on saving energy and home repairs

## News from the Residents and Service Users Panel

### Looking at repairs and maintenance



Circle's Residents and Service Users Panel (RASP) meets quarterly but in between our meetings we try to take part in developing Circle's policies and practices at other events.

Many members have been involved in the review of the repairs and maintenance service. Our members have attended two events where the details of the service have been discussed. Some RASP members have joined in smaller groups going over the fine detail of what is involved in the service – how to improve it and build on the best practices across the Circle Group.

RASP members' knowledge of residents' experience of how repairs and maintenance are carried out has been a useful addition to this review.

RASP is unique. It involves people from across the whole of Circle and we are trying to make sure that we all know about other parts of the group, beyond where we live. For that reason we've started



visiting all of the areas where Circle provides housing and services.

We've been to Mole Valley in Surrey and Mercian in the West Midlands. We spent the day looking at the very varied housing that Mercian provides. From a scheme aimed at young people who have been previously homeless to a very impressive sheltered housing scheme – with plenty in between.

We discussed the difficulties of funding new housing in the current climate and

many other questions facing the housing sector at the moment. I think all the RASP members learnt a lot from that day and are looking forward to future visits.

Our next meeting is in September but before that RASP members will be involved in many events so that we can make sure the views of residents and service users are heard in every part of Circle.

Alison Hill  
RASP chair

## Leaseholders and Shared Owners



### Local Income Officer



Circle Living would like to announce to residents within the Circle 33 region that from April 1st 2011 your Income Officer Ebrahim Piperdy will be based at our Corsica Street Office in London.

If you are a leaseholder, shared owner, market rent tenant or key worker, you may pop in and speak to Ebrahim about any rent and arrears related issues. Where possible Ebrahim will be able to provide face

to face financial advice and support. We would like to demonstrate our commitment to provide excellent customer service and support to our residents.

For more details, please contact Ebrahim on 0845 234 0791. If Ebrahim is not available, then please do leave a message and he will respond to you as soon as possible.

### Equality & Diversity

We may have contacted you recently asking you to complete an Equality and Diversity Form. If not, we will be contacting you shortly. This helps us to collect information including our customers' race, disability and communication needs.

We are collecting this information because we want to make sure that our services are being provided fairly and that we are not discriminating against any groups or individuals. Your answers will also help shape the services we provide to you and ensure that we have the most up to date ways of contacting you.

We understand that some of the questions are more sensitive than others. If there are certain questions you do not wish to answer, you can fill in the rest of the questionnaire and choose the 'prefer not to say' option. In all cases the information will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and a privacy statement will be sent to you.

If you require any further information on this process, please feel free to contact Claire Power-Hynes, Customer Liaison Officer on tel: 020 7704 5486 or email: [claire.power-hynes@circle.org.uk](mailto:claire.power-hynes@circle.org.uk)

## Meet your tenant scrutiny panel



**Patrick Fraher**

Patrick has been actively involved with Circle 33 for many years and is the Chair of his local Tenant and Residents Association in Camden. Patrick lives on Chalcot Road.



**Roy Lloyd**

Roy is a member of the Circle 33 Trust Board, Maintenance and Reinvestment Forum and has been active with the existing Joint Commission group since 2006. Roy works for a Housing Provider in London within their Repairs Team. His knowledge and experience has helped Circle 33 to improve services. Roy lives in Deaconess Court, Haringey.



**Deborah Yussuff**

Deborah has been involved for many years, starting by helping to set up a local Tenant and Residents Association in Chingford. She is also an active resident on the Circle 33 Trust Board, Maintenance and Reinvestment Forum and Anti-Social Behaviour Forum. She has been the Chair for the existing Joint Commission since January 2010. Deborah lives in Walmer Close, Chingford.



**Frank Pycroft**

Frank sits on many panels and groups within Circle 33 and also Circle Support. These include; Service Improvement Groups, housing management meetings and the Readers Panel, where he helps to improve services for all residents. Frank can be found living in Beversbrook Road in Islington.



**Faye Gayle**

We first met Faye when she attended her first activity in 2009, which was a face painting training course. Since then Faye has been active within many different panels and meetings which include the Readers Panel and Service Improvement Groups. She also attends our fun days and helps to entertain the younger residents with face painting. Faye lives in Stock Orchard Street, Islington.



**Rosemarie Gayle**

No relation to Faye and recruited in February 2011 as a new member of the Scrutiny Panel. Rosemarie is currently studying Computerised Accounts Level 2 and awaiting results for Level 2 in Housing through Chartered Institute of Housing. She has been getting to know the other members of the group since joining at the various training sessions already held. Rosemarie lives as Omnibus House in Wood Green, Haringey.



**Gloria Farrelly**

Gloria has been active over the past 16 years as an Estate Champion working with her Customer Services Manager. She also attends many service improvement groups over the past couple of years, different themed training sessions and elected to win a prize at the 2010 Community Spirit Awards. Gloria lives in Mortimer Terrace in Camden.



**James Cannon-Dusauzay**

James first became involved in 2010 by joining the Gardening Circle, set up by our Community Development Team to train residents to carry out basic gardening for residents that are not able to do it themselves. James is also an active member of the Islington Law Centres Housing Team, dealing with tenancy agreements and breaches to these agreements within the County Court setting. James lives in Dalmeny Road in Islington.

**If you would like to contact any of the new Scrutiny Panel, please call Sarah Schofield on 0207 447 3066. Please remember they will not be able to take on individual repairs/complaints that have not already been reported to Circle 33. The group are here to look at the current services we deliver and to help us raise satisfaction with our residents.**



Gordon McIntosh

Gordon joined Circle 33 in June 2010. He has held many positions within the housing world from Tenancy Sustainment Officer, Resettlement Officer and also Housing Manager for

a range of other Housing Associations. He has also set up a local Residents Association where he lives and is their Vice Chair. He regularly gives lectures for Health and Social Care and has been accredited to become an NVQ Assessor, which involved supervising students on vocational programmes.



Dorothy Williams

Dorothy is a new tenant to Circle 33. Past work experience includes working

with adults and children, along with over 20 years of management experience in the NHS, recruitment and Primary Care Trust, along with charity work, she has lived in Camden for 39 years, not always with Circle 33 and can be found living at Matilda Apartments.



Geraldine Lambert

Recruited in March 2011, she was already an active tenant and sits on the Executive

Committee for HTC and its Reinvestment Committee. She also reviews their newsletters when time is available. Geraldine works as a registered childminder, which keeps her busy during the daytime. You can find Geraldine living in Corbun Street, Islington.



Tammy Cunningham

Tammy is kept busy with her voluntary work with two fostering agencies. She sits on many panels with both these agencies and is also a

fostering consultant, which entails large amounts of reading reports on potential carers and looking at evidence at their suitability to become foster parents. She has a high level of scrutiny experience from this role, which will help with the work at Circle 33. Tammy lives at The Towers in Camden.

## Resident Inspectors and their findings

We are pleased to announce that our new Resident Inspection Programme is well underway and the fully trained Inspectors have been busy carrying out their first inspections.

During February – April 2011 they carried out:

- Two office inspections at

our main office in Corsica Street, Highbury, London,

- Two empty properties that were finished and ready to be re-let to new Tenants and,
- Five estate and cleaning inspections which were:
  - o Old Royal Free N1
  - o Orleston Road N7

- o Trederwen Road E8
- o The Towers NW5
- o Tagore House NW3

We have carried out our first debriefing session with the Inspectors along with senior management and staff from across the organisation to review the findings and move forward with an action plan.

### Estates and cleaning – the findings:



#### The Towers:

The Inspector was very impressed with the overall appearance and cleanliness of this area. It was neat, clean and tidy. The only issue was around the patchy grass area which is where a new food growing project is being set up, along with wild flower garden to cover this over.



#### Tagore House:

The results at this Estate rated from High to Low.

Areas of concern that were scored medium and low were around dumped bulk rubbish outside the main doors, dumped rubbish behind lift shafts, electrical cupboards on each floor left open with loose wiring exposed, plus being used to store buggies and rubbish.

The Inspector was concerned with the fire doors being wedged open by the residents living in this block. There were also cigarette trays placed in the ground floor communal area where there are no smoking signs.



#### Trederwen Road:

When the Inspector visited this site most of the area is rated at medium-high. However there were some areas that scored a low score. These included dead tree on the floor of the communal hallways, tyre marks up the wall from bikes, no fire plan on the communal wall, lights not working, meter cupboards not locked, overgrown garden in one property, windows dirty and graffiti on communal walls.



#### Orleston Road (2-4)

When our Inspector visited this site, it was a mixture of scoring. Low score areas included the ground surface in play area, lots of weeds in pathways, dirty and broken gullies at ground level, broken meter cupboard in garden area, car park sign in poor condition, dumped rubbish, damage to gate and dumped flyers in communal hallway on floor.



#### Old Royal Free:

All areas were of medium-high standard. The only area which scored a low result were the bins stored in front of the meter cupboards, small amounts of litter in the hedges, and low watt light bulbs in cupboard areas so could make it hard to see at night when dark.



continued →



Left to Right: John, Annette, Jane, Charlotte, Rita, Gloria, Ayodele

## Office Inspection, the findings:

Two office inspections have been carried out with several areas of concern.



### Low Scores:

- Dumped clothes and concrete in car park area behind metal gate
- Cigarette ends on pathway into car park and also around the internal car park area
- Bin area not closed, wide open and lots of dumped rubbish inside which visitors can see
- No service standard leaflets on the visit in April, plus leaflet stand not in a good position, can only see leaflets when you are sitting in the chair next to one of the stands
- Visitors toilet required a clean
- No cups in water machine on both visits
- Plaster scraped off wall in interview room, along with box of papers and roller blind on floor on both visits
- Light above reception desk requires new light bulb
- Interview room computer, wires are hanging down and could be a trip hazard



## Empty Property Inspections, the findings:

The inspections were carried out on a one bedroom flat in Edward Road, Walthamstow and a one bedroom flat in Brightwell Court in Islington, which is a Sheltered Housing Scheme.



### Passes:

- Both properties passed the inspections with the only exception of both properties did not have a welcome pack. The property in Brightwell Court did not have a new toilet fitted either.

We will be looking into all the issues identified on these inspections and aim to improve on all the low scores.

If you are interested in the full report covering the first quarter of inspections, please contact either Natalie Anderson on 0207 447 3065 or Sarah Schofield on 0207 447 3066.

If you would like to apply to become a Resident Inspector please call and we will send you an application form, along with the criteria and role description.

# Circle Group – Repairs and Maintenance Review

We are busy listening to what customers want. Answers including convenient appointment slots and being kept updated about contractor arrival times were just some of the issues on the agenda at two customer engagement events to discuss our repairs and maintenance service.



The workshops, which were organised as part of a major review of our repairs and maintenance service, brought together customers from across the Group to discuss what they thought were the key things that made up a great service.

We recently carried out some in-depth customer research which helped us to identify a number of service areas we need to look at and improve. As part of that process

we have been reviewing everything about our repairs and maintenance service; from the way we fix small problems, to how we look after the overall quality of your homes.

Gary Wilkinson, who has been leading the review said: "The people best placed to tell us what works, what doesn't and what we could do better, is our customers. That's why they are playing an important part of this review. As one customer who attended the events put it 'nobody knows your homes like we do, we

are living in them.' Exactly right.

"These customer workshops have been really interesting and given us plenty to think about. One of the issues that comes up time and time again is communication. For example, people said being kept informed about expected contractor arrival times and listening to what the customer wants was important.

"That's good to know, because listening is exactly what we are doing."



Details about the outcome of the review will be published on our website in the summer and in the next edition of Home Matters.

## Community Chest

**O**ur Community Chest scheme has successfully paid for various community projects. Successful applications include the Islington Kurdish, Turkish and Cypriot Women's Association to hold traditional dance classes, Isledon Village Annual Summer Community Fun day where residents got together with bouncy castle, music and barbeque and the Haringey Park Food Growing Project.

Residents or individuals who would

like to run a community project that has a clear benefit to Circle 33 residents may apply for between £100 - £1500 towards the costs of a project, which is then decided by the community chest resident panel.

If you would like to know more about starting your own community food growing Initiatives or about the community chest and how to apply please contact Mark Rogers, Community Development Manager on 020 7447 3070 or email [m.rogers@circle.org.uk](mailto:m.rogers@circle.org.uk).



## Food Growing Initiatives

**O**ur Team for Communities have been leading on various food growing initiatives in the London boroughs of Islington, Haringey and Camden. The projects have helped to successfully build community spirit with residents getting out and about on their communal spaces, working together.

By providing the tools and basic skills needed, residents have been able to transform small communal green spaces into thriving spaces

for residents to grow their own vegetables.

Last summer the Parkside Growing Plot in Islington won first prize in the Capital Growth's edible estates competition – plants and people category and Sycamore Gardens Food Growers Club in Haringey received the second prize.

This year the Towers food growing project in Camden has been successfully launched and Circle 33 hopes to continue the success.



## Good Neighbour Awards



We held our first Good Neighbours awards last year and the lucky winner of a £25 voucher was Miss Graham from Hackney. She was nominated by her neighbour Mr Christian, who told us:

*Jean has been my neighbour for over a year now and my enjoyment at home has improved ever since she arrived.....We talk to each other on a regular basis and we unite to help sort difficulties on our street e.g power failures, dying trees. She is so friendly and trustworthy that I felt glad to leave a spare set of my house keys with her in case I ever get locked out..... Her influence is such that more of my other neighbours are brought closer together and she has redefined my understanding of community as a result. I hope that every tenant has a neighbour like Jean.*

Has this story encouraged you to nominate your neighbour? Maybe they do something to help your day go well and you would like to show your appreciation for their kindness.

Write in and tell us what your neighbour has done to help you. It could be anything from putting your rubbish out every week, to dropping by for a cup of tea and to check you are safe and well.

If your story is published, the neighbour you have nominated will receive a £25 gift voucher and both of you will receive an invite to our Community Spirits Awards evening later in the year, to celebrate all our winners during the year, and their story will be published in an edition of the Home Matters newsletter.

Please write in to: Natalie Anderson, 1-7 Corisca Street, Highbury, London. N5 1JG, or call for further information on 0207 447 3065.

We will require the slip below attached with your story:

My Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 My Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 My Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 My Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 I wish to nominate: \_\_\_\_\_  
 They live at: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
**Closing Date: 1st September 2011**

## Performance monitoring

We have 'performance indicators' in place to ensure that we are delivering quality services and providing value for money. The points below give a flavour of our performance at the end of the year (March 2011).

- 72.8% of customers surveyed expressed satisfaction with our overall services

72.8%

- 99% of emergency repairs were completed within the time outlined within our customer service standards

99%

- 98.3% of urgent repairs completed on time

98.3%

- 89.9% of routine repairs completed on time

89.9%

- Satisfaction with the repairs service increased to 89.8%

89.8%

- During the last year we increased the number of gas safety inspections that we were able to carry out from 99% to 99.8%

99.8%

- We improved our telephone service and increased the number of calls answered within 30 seconds to 78% and answered 95.8% of all calls

- By continuing to focus on financial inclusion and supporting residents affected by the current economic difficulties we have been able to reduce the overall rent debt to 3.7%

3.7%

We are still looking to improve on how long it takes to answer the phone, and how quickly we can carry out a repair. You can help with this. Our busiest times are from 8.30 to 11am, and it is even busier on Mondays. If you can avoid calling us during this peak time, then your call can be answered quicker.

## More than just a call centre...

Our Customer Service Team is committed to delivering a first class service to every customer with the aim of getting it right first time. We are always reviewing the way in which services are delivered and seek new ways to improve customer satisfaction.

We are more than just a call centre that receives and transfer calls. We provide Housing Options advice, process rent payments, manage reports of ASB and collect equality and diversity data which enables us to tailor our services to you. We provide customer service at our offices at Corsica Street, Holly Street and Barking and Dagenham and we administer tenancy changes such as mutual exchanges, transfers and successions.



Chevell



Anis



Anna

Our team includes four Team Managers and 16 dedicated Customer Service Advisors. Currently we are working with the Housing Options and Advice Team to review all live transfer applications. The review is to enable residents to move efficiently by having accurate records and a clear banding system that is easy to understand. It is important to complete the review forms as your transfer application may be suspended and you will not be able to bid for properties.

Further information can be found on our resident's website – [www.circle33.org.uk](http://www.circle33.org.uk) under the Lettings Policy Review.

## Are you experiencing anti-social behaviour outside of working hours?

If so you can contact Circle 33's new ASB out of hours hotline

Dial: 0800 075 6699

Text: 'ASB' and details to 80800.

Email: [c33asboutofhours@circle.org.uk](mailto:c33asboutofhours@circle.org.uk)

This service is free to use and call backs will be made by trained staff.

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 0800 073 0417 and we will do our best to help.