

Summer 2023

Shine

Your Eastlight residents magazine

Eastlight
Community Homes



Going the distance

Inspirational Lee won't let dementia slow him down

Page 6

Meet the team supporting you through the cost-of-living crisis

Page 4-5

Your feedback shapes speedier Repairs Service

Page 8

Win a £50 shopping voucher!

Page 12



Measuring your satisfaction

We use your feedback to identify where your services are working well – and where improvements are needed.

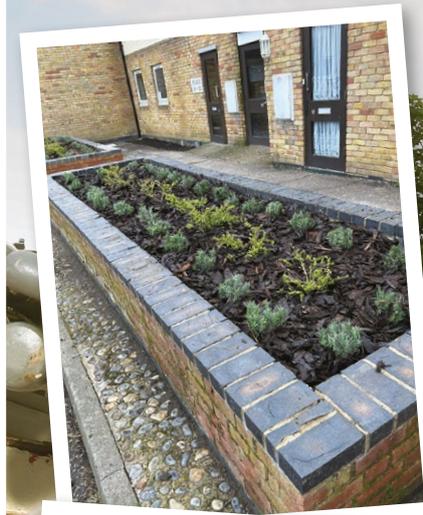
Your views, including the 12,000 responses to our regular feedback surveys last year, help us constantly review our services to make sure they meet your needs and offer value for money. See page 8 for an update on how your feedback has helped improve your repairs service.

From this month, you may also be contacted by an organisation called TLF Research to complete a survey about our services.

This survey is part of the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Satisfaction Measures, which all housing providers are now using to measure customer satisfaction.

You'll be asked whether you're satisfied with everything from the services you receive to the way we communicate with you. Surveys will be carried out over the phone or online and shouldn't take longer than 10 minutes.

We'd really value your opinion and you will be able to see how we are performing on our website.




**ENHANCING
YOUR
ESTATES**

FROM COMMUNAL GARDEN MAKE-OVERS TO RUBBISH-FILLED SKIPS, OUR TEAMS HAVE BEEN OUT AND ABOUT IN A COMMUNITY NEAR YOU.

Community tidy-ups, landscaping improvements and vegetation clear-ups have taken place everywhere from Greenstead Green to St Osyth.

Highlights include working alongside residents in Tiptree for a mass tidy of one estate, and filling 10 skips and five vans with unwanted items and rubbish with Templars Community Association and other residents in Witham.

As well as clean-ups, we've carried out landscaping improvements in eight areas,

from Groves Close in Colchester to Lancaster Way in Braintree. These include creating block paving, renovating raised bedding and general enhancements.

Thank you to everyone who has joined our teams and pitched in with the tidy-ups.

If your neighbourhood feels a little neglected, please contact us to see how we can help.



Contact us at
customer.services@eastlighthomes.co.uk

Bocking homes boost

More affordable homes will be available for some of the 2,460 Braintree district households on the waiting list after we secured permission to build on a site in Bocking.

The 70 homes – a mix of social rent, affordable rent and shared

ownership – will be built in Bovingdon Road, Bocking. Development Director, Andrew Hull, said: “All the new homes will be affordable and provide much-needed housing for some of the thousands of residents and families who are waiting for a home in the Braintree District.”



Show time in Halstead

Eastlight is looking forward to opening the doors to our first ever show home this summer at the Mount Hill development in Halstead.

The Eastlight-led project is underway, with 71 affordable homes currently under construction as part of our commitment to tackling the housing crisis, one brick at a time.

SHIELD blocks high heating bills

We've joined a new project to investigate the potential of using technology to reduce your heating bills and our carbon footprint.

SHIELD (Smart Heat and Intelligent Energy in Low-income Districts) is a partnership of organisations which wants to pilot established and new energy technologies in some Eastlight homes to reduce energy costs and carbon emissions.

Thank you to the 400 residents who completed a recent survey about your heating bills and experiences.

Our star residents

Two Eastlight residents have been shortlisted for prestigious national awards!

Catherine Turner and Rue Garande have beaten competition from across the UK to be shortlisted for the Women in Housing and Housing Heroes Awards.

Accessibility champion Catherine, who is blind and a wheelchair user, speaks up on behalf of disabled residents to ensure Eastlight's services are inclusive, and she has been shortlisted for Board Member of the Year.

Rue, an Eastlight resident and Community Empowerment Officer, campaigns on behalf

of domestic abuse survivors and has created the All In Alliances for Colchester and Halstead. She has been shortlisted for Tenant of the Year.

Catherine and Rue will discover if they win at a ceremony in late June. Good luck!



WE LISTEN WITH EMPATHY – AND WITHOUT JUDGEMENT”

IN A RECENT RESIDENT SURVEY, YOU TOLD US YOU WANTED TO UNDERSTAND MORE ABOUT THE SERVICES EASTLIGHT OFFERS AND WHO RUNS THEM. HERE, WE INTRODUCE OUR TENANCY SUSTAINMENT TEAM, WHO ARE ALWAYS ON HAND TO HELP.

WHAT DO WE DO?

Last year, we helped 456 residents maintain their independence, self-esteem, quality of life and wellbeing.

We'll continue to do this by offering a range of support, including:

- Advice on managing your bills
- Ensuring you get the benefits you're entitled to
- Help to get online
- Issuing food bank vouchers
- Assistance if you're experiencing domestic abuse
- Supporting you if you're not comfortable about letting people into your home – for example, for an essential safety check.

Our Tenancy Support Team includes Georgina, who explained: “Most of my week is spent in residents' homes, giving one-to-one support. We help residents connect with other support services, address debt issues and help to declutter their homes so they can manage their lives more easily.

“I love making a difference. I am passionate about making communities more inclusive, reducing poverty and supporting those most in need to live the best life they possibly can.”

Please do contact us if you're struggling or feeling worried. We are here to listen and help.

INTRODUCING TENANCY SUSTAINMENT COORDINATOR, RENAE

“I believe everyone should feel safe and secure in their home. What inspires me to do my job is knowing I am making a difference or avoiding a crisis from happening. I always imagine me or a family member in that situation and hope that, by giving support, I am enabling residents to live a better life.

“I want our residents to know you don't have to suffer in silence and that we'll listen with empathy and without judgement.

“You never know what life is going to throw at you and if I can help someone learn new skills and ways to cope, or know who to reach out to in times of need, I get a real sense of fulfilment.”



Call us on **0330 128 0330**
email us at **customer.services@eastlighthomes.co.uk**
or fill in a short form on our website:
www.eastlighthomes.co.uk/tenancy-sustainment



“YOU REALLY PULLED OUT ALL THE STOPS”

IN 2020, EASTLIGHT RESIDENT LIZ MARTIN WAS RUSHED TO HOSPITAL AFTER COLLAPSING SUDDENLY.

There, she was diagnosed with Guillain-Barré syndrome, a rare and serious condition which left her paralysed and using a wheelchair.

When she was released from hospital, it quickly became clear her first-floor flat was unsuitable. Liz, who can only walk a few steps at a time, started experiencing poor mental health and was struggling to get support to manage her finances.

When Renae, one of our Tenancy Sustainment Co-ordinators, became aware she sprang into action.

She worked with Liz to successfully bid to move to a bungalow in Braintree, arranged a moving company to help pack her belongings and liaised with the NHS to ensure Liz could be transported safely to her new home.

Renae also arranged for Eastlight’s Aids & Adaptations Service to install ramps and grab rails in her wet room to help Liz get around more easily.

Liz has now been living in her home for 18 months and says: “You really pulled out all the stops for me – I really appreciate it. My new home is lovely – it still feels like new.”



i Are you or someone you know struggling to get the support you need to stay safe and happy in your home? Contact us through the details on the previous page.

NEED TO TALK?

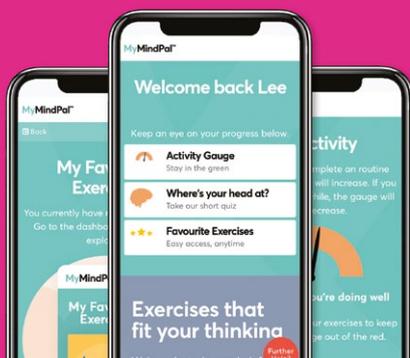
We’ve funded a free and confidential 24-hour helpline for you to talk about anything you might be struggling with, from relationship difficulties and money worries to bereavement.

Call 0330 094 8845

Or visit our online portal here www.tsws-assist.co.uk

Username: Eastlight
Password: Tenant

You can also download the ‘MyMindPal’ app from your App or Play Store and enter the following code: **‘ECH22LMMP’**



GOING THE DISTANCE

INSPIRATIONAL EASTLIGHT RESIDENT, LEE MILLER, ISN'T LETTING DEMENTIA SLOW HIM DOWN.

Back in 2017, medics told Lee his diagnosis of vascular dementia meant he had just seven years to live.

But after learning that exercise would help slow the disease's progress, the 57-year-old has battled back by taking on a series of mammoth cycling and running challenges.

Eastlight is proud to help Lee on his fantastic feats of endurance with sponsorship totalling more than £1,000 to fund a cycling kit, a jersey and support for Marks Tey-based cycling shop, Velo Schils.

CHALLENGING SYMPTOMS

Vascular dementia is the second most common form of dementia and mainly affects people's cognitive ability.

Lee, from Great Horkesley, explained: "Every person with dementia experiences symptoms completely differently. Those with early-onset dementia have a different type to elderly people with dementia, for example.

"I was diagnosed at the age of 51, though I had small vessel disease at about 40, and, before that, mild cognitive impairment in my 30s. Both illnesses are classified as precursors of dementia, so you could say I've had dementia since I was in my 30s."

TRACKING PROGRESS

Father of two, Lee, cycles regularly, runs four days a week and even visits the gym on Sundays.

It means that, since lacing up his running shoes, Lee has lost as much as seven stone and regularly tallies up 70 miles of running and cycling per week.

Lee, who manages his condition carefully, is planning to take part in the Thruxton Duathlon – an event involving a run, a cycle and then another run – on 1 October, which will also act as the GB qualifier for the upcoming European Championship in 2024.

He said: "It will make me immensely proud to represent Eastlight. I've written to more than 1,200 companies, charities and individuals. Of those, only six, including Eastlight, wanted to help. I think that counts Eastlight as being more than special; I'd say ultra rare!

"I might come last for all I know, but I couldn't care less. Just competing will be an amazing achievement for a 57-year-old, previous couch potato with dementia, and I hope to make you all very proud."

You can keep track of Lee's experiences via his own website: www.leemiller.run



“
Never in my wildest dreams did I think you would do this for me; thank you so, so much.”

SHAPING EASTLIGHT FOR THE BETTER

WHEN GREENFIELDS AND COLNE HOUSING JOINED FORCES TO CREATE EASTLIGHT COMMUNITY HOMES IN 2020, ONE OF OUR COMMITMENTS WAS THE CREATION OF A NEW 'RESIDENT ACADEMY'.

JOIN
The Resident Academy

As the biggest resident-led housing association in the country, we recognise that you know better than anyone what you need from us as your landlord.

That's why we're creating new opportunities for you, from helping shape the services that matter to you, to joining our Board and Committees to influence our everyday decision making.

When we surveyed residents last year, you told us you wanted to better understand why we make the decisions we make – to get a peek under the hood of Eastlight. So step forward the Resident Academy!

A PEEK UNDER THE HOOD

The Resident Academy has been created to give you the knowledge and confidence to shape Eastlight for the better.

There are two ways to get involved. In February, we held our first Resident Academy boot camp, where 20 residents (picked out from 130 applicants) spent three days getting training on everything from the social housing world to what's involved in being a Board member. We are planning a second boot camp soon – watch this space to apply.

But if the boot camp is not for you, then you can access the

Resident Academy online. This is a series of courses explaining how Eastlight and the social housing world operates. If you've ever wondered who hears the most serious complaints from residents about their landlords, or who regulates housing associations like Eastlight, then you can discover the answers

from leaders from the Regulator of Social Housing, the Housing Ombudsman and elsewhere.

GET INVOLVED

All you need to do to access the courses is email community@eastlighthomes.co.uk. You can also access the course on the History of Social Housing, on our website.



If you feel inspired to get involved with Eastlight and want to find out more about the opportunities available, please call us or email community@eastlighthomes.co.uk





SPEEDIER REPAIRS FOR YOU



WE HAVE INTRODUCED A RAFT OF IMPROVEMENTS AFTER YOU TOLD US YOU WERE WAITING TOO LONG FOR SOME REPAIRS.

The changes mean you should now wait no longer than four weeks for a repair to your home.

We have acted after you told us you have been waiting too long for non-urgent works including carpentry, plumbing and electrical fixes.

Larger jobs, including fencing and general building works, will take longer to complete – up to 90 days.

Changes include:

- Moving some of our trades team and using contractors to reduce waiting times in these priority areas
- Improving communication, including extra checks that you are home and still require a repair before we visit

- Ensuring follow-on works – when we visit your home and find further repairs are required – are completed more quickly.

If your repair is an emergency, we aim to complete it within 24 hours – or sooner in many cases.

To find out more about your repairs service and what you should expect from Eastlight, please visit our website: www.eastlighthomes.co.uk/my-home/repairs

“ You know better than anyone what you need to be safe and happy in your home, so if something isn’t right, we want to hear about it.

“Your feedback helps us identify areas where we should be doing better and then make plans to put things right, so please get in touch.”

Dan Miller, our Head of Repairs & Maintenance



CONTACT METHODS

Email us: customer.services@eastlighthomes.co.uk

Call us: **0330 128 0330**

Text us: **07860 024511**

Make a complaint: Complete the short form at www.eastlighthomes.co.uk/contact-us/feedback-complaints/ or contact us another way.

Give us feedback: Please respond when we send you a text or email after you receive an Eastlight service.

“HOLD US TO ACCOUNT”

“Hi there, I’m Michelle!

I’m one of our Board Members here at Eastlight, but you may recognise me as the Chair of our Customer Influence Committee (CIC).

As Eastlight residents, we know what kinds of homes, services and standards we both want and need. That’s why the CIC exists, to put power back into the hands of residents and ensure our views influence decision-making at the very top of the organisation and throughout.

Over the past year, our CIC have proved the benefit of making social landlords engage more with their residents; we’ve spoken at various conferences, shadowed and educated teams across the business and scrutinised all resident-focused strategies.

Most importantly, we’ve listened to the biggest concerns raised by you to improve the experience you receive from Eastlight now and in the future, such as enhancing the quality of Eastlight’s customer services, acknowledging the growing impact of the cost-of-living and shaping Eastlight’s Complaints and Resolutions Policy.

So, what’s next for us? Well, we want to be bigger, better and bolder, making sure that Eastlight continues to put us first. But we can’t do it alone...

We’re looking for more diverse tenants, shared owners and leaseholders to join us on our journey and champion the various needs of those living in our homes and communities. No matter what your background or experience, your voice will be heard.

Help us hold Eastlight to account and make a positive difference to the areas you’re really passionate about. Look out for opportunities!

Thank you.”

Help us hold Eastlight to account and make a positive difference.”

Two new roles to join Eastlight’s CIC are now live. To register your interest please visit our website, or email recruitment@eastlighthomes.co.uk to have an informal chat with us!

Alongside the CIC vacancies, we will also be recruiting for a number of other committee roles this summer. These are for the Development & Asset Management, Audit & Risk and Governance & People Committees.

All applications close Sunday, 9 July 2023. All information is on our website.

All vacancies are subject to remuneration

JOIN US

ALL IN FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE

WE BELIEVE LOCAL RESIDENTS UNDERSTAND OUR COMMUNITIES BETTER THAN ANYONE, AND HAVE THE IDEAS, PASSION AND TALENT TO INTRODUCE THE CHANGES YOU KNOW ARE NEEDED.

Through All In, our community programme, we paid four teams of Essex residents to dedicate a year of their lives to one goal: To create a bold solution tackling a major social issue, and then make it happen.

Kinder Minds

“It’s scary to think that in Braintree, you need to reach a point of crisis to receive adequate support.”

The All In Community Team for Braintree have launched Kinder Minds: a community-led wellbeing service where local people can enjoy free or low-cost activities such as yoga and art therapy while building meaningful relationships with other residents.

Find out more here: www.weareallin.co.uk/meet-the-community-teams/kinder-minds
Contact us: aplacetobeyou@kinderminds.org

GROW with the FLOW

“Period shouldn’t be a dirty word in 2023.”

The All In Community Team for Halstead are a group of local women who have created Grow with the Flow with secondary school pupils from the town, after discovering 85% of girls have tried to hide that they are on their period.

Find out more here: www.weareallin.co.uk/meet-the-community-teams/grow-with-the-flow
Contact us: growwiththeflowsisters@gmail.com

From June 2022, our teams worked with thousands of local residents to create four truly community-led ideas that address everything from the cost-of-living crisis to mental wellbeing.

With funding and support from Eastlight, all four schemes will continue to improve lives in your communities. Please find out more about the ideas here – and contact the teams to get involved!

Trusted

“Never has there been a greater need for communities to come together and combine knowledge.”

Colchester’s All In Community Team are taking the stigma out of talking about money through Trusted, a weekly safe space where the experts in the room are residents who have spent years making ends meet.

Find out more here: www.weareallin.co.uk/meet-the-community-teams/trusted
Contact us: trustedmoneyconfidence@gmail.com

popcorn

“Social isolation affects everybody – but it really impacts young people.”

The All In Community Team for Witham have created Popcorn: a programme where young people who are struggling to reconnect, after years stuck at home during the pandemic, can build friendships and connections.

Find out more here: www.weareallin.co.uk/meet-the-community-teams/popcorn
Contact us: popcorn.essex@gmail.com

JOIN
YOUR
ALL IN
ALLIANCE



OUR ALL IN ALLIANCES IN BRAINTREE, COLCHESTER, HALSTEAD AND WITHAM ARE YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

Come along to a quarterly meeting where you'll meet people like you, decide on the issues you and your community care about, agree how you're going to tackle them and award funding to community-led ideas you think will make a difference locally.

This spring, alliance members voted to award £12,000 to a total of 12 local organisations and charities, including: Braintree Basketball Club, Edith Borthwick School, the Empire Theatre Trust and African Families in the UK.

Your next All In Alliance meetings are taking place this summer. Visit www.weareallin.co.uk for the details.

£100,000 FOR ESSENTIAL SUPPORT TO LIFE-CHANGING CHARITIES

WE'RE PLEASED TO HAVE FUNDED FOUR FANTASTIC ORGANISATIONS TO HELP CONTINUE THEIR WORK SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES.

The Braintree District and Eastlight Community Fund is a joint fund between Eastlight and Braintree District Council which has awarded £1.1 million to local charities and causes.

£27,000 has been given to the **Centre for Action on Rape and Abuse (CARA)** to continue vital counselling sessions to people of all ages affected by sexual violence.

Essex Boys' and Girls' Clubs has been funded £24,000 to provide activities to pupils from three schools in Braintree who are disengaged and struggling.

Soul Food is a church project started during the pandemic to get hot meals to those who need them. It's receiving £20,750 to continue to provide a weekly takeaway service, as well as sit-down community meals, to anyone in need in Halstead.

And **Abberton Rural Training** has been given £25,700 for its work to help vulnerable people gain confidence, hope, qualifications and employment in the great outdoors.

WIN ONE OF FIVE £50 SHOPPING VOUCHERS!



JUST TELL US WHAT YOU THINK OF SHINE, YOUR NEW-LOOK MAGAZINE.

Please **click here** to complete our short online survey. Please enter by **Friday 14 July** to be entered into our prize draw.

Thank you.

1 WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT FROM EASTLIGHT?

2 WHAT ARE YOU NOT INTERESTED IN KNOWING ABOUT?

3 WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE MAGAZINE, OVERALL? ARE THERE ANY IMPROVEMENTS WE COULD MAKE?

Contact us

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 magazine in a different format or language, please let us know.



Eastlight
Community Homes