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South Anglia's new anti-social behaviour team

South Anglia has responded to residents' concerns about anti-social behaviour (ASB) by restructuring and expanding its team of ASB specialists. Anti-social behaviour covers a range of activities that can have a negative effect on the quality of community life. We manage cases from physical violence and hate crime to garden misuse and litter.

South Anglia plays a significant role in the community in managing ASB. We work with residents and other organisations in preventing ASB, taking early response and enforcement actions, supporting victims and helping perpetrators to address their behaviour.

Steve Kensington, our ASB Manager has overall responsibility for South Anglia's response to ASB. Steve shapes the service to ensure that we are in a position to provide the level of support that residents need.

Tracey Field, the new ASB Co-ordinator is responsible for supporting the neighbourhood teams with their cases and is involved in complex cases



Pictured left to right: Tracey Field, ASB Co-ordinator; Steve Kensington, ASB Manager; and Katrina Robinson ASB Assistant. Becky Rousell will be joining the team shortly.

and those that are likely to require enforcement action.

Becky Rousell's role as the ASB Officer is newly created. As well as managing cases, Becky forms the high-visibility face of the team – meeting with

residents and getting to know their needs.

Katrina Robinson, the ASB Assistant, provides support to all levels of the ASB team and helps link the team to other departments within the Circle group and South Anglia's partners.

If you wish to report ASB to South Anglia please speak to your Neighbourhood Officer, call customer services on **0800 694 0159** or **0845 600 1543** or email the ASB Team at ASBSouthanglia@circle.org.uk

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2. Press red;
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4. Select Looking Local #6;
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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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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@circle.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.circle.org.uk/optout and fill in the short form.



New members are welcomed to our Scrutiny Panel

South Anglia would like to welcome and introduce it's new Resident Scrutiny Panel. Simon Foster, Ching Kwan, Mike Bateman, Bobbie Gollop, Harvey Musto, Susanna Nsude, Norman Pascoe and Taj Hussain.

The panel were recruited in June and will work independently to assess the services we provide to residents. To ensure they have a good understanding of how South Anglia works, members of the panel will gather performance information from staff and shadow different departments.

They will also receive training and support in their role from South Anglia staff and a consultant from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS). The panel currently consists of 7 General needs tenants, 1 sheltered housing tenant and we are looking to recruit a leaseholder.

The Scrutiny Panel will review service areas that are not performing well and make recommendations for improvements to the South Anglia Board.

When prioritising service reviews, the panel will take in to consideration areas that have a large impact on residents and where improvements are needed.

A group of customers from the South Anglia Residents Forum have come together with the Resident Involvement Team to form an overview panel.

During the past three months the overview panel has prepared the guidance manual and defined the role of the panel members. The Overview Panel also took part in the selection of members for the Scrutiny Panel during a group-interview process.

If you would like to be involved in Scrutiny and are a good team player, your chances to be part of the Panel are not over. Not all places have been filled so you can still apply by contacting the Resident Involvement Team on: 01376 559403 or communitiesandinvolvement@circle.org.uk



Gas Safety
Remember to be safe and let us in!
Faulty or un-serviced appliances
can give off a deadly colourless,
odourless gas called
carbon monoxide.
For more information
read page 4



Check out our website at www.southanglia.org.uk for our latest videos which offer some top tips on saving energy and home repairs.

Anti-social behaviour **Focus on – noise nuisance**

A certain level of noise is just part of life, no house or flat is completely soundproof, but it can become a nuisance and if it continues it can have a major impact on someone's quality of life.

We work with police and local authorities on all aspects of Anti-social behaviour. When dealing with noise nuisance we rely heavily on local authority Environmental Health teams, who may give a noise abatement notice if they find that the noise is too much.

It must be remembered that if you can hear sounds through the walls, your neighbours may hear sounds from you too. If the walls or windows are thin, it may be that a little consideration from everybody is all that is needed to solve the problem.

Sometimes your neighbour will not be aware that their behaviour is causing you problems. Many cases are resolved by neighbours just speaking to each other. South Anglia can also provide a mediation service to help you talk to your neighbours.

If South Anglia or your council need to take action against people who are causing noise nuisance, it is important that you complete nuisance diary sheets which will be used as evidence. We have also bought noise recording equipment to measure and record the noise.



If you are affected by noise nuisance, try speaking to or writing to your neighbour. If that doesn't work contact your neighbourhood officer

and we will work with you, your neighbours and our partners to resolve the problem.

Grounds Maintenance update



John O'Conner
GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

Pinnacle
psg

Our new Grounds Maintenance contractors who were recruited earlier this year, appear to be a big hit with residents. The teams have been working on our sites across the four counties for almost 6 months now. Despite a few teething problems at first, the Grounds Maintenance teams from John O'Conner and Pinnacle PSG have clearly won over some of our residents.

Mrs H of Burnham on Crouch, *"The two gardeners have done an excellent job, this is the standard we expect."*

Ms F of High Wycombe. *"It was very nice to have gardeners who obviously took pride in the work they did and were very professional. The whole grounds look 200% better."*

We would like to ensure that the standard of grounds maintenance and resident satisfaction continues to improve. One of the best ways to improve this service, is for you to let us know, whether you are happy with it or if you think we could do better.

Please let us know what you think of our estate services by calling **0800 694 0159** or **0845 600 1543** or complete our contact form on our web site via the following link www.circle.org.uk/south-anglia/resident-info/estate-services. All calls and contacts will be treated with the strictest confidence and will only be used to ensure that complaints are resolved, resulting in service delivery improvements.

South Anglia's new Maintenance Services Team



Top: Property Service Management Team (left to right) Ronan O'hara (Head of Property services), David Richardson (Asst Director Property Services), Caroline Davies (Head of Maintenance Services).

Right: An operative from the Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) carrying out an on site repair at a customers property.



We are delighted to announce that our maintenance contractor Anglia Maintenance Services (AMS) has been merged with South Anglia to help create a new and more effective maintenance service.

In recent years South Anglia has employed Anglia Maintenance Services (AMS) on a contractual basis to deliver routine repairs, void repairs and external decorations. However on the 1st April 2011 AMS joined South Anglia to create a new, stronger and more efficient organisation.

We are very excited by this development which will help

provide improvements to our repairs and maintenance service. By merging AMS and South Anglia we have an opportunity to shape the future delivery of our maintenance and repairs service. The work which has been undertaken by AMS will now be carried out by our newly formed in-house 'Maintenance Services Team' who will work to ensure your homes are maintained to a very high standard. This change will also help reduce costs and deliver better value for money, which is equally important.

Please join us in wishing our new Maintenance Services Team every success for the future.

New gas contractor for the Luton area



Gas contractor T. Brown will now be carrying out all regular servicing and breakdown work for gas, oil and solid fuel heating systems in all South Anglia homes. Many residents will already be familiar with contractor T. Brown however for residents who live in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and some Hertfordshire local authority areas, T. Brown will be a new contractor.



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 law that you allow us into your home to carry out these safety tests. It is a breach of your tenancy

agreement and may result in legal proceedings if we are unable to check your appliances.

South Anglia can report 99.91% compliancy for valid gas safety inspections, however we must work to achieve and maintain 100% compliancy. Therefore we ask for your ongoing

support in completing these important safety tests. If an appointment is missed, our new contractors will do their best to re-arrange a new time and date. Please contact the customer service team on Tel. 0800 694 0159 or 0845 600 1543 or T. Brown on Tel. 0208 786 1414 to

change an appointment.

Ensuring your safety

All T. Brown operatives carry identity badges that include a picture, licence number, company name and expiry date on the front. On the back is a list of equipment that the operative is authorised to work on.

If you wish to check that someone is an engineer then call GAS SAFE on 0800 408 5500.

Call South Anglia on 0800 694 0159 or 0845 600 1543

News from the Resident and Service Users Panel



Circle's Residents and Service Users Panel (RASP) have been busy over the last few months. We don't just meet once a quarter, we all try to participate in the development of Circle's policies and practices in other events between our formal meetings.

Many members have been involved in the review of the repairs and maintenance service, which is of course one of the main contacts that residents have with Circle. Our members have attended two large events where the details of the service have been discussed and some have participated in smaller groups going over the fine detail of what is involved in the service – improving the service where it is needed and building on the best practices across the whole of Circle.

RASP members' knowledge of residents' experience of how repairs and maintenance are carried out in every part of the country where Circle has properties has been a

useful addition to this review.

RASP is unique in that it involves people from across the whole of Circle but we are also busily trying to make sure that we all know about other parts of the group, beyond where we happen to live. For that reason we've started on a programme of visits to all of the areas where Circle provides housing and services, to look around and get a feel for the special conditions in each area.

We've been to Mole Valley in Surrey and most recently visited the Mercian housing association 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 provision 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 formal meeting is in September but before that RASP members will be involved in a range of 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



Help us improve our service to you!



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.

Why is it important that we collect this information?

At Circle, our mission is to enhance the life chances of our residents. Each question we ask is equally important. 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.

In addition, these questionnaires will 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.

You can provide your Equality and Diversity information via post, over the telephone, by email or in person. 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.

Over the next 12 months we will be focussing on collecting this data and appreciate your assistance with this.

If you require any further information on this process, please do not hesitate to contact the Team using the following details:

Tel: 01279 712460

Email: leaseholdersSA@circle.org.uk

Residents review repairs service

Listening to what customers want, 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.

How to get involved



Resident involvement is at the heart of everything we do and our aim is to get as many residents involved as we can. We want to provide services that customers want and that meet the needs of our diverse communities. By getting involved you can have your say on the decisions that affect the services you receive and make your area a better place to live.

Here are just a few of the activities you can get involved in:

South Anglia's Resident Forum (SARF)

The Resident Forum reviews our policies and procedures and agrees actions for improving services. All members are provided with training and support to help them to carry out their duties.

Residents Scrutiny Panel

Residents independently review our performance and make recommendations for improvements to our services.

Resident Recruitment

We are looking to train a panel of residents to sit in interviews for customer facing staff at South Anglia. This is an opportunity to help shape the customer services that you receive.

Quality Action Groups (QAGs)

These groups are formed by residents and staff and focus on different services. The groups meet to look at the service improvement plans and agree any new ideas which are being introduced.

There are many ways to get involved with South Anglia to ensure your voice is heard, please take a look at the different Resident Involvement activities on our website at www.circle.org.uk/south-anglia/get-involved/residentinvolvement/resident-involvement-activities/



Decent Homes

At the start of the 2010/11 financial year South Anglia had 676 properties failing the government's requirements under the Decent Homes Standard.

To meet the government's deadline of ensuring all social housing tenants would benefit from a decent and warm home, with modern facilities by the end of 2010, we issued a program of works to a number of contractors.

To meet the Decent Homes standard a home must:

- meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing
- be in a reasonable state of repair

- have reasonably modern facilities and services
- provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

We worked hard every month towards the standard and achieved the target by the end of October 2010, which was well within the deadline of December 2010.

However, the Decent Homes work is not stopping, we are currently working to develop an on going program, to ensure South Anglia keeps to the Decent Homes Standard as we move through 2011.

Loan shark warning

If you are thinking about borrowing money be careful where you get the loan from and seek advice and help before you do so. It can be very dangerous to borrow money from loan sharks, below is a story highlighting some of the risks.

Aged 17, Mike was keen to buy his first car. When Peter offered to lend him £250, Mike agreed and began paying back in instalments until the loan was repaid. It was then that Peter mentioned extra interest, Mike then struggled to repay this so Peter offered a further loan.

Over the next two decades Peter trapped Mike in a never ending spiral of debt, forcing him to repay a staggering £90,000 on this loan.

Mike struggled to get by, working two jobs to keep up repayments. Mike's home life suffered and at his lowest point he attempted suicide.

The loan shark physically attacked Mike and threatened his family. After what Mike describes as "years of sheer hell", he spotted an article in the local paper about a loan shark who had been prosecuted by the Illegal Money Lending Team.

He plucked up the courage to call the hotline and from that moment on was fully supported by the team. Peter was prosecuted and received a custodial sentence.



For help and advice call the England Illegal Money Lending Team in confidence on 0300 555 2222, Lines are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week or the Income Team on 01279 714 799 for further information (please note the Income Team are not available 24 hours a day, seven days a week).

How are we doing? Performance for May 2011

Rent & Service Charge collection

92.1%

Re-let time (for all managed stock)

21.0 days

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

94.4%

Emergency repairs completed in target

96.0%

Current tenant arrears

3.5%

Routine repairs completed in target

98.7%

Complaints resolved at first stage

87.2%

Local Offers



In December 2006 the Government asked for an independent review of the way social housing was regulated. As a result of this the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) was set up and they set standards for social housing providers.

The TSA held a series of discussions with tenants across the country to find out what they thought a good standard of service should be. The results of these discussions produced six National Standards that all housing providers must meet.

To be able to deliver these six National Standards, the TSA requires housing providers to agree Local offers with residents for the areas of service which are relevant to them locally. This means that customers will be given meaningful performance

information that is relevant to them and will ensure that housing providers target their resources on the services that are most important to their customers.

We have carried out a 4 month consultation exercise with our residents which have enabled us to develop our "Commitments" which will show you what we aim to deliver in your local area.

You should have now received a copy of our Customer Commitments for Local Offers in your local area. Copies are also available on the website and by request. If you would like to know more about this, please do not hesitate to contact the Resident Involvement Team: 01376 559400 or email: communitiesandinvolvement@circle.org.uk

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.