

Keeping Connected

**Families
move into
'dream' homes**



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After Lockdown**
Sidney, 93,
reunites with wife

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Hello from Emma!

Thank you for taking the time to read the first edition of Eastlight's customer magazine. I do hope you are well and are staying safe.



First off, I would like to thank the 1,000+ of you who responded to our survey. We asked you to tell us what Eastlight Community Homes should focus on over the next few years, and you gave us some great feedback which will help shape our future.

Hundreds of you told us that having your say on the homes and services you receive is crucially important, and as the country's largest Community Gateway organisation we are working up an exciting Eastlight way to do just that. Reducing the carbon footprint of your homes also came up, and this will be another focus of Eastlight for years to come.

But of course, a high-quality repairs service, strong communications and having somewhere you are proud to call home were at the top of the list.

I'd like to thank you for your patience while we address the backlog of repairs that built up while our trades teams and contractors were unable to safely visit your homes during the lockdown.

As you will see on page 3, our people have pulled out all the stops to carry out an unprecedented number of repairs at your homes, and that will continue until your waiting times are back to what they were. We are also doing all we can to address the connection issues our Customer Services Team is facing, which has caused some of you to face longer waits to get through to them.

Before I go, please take a look at the leaflet included with this magazine. The Future of Eastlight Festival is the next step towards creating Eastlight's future, and we want your thoughts on our emerging plans. Do have a read and if any of the sessions appeal, then we'll see you there!

Emma Palmer

With kind regards
Emma

Eastlight
Community Homes

The **BIG** Three

1. REPAIRS

Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete our first customer satisfaction survey. You told us that what matters most to you is REPAIRS, COMMUNICATIONS and SUPPORT. Here's an update of what's happening in those areas.

What we've done

We provided an emergency-only repairs service from when lockdown began until the end of June. We also prioritised getting homes ready for the homeless, knowing that the coronavirus pandemic would have a financial impact on so many in our communities.

Our gas contractors have continued to carry out annual gas services throughout lockdown and Tier 2 restrictions, and will carry on doing so.



What we're doing

Repairs completed:



We plan to continue to offer a full repairs service throughout the Tier 2 lockdown. We've hired additional repairs staff and have redeployed others to reduce the wait you're experiencing for repairs. However, we do still have a backlog of repairs following lockdown, which we're reducing as fast as we can. In households which are isolating, we will only carry out emergency works wearing full personal protective equipment (PPE).

What we're going to do

Currently, previous Greenfields residents receive repairs from our in-house repairs team, and previous Colne residents from contractors, Fosters. We're in the process of extending our in-house repairs service to all, which should be in place next year. We're also looking at rolling out our in-house Property MOT service to all, which is a thorough check of your home with the aim of carrying out any repairs required in one visit, rather than several.

In September, Edna called us when she had a leak from her water tank. Staff member, Ray, visited that same day and she said:

"He filled me with confidence by explaining what he had done to temporarily repair the leaking tank and what would happen to complete the repair it in the next few weeks. I didn't have to wait long for his arrival after calling in the repair and Ray was very good with my dog as well!"

Jennie was originally due to have her path repaired in June but was told it was delayed until November, which was upsetting for her. Fortunately, a cancellation meant staff members Aaron and Daniel could do the repair in September. She said:

"They both deserve a gold star. They went above and beyond, were kind and friendly and followed all the necessary Covid-19 requirements."

Our planned programme of works includes:

Internal work, such as:



Kitchens



Bathrooms



Doors

External work, such as:



Grounds maintenance



Roofing

Although we halted some work at the start of lockdown, we took the time to implement Covid-safe working practices and gradually re-started the work from mid-April. The safe working practices include wearing appropriate PPE and calling households prior to work starting.

Despite initial delays, all work should be completed as planned.

2.COMMUNICATIONS

We're currently experiencing a high demand for our services, following the lockdown period ending. Our Customer Service Advisors are working from home on weekdays to take your phone calls, emails, texts, letters and social media messages.

We know you're sometimes experiencing lengthy waits to reach us by phone. This is due to connectivity issues caused by working from home during the pandemic, and we are working hard to resolve them by introducing new equipment. We're also prioritising essential and urgent requests and have recruited new team members.

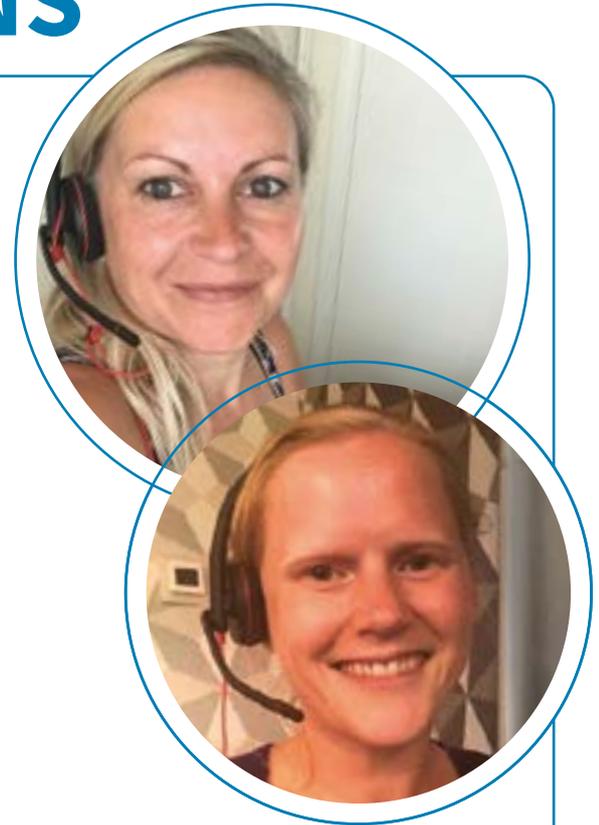
Please bear with us and do get in touch if you believe we may be able to help in any way. We would like to thank you all for your patience in these challenging times.

Our offices are currently closed to the public, to help keep everyone safe.

The difference you make

Sometimes, when you contact us by phone, text or email, you'll receive an email or text asking what you thought of our services and giving you the chance to suggest improvements.

Please do share your feedback with us as we use it to check what's going well, and what changes we could make to be better.



Two of our customer service advisors, Maria (top) and Charlotte (above)

The Eastlight Way - coming soon!

Our mission is to offer you the services that you want and need. Over the next 12 to 18 coming months, we'll be creating The Eastlight Way with you, to give you the best services possible.

Find out more about our exciting future in our Annual Report. Contact us for a copy or visit www.eastlighthomes.co.uk



3.SUPPORT

We know the impact of the coronavirus has been on more than just our health. The lockdown has resulted in a large increase in anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse and safeguarding issues, as you can see below.

We continue to offer a full service and will visit you where required to ensure you get the support you need.

Our support services include:

- Anti-social behaviour (ASB)
- Safeguarding
- Domestic abuse
- Getting online
- Health and wellbeing, such as chair-based exercise and drug and alcohol abuse support
- Estate services, including keeping communal areas & spaces clean
- Applying for benefits, including Universal Credit.

Anti-social behaviour

ASB reports:



We know that there is more general household noise at the moment, due to us all spending more time at home. However, if there are repeated issues which you are unable to resolve with your neighbour yourself, then please get in touch.

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse victims supported:



If you or someone you know is suffering from domestic abuse, call 999 if there is any immediate danger. You can also contact us for advice and support, or [COMPASS](#) on 0330 333 7444.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding referrals received:



Everyone has the right to live their lives free from abuse and neglect. Abuse and neglect can happen to anyone, in a number of different ways. If you or someone you know has a concerns, you can report it to us by emailing safeguarding@eastlighthomes.co.uk or calling 01376 535400. If there is immediate risk to a person's safety, please call the relevant emergency services.

Katee and Laura, two of our ASB Co-ordinators, recently supported someone experiencing abuse and severe mental health issues to move closer to her mum and other family. The whole family now has an effective support network in place that makes life easier for everyone. Her mum said:

“Katee is so good at her job – her language skills, understanding and empathy are amazing. Some people have no idea about mental health, but Katee has this skill and didn't talk down to us. Laura is a little star, too. The joy I feel now is unbelievable.”



Our two ASB co-ordinators, Katee (right) and Laura (left).

SHAPE OUR FUTURE

Now more than ever, we have a role to play to support our communities as the effects of the coronavirus become more obvious. We can only do this by working with you so that you have the homes, services and communities you want and deserve.

Resident involvement revamp

We're currently reviewing how you can get involved, so that you have lots of opportunities to influence and shape our services effectively, as well as improve your communities. A range of residents joined us for five workshops in the summer to look at what's worked well in the past, and what would be improved. We'll share our thoughts with you very soon so you can tell us what you think. We are really keen to hear your views!

Take a look at the future of our resident involvement opportunities in this 4-minute video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2XHfsViOTw

Funding to continue for fantastic charities

From foodbanks to disability support, providing grants for essential projects and organisations has always been important to Colne and Greenfields. As Eastlight, our joint fund with Braintree District Council provides grants ranging from £10,000 to £40,000 to improve health and wellbeing, increase aspirations and opportunities or develop skills through training.

Projects who received funding this year include Braintree Area Foodbank and also Abberton Rural Training, who provide outdoor rural skills training to people who are unemployed or have mental health problems. We're proud that the Grants Panel includes Eastlight residents.



Hundreds of people struggling during the coronavirus pandemic received urgent help after local causes received grants from Colne Housing earlier this year. These include Uttlesford Citizens Advice, and a partnership between Firstsite Colchester and Community 360 to provide emergency food parcels.

Outstanding award win!

Huge congratulations to all residents and staff who shaped Colne Housing's Resident Engagement Strategy before we merged in July. Your efforts led to us winning the Outstanding Tenant Engagement Award for under 10,000 homes category at the [TPAS 2020 Awards!](#)

And a huge "well done" to residents Ken Davies and Marlene Carter (pictured below), who were shortlisted for awards for their contributions to their communities and fellow residents.



YOUR EASTLIGHT NEWS

Stay posted: www.eastlighthomes.co.uk

New homes in Braintree are “a dream!”

Families celebrated moving into new homes completed ahead of schedule during the pandemic with some hand-delivered hampers from our Chief Executive, Emma Palmer.

The first of 34 homes have now been completed on our Spalding Close site in Braintree.

New residents include Stacey Bell, who has moved into her house with her two children. She said: **“I keep waiting for someone to pinch me to wake me up from a dream!”**



Thank you for being our first cover stars!

Tribute to our volunteer

Tributes have been paid to an Eastlight volunteer resident who worked tirelessly to improve communities in Braintree and beyond.

Ann Woods, from Braintree, passed away in July aged 68, following a battle with ongoing health conditions.

Ann began volunteering for Greenfields in 2008 and made a significant contribution to our communities. Neil Coughlan, Eastlight Board member and volunteer resident, said:

“Ann was passionate, very straight-talking and always wanted to see positive change.”



See more about Ann on our website: www.eastlighthomes.co.uk

Lifetime tenancies

More than 1,000 Eastlight residents are being offered new tenancies which will last for their lifetime.

Currently, around 1,200 residents have Fixed Term Tenancies, which end after five years. When they end, they must either be renewed or the resident has to find a new home.

We have begun contacting residents to offer them an Assured Tenancy, meaning you can remain an Eastlight resident for life, even if your needs change and you need to move home.

Residents with intermediate or key worker tenancies are not affected, as they cannot legally be offered lifetime tenancies.

Our first AGM

Thanks to the 164 resident shareholders who took part or sent their votes in to our first Annual General Meeting, held online in September. Attendees heard from fellow residents and Eastlight leaders about the last 12 months and the exciting future ahead. See more on our website: www.eastlighthomes.co.uk

Talk to us about fire safety

We will be involving residents living in our flats & schemes in our fire safety consultation later this year, to help keep you safe. Keep an eye out for an invite.



Sidney's surprise birthday reunion!

Sidney didn't want to let go of wife Jean's hand after we organised a surprise reunion for his 93rd birthday! They hadn't seen each other after he moved into a care home in February, shortly before lockdown restrictions came in.

Sidney, who phones his wife of 72 years every morning, was very pleasantly surprised and said it was lovely.

See more about Sidney on our website:
www.eastlighthomes.co.uk



Find out more or get in touch

For previous Greenfields residents:

Call us 01376 535400

Text us 07860 024511

Email us csc@greenfieldsch.org.uk

Write to Eastlight House
Charter Way
Braintree
Essex
CM77 8FG

My Greenfields users: please note that My Greenfields will not be available between Friday, 6 November and Monday, 9 November while we carry out upgrades to the site.

For previous Colne residents:

Call us 01206 244700

Text us 07539 114114

Email us info@colnehousing.co.uk

Write to The University of Essex campus
Colne Housing
Block G, Parkside
Knowledge Gateway
Nesfield Road
Colchester
Essex
CO4 3ZL

Visit: www.eastlighthomes.co.uk

 www.facebook.com/eastlighthomes

 www.instagram.com/eastlighthomes

 www.twitter.com/eastlighthomes

 www.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.

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