

Environmental, Social and Governance Report 2021



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Environmental, Social and Governance Report

The Board is pleased to present Eastlight's first Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) report. The report provides information on our performance, both quantitative and qualitative, against the requirements of the new Sustainability Reporting Standard for Social Housing.

The Sustainability Reporting Standard for Social Housing (SRS) was published in November 2020 following widespread consultation and engagement from across the housing and financial sectors. Its purpose is to provide investors and other stakeholders who are increasingly focused on environmental, social and governance matters, with greater information, clarity and consistency on the activities that housing providers such as Eastlight undertake and the outcomes that are achieved.

What ESG means to Eastlight

The modern world is changing at a rapid pace, and although ESG reporting is driven by investors' appetite for ethical investment, the elements are intrinsic in Eastlight's values and fundamental to our future plans.

Environment

The environmental challenges we all face are at the forefront of our development and asset plans. Our New Homes Strategy looks to embed the move to carbon-neutral homes and utilise modern methods of construction. Improving the fabric of our existing homes to provide sustainable and economic homes for our residents is fundamental to our asset plans.

By the end of 2021/22, we will have completed the majority of our stock condition surveys, which include detailed energy data. This data will be analysed using our asset software, enabling us to create two roadmaps. The first will be to achieve the 2030 target for attaining Energy Performance Certificate rating at level C for all our properties. The second is the decarbonisation roadmap with a target date of 2050.

We are also looking at greening our vehicles which are used by our teams to repair and upgrade customers' homes. We are trialling two electric vehicles for 12 months so that we can determine the benefits and challenges, and if successful, roll out green vehicles across our fleet.



Social

Embracing our social responsibility is central to our corporate values, from providing affordable homes to those on low incomes, to supporting our residents and communities in ways that matter to them both individually and collectively.

Listening to our communities is crucial and we have launched our groundbreaking Community Investment programme, called **All In**. This will bring together local people and organisations into a powerful network which will introduce real change in our communities where they are living and working. Our community project, a first of its kind in the UK, will provide a space for local people in all their diversity to come together to develop innovative ideas that tackle the big social challenges affecting their communities. Supporting this will be a learning academy (both digital and real-world), providing personal and professional development across a wide spectrum of relevant topics and specialist areas, from community organising to setting up a social enterprise.

All In will provide learning and development to hundreds of people across Essex, help teams of local people create bold new solutions, and provide intensive support to make viable community ideas a reality. This programme will include a Resident Academy, aimed at equipping participants with transferable skills for life and work.

This year, we will also be increasing our traineeships. Called **Succeed at Eastlight**, they will help people from all ages and walks of life to gain the skills and knowledge to launch new careers, getting hands on training and the opportunity to put their skills into practice. What makes this different is we pay a decent wage and there offers of a real job for successful candidates.

Supporting all this good work are our people, who are committed to supporting Eastlight's aspirations. And we are committed to making sure our people are informed, engaged and understand our ethos and culture of inclusion.



Governance

Strong governance underpins Eastlight's strategic direction. The depth and breadth of our Board ensures that we have clearly defined objectives and we maintain focus and deliver against our corporate commitments. In 2021, we established the Customer Influence Committee, which comprises Eastlight residents and is chaired by an Eastlight resident Board member. As a fully constituted committee within the governance structure, it has delegated authority from the Board to oversee and support customer influence in decision making and the development and delivery of our strategies and policies. Additionally, one of our Board members has been appointed Sustainability Champion, ensuring the emphasis on ESG remains part of the decision-making process.

Next Steps

This is the first year for ESG, and Eastlight was well placed to report against all the core metrics defined in the Standard. The appendix attached details the outcomes and responses, and demonstrates that we are already on the right road. It also evidences our awareness of the importance of ESG factors.

Next year, Eastlight will publish its first full ESG report.



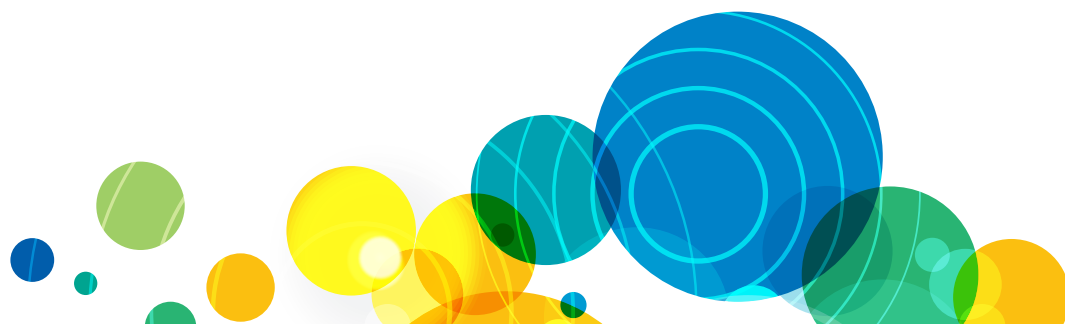
Appendix A

Theme	Ref	Criteria	Measure/Response at 31 March 2021 (unless stated)
Social – Affordability and security	C1	For properties that are subject to the rent regime, report against an affordability metric: Rent compared to Local Housing Allowance	Across our housing, rents are on average 57% of the Local Housing Allowance, a measure used to determine reasonable local rent levels and determine Housing Benefit. We have 66 homes that are 100% of the Local Housing Allowance, with the majority of our rent charges between 40% and 70% of Local Housing Allowance.
Social – Affordability and security	C2	Share, and number, of existing homes (homes completed before the last financial year) allocated to: General needs (social rent), intermediate rent, affordable rent, supported housing, housing for older people, low-cost home ownership, care homes, private rented sector	Social Rent - 73.2% - 8513 homes Intermediate - 1.0% - 116 homes Affordable rent - 14.9% - 1734 homes Supported housing - 1.3% - 152 homes Housing for older people - 5.5% - 637 homes Low-cost shared ownership - 3.9% - 454 homes Care homes - 0.1% - 6 homes Private rented sector - 0.1% - 11 homes
Social – Affordability and security	C3	Share, and number, of new homes (homes that were completed in the last financial year), allocated to: General needs, social rent, intermediate rent, affordable rent, supported housing, housing for older people, low-cost home ownership, care homes, private rented sector	Affordable rent - 76.3% - 180 homes Low-cost home ownership - 23.7% - 56 homes Our New Homes Strategy commits to developing 1,746 affordable and 476 social rent properties in the next five years. We have a strong pipeline and are already in contract to deliver over 1,200 new homes.
Social – Affordability and security	C4	How is the Housing Provider trying to reduce the effect of fuel poverty on its residents?	Eastlight is targeting energy efficiency improvements, to improve the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating of the home and benefit residents' running costs. Our asset management strategy has a fabric first approach, ensuring that the home is properly insulated, making sure that the money spent by our customers on heating is retained within the home for as long as possible. Eastlight's specification targets energy efficient models for major works components, including windows, doors, boilers etc. We also help customers with benefit claims and energy switching.
Social – Affordability and security	C6	What % of homes with a gas appliance have an in-date accredited gas safety check?	100%
Social – Building Safety and Quality	C7	What % of buildings have an in-date and compliant Fire Risk Assessment?	100%
Social – Building Safety and Quality	C8	What % of homes meet the Decent Homes Standard?	100%



Theme	Ref	Criteria	Measure/Response at 31 March 2021 (unless stated)
Social– Building Safety and Quality	C9	What arrangements are in place to enable the residents to hold management to account for the provision of services?	<p>In May 2021, our Customer Influence Committee was formed. The Committee consists of residents and is chaired by a resident Board member. As a fully constituted Committee it has delegated authority from the Board in ensuring that customers influence decision making and that a wide variety of views from a wide range of customers are considered. They oversee and monitor the delivery of the Community Empowerment Strategy, the Asset Management Strategy and the Service Delivery Strategy.</p> <p>Residents can also attend the Annual General Meeting, where there is opportunity to ask questions about Eastlight’s performance and information is provided in a customer friendly report.</p>
Social – Resident Voice	C10	How does the Housing Provider measure Resident Satisfaction and how has Resident Satisfaction changed over the last three years?	<p>Eastlight measures satisfaction in several different ways. We measure ongoing satisfaction ‘realtime’ by automated surveys triggered at the point of customer contact. Additionally, we will carry out annual STAR type surveys to measure overall satisfaction and Net Promoter Score (NPS). Eastlight was formed in July 2020 and our NPS score at that time was +27. Our realtime satisfaction currently stands at 90% (4.5 out of 5).</p>
Social – Resident Voice	C12	<p>What support services does the Housing Provider offer to its residents?</p> <p>How successful are these services in improving outcomes?</p>	<p>Eastlight offers a range of support to our customers. This includes tenancy sustainment, welfare rights and benefits, financial inclusion and digital inclusion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tenancy Support Co-ordinators provide high/medium and low support needs including physical health, mental health, financial support/advocacy, relationships, property maintenance, access to internal and external services and substance misuse. This team also leads on Safeguarding concerns, prior to and after escalation to statutory services. - Welfare Rights/Benefits Officers help our customers with benefit applications, appeals and general support around financial hardship. They also lead on our partnerships with local foodbanks, distributing vouchers to those in need. - Financial Support Co-ordinator helps customers with debt, budgeting and assistance with becoming job ready (including assistance with CVs and job searching). This role also manages a £30,000 per year budget to support customers in financial hardship requiring urgent items/services. The role is the lead on our service level agreement/working relationship with Citizens Advice. - Digital Support Co-ordinator ensures customers can access claims, housing applications and all online services pertinent to the management of their home, income and general wellbeing. Provides PC and online training, as well as assistance with new and existing Universal Credit claims. <p>The co-ordinators have assisted in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 256 Tenancy Sustainment cases. • 119 resident interventions to help with mental health. • 146 Safeguarding cases. • 314 Housing Related Support (Support Coordinator) cases. • 621 Financial Support/Digital Support cases. • Residents gained over £1m following benefits advice. • Awarded £19,904 from our hardship fund. <p>In 2020/21, we also introduced Tenancy Sustainment & Safeguarding Policies to set out our commitment to supporting our customers. Both policies are available/accessible to our customers and people online.</p>

Theme	Ref	Criteria	Measure/Response at 31 March 2021 (unless stated)
Environmental – Climate change	C14	Distribution of EPC ratings of existing homes (those completed before the last financial year)	The distribution of EPC ratings for homes owned at 31 March 2021 are: B rated - 2% C rated - 60% D rated - 34% E rated - 4% We are currently preparing our roadmap to meet the EPC rating of C or above for all our homes by 2030.
Environmental – Climate change	C15	Distribution of EPC ratings of new homes (those completed in the last financial year)	Of the homes completed this year: 5% were B rated; 75% were C rated In future, all newly developed homes will have an EPC rating of C or above.
Governance	C25	Is the Housing Provider registered with a Regulator of Social Housing?	Yes, registration number L4499.
Governance	C26	What is the most recent governance and viability rating?	Eastlight currently has a G1/V1 rating, the highest rating available by the Regulator of Social Housing
Governance	C27	What code of governance does the Housing Provider follow?	Under the Regulatory Framework the Board is required to select and comply with a published Code of Governance. The Board has chosen to adopt the Code of Excellence in Governance published by the National Housing Federation in 2020 as its code of governance from 1 April 2021. The Board considers that this Code is the most appropriate for the Association taking into account its size, corporate structure, community gateway principles and the nature of its activities. The Board has an action plan to ensure full compliance with the 2020 code by 31 March 2022. This year the Board has assessed itself against the 2015 Code and is fully compliant in all material respects. The Board has also chosen to adopt the NHF Code of Conduct 2012 and is equally compliant.
Governance	C28	Is the Housing Provider not for profit?	Yes
Governance	C29	Explain how the Housing Provider's Board manages organisational risks.	The Board annually reviews and agrees our risk appetite across the key areas of activity. They review strategic risks at their meeting at least quarterly. A more detailed review of strategic risks is undertaken by the Audit & Risk Committee at each meeting. The Operational Management Team (Heads of Service and Directors) and the Executive Management Team review risk monthly. Assurance Maps are currently being developed for each operational area to further test controls in each area. We have a three-year rolling programme of internal audits to test controls and assess management of risks.



Theme	Ref	Criteria	Measure/Response at 31 March 2021 (unless stated)
Governance	C30	Has the Housing Provider been subject to any adverse regulatory findings in the last 12 months eg. Data protection breaches, bribery, money laundering, HSE breaches or notices - that have resulted in enforcement action?	No
Governance	C31	What is the demographic of the Board? And how much does this compare to the demographic of the Housing Provider's residents, and the area that they operate in?	<p>Women 50% of the Board are women. 62.49% of our customers are women.</p> <p>BAME 7.14% of the Board are BAME. 5.47% of our customers are BAME.</p> <p>Disability 7% of the Board are disabled. 43.82% of our customers are disabled.</p> <p>Average age of the Board is 56.21 years. Average age of our customers – complete data is not held however the majority of customers fall in the 55 - 64 age band (20.69% of customers) followed closely by 20.63% of customers falling in the 65 - 74 age band.</p> <p>The average tenure of Board members is 13 months. This is relatively short, and is a result of the appointment of new members post-merger, aimed at bringing new and broader perspectives to our already strong and resilient Board.</p>
Governance	C32	What % of the Board and management team have turned over in the last two years?	<p>Since merger, two Board members have resigned and one appointed with a process ongoing for a turnover of 20%.</p> <p>For Executive Directors, since merger, we have had one resignation and one appointment representing 25% turnover.</p>
Governance	C34	What % of the Board are non-executive directors?	100%
Governance	C35	Number of Board members on the Audit Committee with recent and relevant financial experience?	3
Governance	C36	Are there any current executives on the Remuneration Committee?	No
Governance	C37	Has a succession plan been provided to the board in the last 12 months?	Eastlight Board was formed following the merger of Greenfields Community Housing and Colne Housing Association on 1 July 2020. A succession plan was agreed by the Board in June 2021
Governance	C38	For how many years has the Housing Provider's current external audit partner been responsible for auditing the accounts?	The current audit partner was previously the auditor for Greenfields for three years and has been the audit partner for Eastlight for 2020/21 audit.



Theme	Ref	Criteria	Measure/Response at 31 March 2021 (unless stated)
Governance – Board and Trustees	C39	When was the last independently - run, Board effectiveness review?	An individual annual appraisal is undertaken of all Board Members and the Chair. An independent review of governance and Board effectiveness was undertaken during the year (Apr/May 2021) supported by Savills which has informed a plan to implement recommendations.
Governance – Board and Trustees	C40	Are the roles of the Chair of the Board and CEO held by two separate people?	Yes
Governance – Board and Trustees	C41	How does the Housing Provider handle conflicts of interest at the Board?	We have a clear policy around declaring declarations of interest annually. This is also a standing item on each Board and Committee agenda. Where a conflict is identified, there is a clear process and legal advice is sought. Requirements are documented within the Board/ Committee Service Agreements and within supporting policies (Code of Conduct, Probity Policy, etc.)
Governance – staff wellbeing	C42	Does the Housing Provider pay the Real Living Wage?	Yes
Governance – staff wellbeing	C43	What is the gender pay gap?	Eastlight's first gender pay gap was calculated from April 2021 data and published in December 2021.

Find out more or get in touch

December 2021

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