Summer 2021

Keeping Connected

With our residents and communities

1ST BIRTHDAY EDITION

Eastlight Community Homes

Welcome from Emma

As the summer ends and children go back to school, I hope that your community is slowly starting to recover from the effects of the pandemic, as we all learn to live with the virus.

Eastlight is focusing on catching up on service delays - such as repairs - caused by lockdowns and the resulting increase in calls and email queries. We are now able to provide all our services safely; however, delayed services continue to result in longer waiting times.
We are sorry and know this is frustrating.
We are doing all we can to put this right.
We would be grateful if you could also help us by only calling with urgent queries, otherwise please email, message us on social media, text or visit our website. Your enquiries and requests are important and will be dealt with and we ask that you don't contact us multiple times.

"Our dedicated teams have remained here for you and continue to support our vulnerable residents"

We marked our first birthday as Eastlight in July. This was an opportunity to look back at the progress we have made, despite the challenges of the pandemic, and of joining two great housing associations together. In this newsletter you'll see achievements, progress against what we set out to do by merging, and our ambitious plans for the coming years. We know there is still much to do.

Our dedicated teams have remained here for you and continue to support our vulnerable residents. We're pleased to have been nationally-recognised for the support we offer residents and staff experiencing domestic abuse. If you are affected, please trust that you can ask us for help - no one should feel scared in their own home.

"Your feedback is really important and we will always welcome your views"

Our staff have been working hard behind the scenes - improving our systems, processes and how we record the information we have about you and your homes. These are the important foundations we need to create modern services which meet your needs and keep you safe.

Thank you for your patience and for taking the time to tell us when we get it right and where we need to improve. Your feedback is really important and we will always welcome your views.

With warmest wishes,

Emma Palmer, Chief Executive.

Eastlight's Annual Check-up

12,415
total number of social housing homes Eastlight provides to local people

282
new homes built, including 103 for shared ownership

86%
of residents surveyed rated the grounds maintenance as 5 or over out of 10.

£37,663
in community improvements

18,795
repairs completed

79%
of residents satisfied with repairs

£1.1 million
secured for residents following benefits advice

410
residents received money or employment advice

£19,904
to 44 residents in financial hardship

949
reports of anti-social behaviour resolved (up 300 on the previous year due to low level nuisance)

71
people affected by domestic abuse received specialist help

12,500
welfare calls made to our most vulnerable residents

£130,000
of grants awarded by Eastlight and Braintree District Council for community support during the pandemic

48
Christmas food hampers delivered to households in financial hardship

12
laptops donated to residents

Data from April 1 2020 to March 31 2021

How have we been performing?

223 new bathrooms

118 new central heating systems

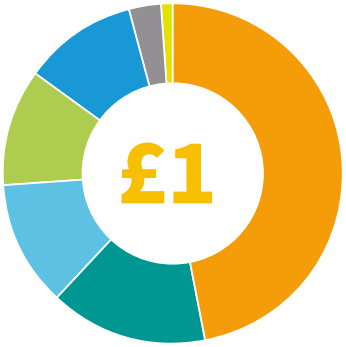
106 new kitchens

£13m invested in improvements to our existing homes

465 new boilers

Data from April 1 2020 to March 31 2021

How we spend each £1



- New homes 47p
- Management 15p
- Maintenance 12p
- Improving Homes 11p
- Loan charges 11p
- Support & Services 3p
- Community Projects & Empowerment 1p

For more information, please see our Financial statements on our website

We are getting Stronger Together

We merged so we could do more for our residents and communities now and for generations to come. Our pledge remains and here is summary of how we are progressing on our top commitments:

Our commitment	What have we achieved so far?	Coming up
Inspire communities to shine	Shaping ground-breaking community empowerment programme	Launching new community empowerment programme Training local people to solve challenges in their neighbourhoods (see next page to get involved!) Community academy Career start opportunities
Powerful resident voice	Customer Influence Committee launched	New shareholding offer
Modern services	All repairs services provided by Eastlight	Residents helping design online 24/7 services for those who choose them Residents helping review grounds maintenance services Completing repairs paused in lockdown
Improve homes	£130m available to invest in existing homes	Responding to climate change

If you could change one thing in your community, what would it be?

What's the one change that would make a real difference to you and your loved ones?

We're launching *All In*, an ambitious new programme to bring together a network of local people and organisations to make those changes happen.

All In will be built with you from the ground up, beginning with a big conversation to decide what changes we want to focus on.

To join that conversation, please fill in the short survey enclosed or complete this online version.

What is *All In*?

All In is for everyone in our communities, whether you live in an Eastlight home or not.

The big decisions – like the challenges we focus on and how we take them on – will be decided by local people like you.

Next year, together we will:

1. **Launch a new academy,** where you can learn new skills to tackle these big social issues – online or in person
2. **Recruit paid teams** of local people to work full-time to come up with solutions to these issues
3. **Support and invest in the best ideas,** so they can improve lives in our communities.

Before that, we will be continuing the conversation with you out in our communities with fun events, consultation and more. You can get involved in the way that works for you.

This is your chance to make a real impact. You know and care about your community, so you can see where it needs to change.

Let's do this together. We're *All In*.

Are you?

Look out for updates and ways to get involved in this newsletter and on social media.

Working together

Chair of Customer Influence Committee, Michelle Baker (third from left), with Eastlight Board members

Eastlight influencers update!

In May we formed our Customer Influence Committee, to ensure that what you tell us you would like to see is part of how decisions are made at Eastlight. Committee members have been busy getting under the skin of what Eastlight does and working out how they are going to make sure they rise up to the challenges our Board has set them!

Two topics that they will initially focus on are:

How we resolve complaints

How to get the views of a broader range of customers

Watch this space for updates on the group's work, and please keep giving us your ideas and feedback.

What do you want to know more about?

What else do you want to know about the services we provide that we're not currently telling you about? We publish information on topics ranging from repairing your homes to support for domestic abuse, should you need it. If you want us to tell you more, please contact Jessica Brett on 01376 332475 or jessica.brett@eastlighthomes.co.uk

No one should feel scared in their own home

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone, yet it is often overlooked, excused or denied. This is especially true when the abuse is psychological, emotional or financial, rather than physical.

Noticing and acknowledging the signs of an abusive relationship is the first step to ending it. If you recognise yourself or someone you know in the following descriptions of abuse, please know that there is help and support available. No one should live in fear of the person they love.

Do you:

- Feel afraid of your partner much of the time?
- Avoid certain topics out of fear of angering your partner?
- Feel you can't do anything right for your partner?
- Believe that you deserve to be hurt or mistreated?
- Wonder if you're the one who is crazy?
- Feel emotionally numb or helpless?

If you answered yes to any of the above, you may be in an abusive relationship.

If you're experiencing domestic abuse, we will:

- **Listen to you**
- **Support you**
- **Help you to take action, if you want us to.**

If you think it might be happening to you or someone you know, you can contact us, call the Essex Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0330 333 7 444 or call 999 if you're in immediate danger.

We have recently become the first housing association in Essex to receive national accreditation for the support we offer customers and staff for domestic abuse.

Please don't suffer in silence – we are here if you need us.

daha accredited

Five ways to keep mould at bay

With autumn approaching you may be thinking about how to keep your home free of condensation, which can lead to mildew and mould if left unchecked.

We will do our best to support you if you are experiencing issues, but here are five simple steps to fight condensation:

1. Dry wet windows, windowsills and surfaces every day
2. Wring out clothes as much as possible before drying on a radiator
3. Don't cook with internal doors open, use an extractor fan or open a window
4. Put lids on pans when boiling water
5. Keep bathroom doors closed and open the window after a bath.

Please contact us for more guidance, or visit www.eastlighthomes.co.uk

Celebrating our differences

It's very important to us that our customers, staff and everyone we work with is treated fairly and that no one suffers disadvantage or discrimination based on something that may make them different from someone else.

We aim to celebrate our differences, and our staff have been sharing stories and experiences about race, disability, religion, sexuality and more. We're using our knowledge to increase our understanding of each other and our customers, so that our services are right for you.

Here is a taster of a couple of stories shared by two staff members, and you can click on the links or contact us to read the rest:

What does Pride Month mean to me?

By Andrew Allocca, Development Manager

"Pride Month is a time of both celebration of how far the LGBTQ+ Community has come and also a challenge to the establishment on how far we must still go to achieve genuine equality and parity.

Having grown up in the 70's and 80's I lived through the dark days of the HIV crisis and Section 28 - a British law that prohibited the "promotion of homosexuality" by local authorities. Being a young gay person at school through this period meant that, rightly or wrongly, schools did nothing to combat homophobia in fear of falling foul of this law."
Read more here: www.cih.org/blogs-and-articles/what-does-pride-month-mean-to-meeur

Windrush Day and me

By Amanda Bhavnani, Communications Advisor

"Windrush Day marks the anniversary of the arrival of MV Empire Windrush at the Port of Tilbury, near London, on 22 June 1948. It bought workers from Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and other islands to help fill post-war UK labour shortages.

My mum, Abaida, was part of 'The Windrush Generation,' coming to England in 1954 aged three with her mum and older sister.
Read more here: www.cih.org/blogs-and-articles/what-windrush-day-means-to-me

We understand that each individual is unique, and recognise individual differences

How safe is home for our LGBTQ+ residents?

We've signed up to the HouseProud Pledge – a national project which helps to address LGBTQ+ inequality for social housing residents.
For example, current national data shows:

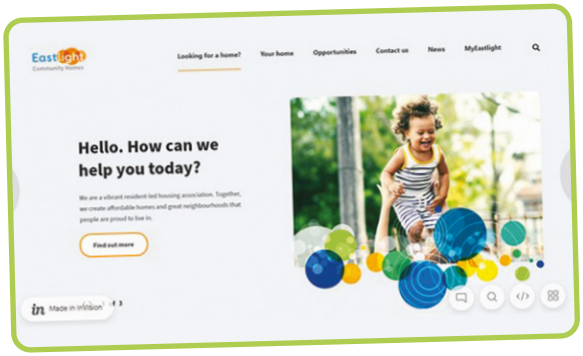
- 20% of gay men make changes to their home (e.g. moving pictures or books) to hide their sexual orientation from housing association staff when they come to visit
- 60% of trans people do not feel safe in their neighbourhood.

Over the next year, we will make sure that our LGBTQ+ residents are seen and heard properly in various ways. We want to increase our understanding of what you experience, how you feel and what changes you would like to be made, with the aim of ensuring that home is a place where you can freely express your sexual orientation and/or gender identity without fear or prejudice.

We have signed up to the HouseProud pledge.

HouseProud

If you're a member of the LGBTQ+ community, please let us know your housing experiences by contacting us.



Visit www.eastlighthomes.co.uk

New website launching

We're launching a new and improved website, designed to be easy to use for everyone. We would love you to take a look and start using it to:

- Contact us (including through the Live Chat option and My Eastlight app)
- Look up service information
- See our latest news
- Get involved

Chair-based exercise classes resume!

Our free face to face classes - to help you improve your movement and flexibility - have now safely resumed.

Choose from:

Wednesdays at The Mulberries, Braintree, 2-3pm

Thursdays at The Salings Millenium Hall, Great Saling, 2-3.30pm

Fridays at The Mulberries, Braintree, 10.30-11.30am

Or join our online class on Wednesdays from 2-3pm.

CONTACT US TO BOOK

Call: 0330 128 0330 (local rate)

Text: 07860 024 511

Email: customer.services@eastlighthomes.co.uk

Write to: Eastlight House, Charter Way, Braintree, Essex, CM77 8FG

Visit: www.eastlighthomes.co.uk

facebook.com/eastlighthomes

instagram.com/eastlighthomes

twitter.com/eastlighthomes

linkedin.com/company/eastlight-community-homes-

We really value your comments, compliments and complaints, as they help us to shape the services we provide to you. Please get in touch, any time.

If you need this newsletter in a different format or language, please let us know.

To help to keep our staff and customers safe, our offices remain closed but you can meet with us by appointment, if necessary

Eastlight Community Homes