

Life chances



Introducing a new partnership
Mercian Housing and Circle Anglia



life chances

A new partnership

In October 2009 Mercian will enter an exciting new phase by becoming a group partner within Circle Anglia, one of the UK's leading providers of affordable housing.

Established in 1964, Mercian Housing Association has grown steadily to become a successful and respected provider of affordable homes and support services in the West Midlands.

Formed from the merger of the Anglia Housing Group and the Circle 33 Housing Group in 2005, Circle Anglia has grown rapidly to include, with Mercian, eight housing associations and three commercial



care and support partners, serving over 180,000 people and providing over 51,000 homes across the UK.

"I'm delighted to welcome Mercian Housing Association to Circle Anglia. Mercian will be an excellent addition to the group as they understand Circle Anglia's vision and share our values of providing better homes, delivering great customer service, and investing in the wider community. This joint vision will help us in building a partnership that we will both benefit from, enabling us to enhance many more life chances throughout the UK."

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark C. Rogers". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Mark Rogers
CEO
Circle Anglia



"I'm very happy that Mercian is joining Circle Anglia. Circle Anglia understands what Mercian is trying to achieve and will work with us to help improve services for our customers and bring many benefits to our communities. We will be the group's lead partner in the West Midlands, enabling us to realise our potential in meeting the housing and regeneration needs of the region."

Laurice Ponting
Chief Executive
Mercian Housing Association



Why have Mercian and Circle Anglia decided to take this step?

Delivering for our customers

At the heart of the decision to become part of Circle Anglia is:

- A shared commitment to improve services and deliver greater value for our residents
- Access to greater resources and sharing of best practice to enable Mercian to make a greater impact in its key neighbourhoods
- The opportunity for Mercian's specialist services to be offered to a wider range of customers across the group

Being part of a larger group achieves these aims in many ways, such as: advancing the 'life chances' agenda; working with communities and involving residents in what goes on; and developing new initiatives and services for residents.

Enhancing life chances

Mercian and Circle Anglia share a common purpose: to enhance our residents' life chances. The partnership enables this ambition to be realised by:

- Making improvements to people's homes, helping them to live with independence and dignity
- Creating opportunities for individuals to access training and employment
- Taking action to improve the health and lives of older people
- Providing support and guidance services to young people. Mercian's capacity to do this will be far greater as part of a wider group in which innovation and resources are shared

To understand more about what we mean by our commitment to enhancing life chances you can watch a short film on the Circle Anglia web-site: www.circleanglia.org/corporate/regeneration/life-chances

life chances

Working with communities

As a group partner Mercian will have more resources and access to a wider range of expertise and support to make a real, lasting difference in neighbourhoods and communities.

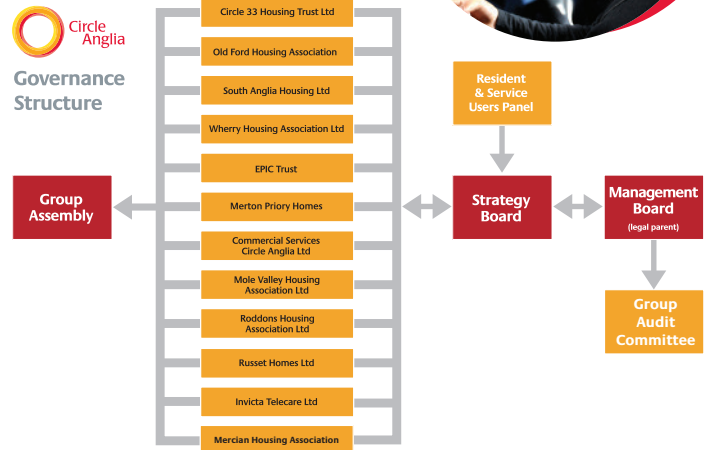
To build on the excellent community development work it has already done and on its work to tackle the problems of financial exclusion, staff and residents from Mercian have been to visit other partners within Circle Anglia and have seen excellent examples of community facilities and initiatives. Including the Housing Corporation Gold Award-winning Community Cohesion work of Old Ford, that could be developed within the West Midlands. The partnership works in both directions and will provide the opportunity to further develop and extend the work of Mercian's Financial Services subsidiary, ART Homes Ltd, into other parts of Circle Anglia.

New opportunities for resident involvement

There will be exciting new opportunities for residents to be involved in the way both Mercian and

the wider group operate. At the centre of the group structure is a Residents and Service Users Panel, which is directly represented on Circle Anglia's Strategy Board.

Mercian's residents will make a major contribution to this and other panels that meet regularly to look at policies and working practices that are applied across the group.



New initiatives and services

As a group partner, Mercian will be able to introduce new services and opportunities for its customers, such as:

- House Exchange – the innovative system which enables tenants who are thinking of a move to see homes that are available for a mutual exchange across the country
- Accessing help and services from other specialist partners such as EPIC Trust, the support and care arm of Circle Anglia, and Invicta Telecare who provide monitoring and emergency call-out services



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A partnership to support improved services

- **Expertise and resources**

As with all Circle Anglia group partners, a range of specialists and a group senior management team will help in delivering Mercian's objectives. Specialist teams are already working with Mercian colleagues to drive forward business critical issues such as a full stock condition survey.

The group provides high-quality cost effective central services such as HR, Treasury and Risk Management, IT and Learning and Development as well as Commercial and Leasehold services. The access to experience and expertise from around the group will greatly strengthen Mercian's ability to respond to the complex housing needs of the region.

- **Systems**

Mercian's customers will immediately benefit from modern, high quality housing management systems that are well supported by the group. This enables faster, more efficient

customer contact and also enables Mercian's front-line staff to spend more time actually delivering services rather than compiling reports or gathering statistics. Using a common system will enable much of that 'back office' work to be done by specialist teams at Circle Anglia.

- **Lower costs**

As part of a group, costs can be spread across a number of partners and there is far more opportunity to share things such as specialist advice or staff learning and development. The group partners work together with Circle Anglia to get the best value for money and have achieved impressive savings in things like the cost of arranging repairs contracts and providing legal services. Those savings create the capacity to deliver more affordable homes and front-line services. Group partners also work together to share information and best practice.





Scale and local effectiveness - the best of both worlds

There are times when scale really does matter. A significant part of Mercian's decision to become part of Circle Anglia was a recognition that in order to tackle some of the major housing and regeneration challenges in the West Midlands it is necessary to have access to more resources and greater financial capacity. Circle Anglia offers that capacity as well as a commitment to support strong, effective local partners.

Although it is joining a large national organisation, Mercian will retain its local focus and identity, evidenced by the fact that:

- Mercian retains ownership of its housing stock
- The Board of Management continues in place, taking a seat on the group Strategy Board alongside the other partners

- Senior managers remain, taking their place in the leadership teams of Circle Anglia
- Staff remain employed by Mercian. This partnership is a major new opportunity and the start of an exciting new era in the life of the Association. It will maintain and build on Mercian's existing strengths and core values, but will also give it the capability and expertise of a large, national group



Life chances

Partnerships for the future

Looking ahead, the establishment of Mercian as part of Circle Anglia introduces something new and potent into the region. Circle Anglia has not previously operated in the West Midlands and sees many opportunities to support Mercian in meeting the housing needs of the region.

The group has an excellent track record in housing development and regeneration, and has delivered major programmes of stock investment through housing stock transfers.

Circle Anglia has award-winning achievements for community development and cohesion, and this experience and expertise, combined with the group's financial strength, offers a powerful new asset for Local Authorities, government agencies and a range of other stakeholders to draw upon. We look forward to introducing ourselves over the coming weeks and to engaging with a range of exciting and challenging initiatives.



Mercian Housing Association and Circle Anglia

“The partnership between Mercian and Circle Anglia will complement each of our strengths. Mercian will be able to achieve more of our aims as part of a large, national group, while still delivering bespoke local services. I’m very excited about what the future holds.”

Colin Small
Chairman
Mercian Housing