

Spring 2023

Keeping Connected

Your newsletter

Eastlight
Community Homes

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Hello, from Emma



Hi. We know that many of you are continuing to struggle with the cost-of-living increases, and we remain here for you to help however we can. You'll see some examples of the support we can provide on page 5.

We recognise that your upcoming annual rent increase may be difficult for you. You can find out more about our 2023 increases on **page 4**. We'll contact you all separately in the next few weeks with the exact amount you will be paying. I urge you to please contact us immediately if you have any concerns, and we'll see how we can help.

It's been our pleasure to get back into our communities and see some of you face to face, following the lockdowns. We've supported residents to clean up the Saw Mill estate in Colchester, given advice to our residents on spotting signs of domestic abuse, and our All In programme continues to support people across Essex in lots of ways – see **pages 8–9**.

We have recently launched a new-look service to support you if you are experiencing condensation, mould or damp in your home. On **pages 6–7** you will find advice on managing condensation in your home. If this doesn't work, then please contact us and we will visit you to investigate and support you further.

Until next time, please get in touch with us if we can help with anything, if you feel something could be improved or to let us know what you think we're doing right for you. We look forward to hearing from you.

Emma Palmer

Chief Executive

Helping you to live in peace

Everyone has the right to live in a peaceful and safe neighbourhood. We know the impact anti-social behaviour (ASB) can have on your life and we take all concerns seriously.

What should I do if I am experiencing ASB?

Please report all crimes, such as violence, drug use/dealing, threatening and intimidating behaviour and harassment on the grounds of your race or sexuality to the police.

You can contact us if you feel the ASB you're experiencing can't be resolved yourself. We will:

- Respond in 24 hours
- Be open and honest
- Tell you if it isn't ASB.

If it is ASB, we will investigate, agree an action plan with you and keep you posted.

In most cases, talking with your neighbour calmly about your concerns can resolve many minor problems before they get out of control. If this doesn't work, we offer a free independent professional mediation service.

 **Please contact us if this is something that you feel will help or you would like to report ASB. Visit www.eastlighthomes.co.uk/extra-support/anti-social-behaviour for more about our service or get in touch through the details on the back page.**



SPENDING TIME WITH OUR SCHEME RESIDENTS

The best way to spread Christmas cheer...



...is singing loud for all to hear!

A group of young carol singers treated residents of our Oxley House scheme to a morning of festive favourites in December.

The pupils from Colour Wheel Montessori Nursey in Black Notley arrived bright and early – although not via Santa's sleigh – to deliver Christmas cards and belt out some Christmas classics to spread some joy.

Residents were thrilled with the exclusive singsong. Yet, despite the demand, the little rockstars refused an encore and instead shared personalised Christmas cards with the adoring audience –

they'll be worth a few quid in a few years' time!

Carla Pamment, Tenancy Co-ordinator, said: "It was lovely to have the children from the nursery visit Oxley House. They warmed our hearts with some Christmas cheer and festive sing-along. The snowy weather also gave us the perfect Christmassy backdrop for the children to hand-deliver personalised Christmas cards."

Sam Cottrill, Manager of the nursery, said:

“Christmas should be a magical time for everyone, but some people are not lucky enough to have young children in their lives at Christmas. We wanted to share with others the little bit of joy and magic that children can bring at this time of year.”

Spot the signs of abuse

135 residents living in our Housing for Older People Schemes attended coffee mornings where they learnt how to spot the signs of abuse during National Safeguarding Adults Week.

During the sessions in November, they learnt how to report concerns. As domestic abuse does not have an age limit, and older people are less likely to recognise it, these sessions were vital in giving our residents a safe space to discuss the topic to improve their own understanding.

Since the sessions, 85% of residents who took part feel that their understanding of domestic abuse has improved, and 91% now know how to report a concern.

 **Find out about support for domestic abuse at www.eastlighthomes.co.uk/extra-support/domestic-abuse/ or contact us in confidence.**





Your rent from April 2023

From Monday, 3 April, your rent will increase by 7%*.

As usual, we will send you a personal rent letter in the next few weeks to explain your rent and service charge payments for the following year.

We recognise that any rent rises can be difficult to manage, especially during the cost-of-living crisis.

If you are struggling to pay your rent, then we may be able to offer your support.

Please contact us. You will not lose your home if you cannot pay your rent, as long as you work with us to manage any arrears you have.

Why are you increasing my rent?

We are a not-for-profit organisation, and the income we receive from your rent payments is used to provide services and maintain and build affordable homes.

* If you live in supported housing, your rent will increase by 11.1%. Garage rents will also increase by 11.1%. Shared owners' rent will increase by 7%.

Unfortunately, high levels of inflation have resulted in an increase in these costs. While a 7% increase is below current inflation levels, the rise will support us in providing these services, not least repairs and improvements to your home.

I am struggling to afford to pay my rent. Can you help?

Please contact us, as we may be able to support you with the following:

- Help to claim the benefits you are entitled to
- Links with partner organisations that can help, such as Citizens Advice
- Short-term financial aid, including foodbank vouchers.

Need support?

Please take a look at the cost-of-living article on the next page. We are here for you.

➔ For more information about the support we and others can provide, please visit: www.eastlighthomes.co.uk/extra-support/cost-of-living-support

Further information will also be included in your rent letter, which will arrive in late February or early March.



Supporting you through the cost-of-living crisis

The cost-of-living and energy crisis has been challenging for many, and we recognise that many of you will now be struggling to pay your bills, energy or other costs.

We are here for you, if you need us. Please contact us on **0330 128 0330** (local rate) if any of these sound like you, and we'll see how we can help:



"I CAN'T PAY MY RENT"



"I CAN'T HEAT MY HOME"



"I CAN'T AFFORD TO BUY FOOD"



"I DON'T HAVE ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT AT HOME"

Visit our website

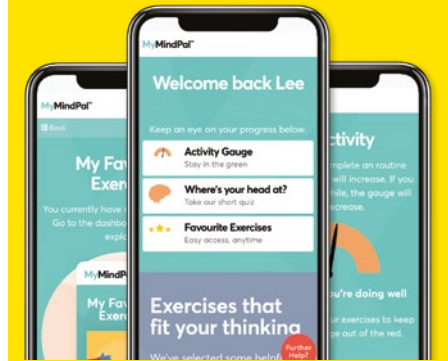
From financial advice to foodbanks, our cost-of-living support section on our website has a wide range of information and support available, should you need it. Visit: www.eastlighthomes.co.uk

Free Support & Wellbeing Service

We've funded a Tenant Support & Wellbeing Service (TSWS), open to all our residents. Whatever the problem may be – relationship difficulties, mental health, alcohol & drug issues or parenting challenges – our professionals are just a call away for you to talk to. You can reach the 24/7 service on **0330 094 8845**.

➔ If you don't feel comfortable speaking to someone by phone, check out a library of articles, tips and other help via the TSWS online portal here: www.tsws-assist.co.uk

MyMindPal App



We've funded an app which can help you make positive changes to your life. All you need to do is search your 'Play Store' or 'App Store' for the MyMindPal app.

➔ Please visit our **Cost-of-Living Support** page on our website for all access and login details.

Colchester Team are All In

Our Colchester Community Team are working hand-in-hand with local people to help tackle the issues raised by the cost-of-living crisis.

➔ Get involved and give your views by emailing colchester@weareallin.co.uk or get in touch through the contact details on the back page.

COLCHESTER ALL IN



Supporting you to manage mould in your home

We are here to work with you to look after your home by preventing condensation or mould from building up.

Condensation can come from cooking, washing, boiling kettles and drying clothes indoors because these activities produce warm, moist air. Problems can be worse in cooler rooms.

Sometimes, we will need to carry out repairs or other work in your home to tackle damp and mould. However, in many cases, there are quick and simple steps you can take to prevent it, which you can find here.

If these steps fail to remove the damp and mould, then please get in touch. One of our Home Solutions MOT teams will visit your home, usually within 14 days.

Are you worried about heating your home?

Heating your home at a consistent temperature (recommended at 18 degrees by Energy Savings Trust and the NHS) reduces the chance of condensation and mould.

However, if you cannot afford to heat your home, we may be able to support you. Please contact us and read the information on **page 5** to see what help is available if you are struggling with the cost of living.

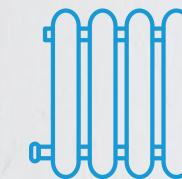
Useful tips

Here are some steps you can take to prevent mould and damp building up in your home.



Ventilation

- Open windows every day even if only for short periods
- Open windows, close doors and use extractor fans when cooking or showering
- Open curtains to allow sunlight to warm your home
- Dry clothes outside if you can. If you can't, use a clothes horse and keep the door closed and windows open.



Heating

- Heating your home at a consistent lower temperature reduces the chance of condensation and mould from building up.
- Make sure you know how to use your heating system and ask us for help if you're not sure.



Cleaning

- Wipe condensation off windows and other surfaces
- Use mould & mildew spray to wipe down walls affected by mould. Please read the label before using.



Contact us

- If the mould and damp persists, contact us and a member of our Home MOT Team will visit you – usually within 14 days
- If you are struggling to afford to heat your home, we may be able to offer further support.

➔ Please contact us through the details on the back page.



THE BIG ALL REVEAL

Our All In community teams share their plans to improve lives in your community in 2023.

Since June 2022, our All In Community Teams have each been creating one big idea that tackles a major social issue in our communities.

Each team has met hundreds of Eastlight customers, local residents and community organisations to discover how their chosen issue – ranging from the cost-of-living to mental health support – affects local people.

They have worked with their local community to develop ideas to improve lives and then test them to see if they will work in the real world.

And this month, they will officially make one idea real by launching a pilot programme that they passionately believe is what their local community needs.

Find out more, and how you can get involved, here.

BRAINTREE Kinder Minds A place to be you



Kinder Minds is an initiative for adults in Braintree to come together and enjoy mindful activities to support their mental wellbeing.

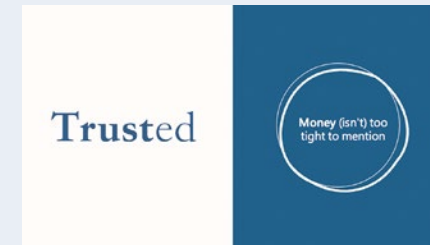
Time and again, Braintree residents have told us that they are crying out for things to do in the town that help manage their wellbeing.

So from February, our pilot scheme will offer our attendees a variety of low cost, drop-in creative and social activities.

On a typical week, we'll offer a relaxing activity like guided meditation on one day and arts and crafts such as pottery painting a couple of days later. We'll then finish the week with a chill and chat session in a local café.

Sound like something you need? Get in touch: braintree@weareallin.co.uk or visit www.weareallin.co.uk

COLCHESTER Trusted Money (isn't) too tight to mention



It's hard to talk about money
Working with our community, we have created Trusted to make life easier for the growing number of local residents who are struggling during the cost-of-living crisis.

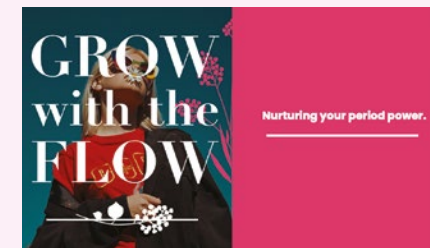
They will be supported by other local people – those who have lots of experience in making their money stretch as far as possible.

In February, we are launching a six-session pilot programme to support 15 local residents.

We'll talk about everything from debt and budgeting to the peer pressure we all face to keep up appearances in a comfortable space where we will learn, share and support each other.

Do you feel Trusted could help you? Get in touch: colchester@weareallin.co.uk or visit www.weareallin.co.uk

HALSTEAD GROW with the FLOW Nurturing your period power



Period shouldn't be a dirty word in 2023

Over the last few months, we've discovered just how little young women know about periods and the embarrassment, stigma and barriers they have to overcome to gain confidence and awareness.

We're launching Grow with the Flow, a support initiative to boost the confidence of Halstead's young women.

Amazing local women will visit local secondary schools and help nurture

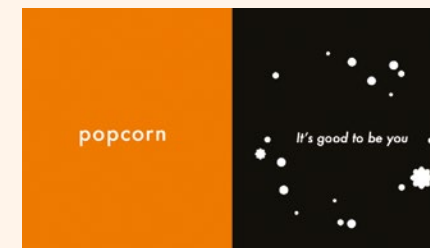
understanding around students' period health.

We will talk about what a "normal" period is, what products are out there to use and when to seek medical help.

This is just the start of our mission to grow a period positive community in Halstead and beyond.

Want to get involved? Get in touch: halstead@weareallin.co.uk or visit www.weareallin.co.uk

WITHAM popcorn It's good to be you



Making big life decisions can be scary... support from those who've just made them is what we're all about.

Popcorn is for young people (16-19) who have had a difficult pandemic. Years separated from their peers and stuck staring at a computer screen has left many more socially isolated.

As they face significant milestones like leaving school and entering the adult world, we're on a mission to

help them build their confidence. We're doing this by bringing young people together with their peers and those a little older in a safe space to talk about what feels important to them.

We're looking for young people aged 16-19 and group session guides aged 18-30 to be a part of Popcorn. Get in touch: witham@weareallin.co.uk or visit www.weareallin.co.uk



Community Clean-up is a tidy success

Colchester residents filled three skips as they joined forces to tidy up their estate at an Eastlight event.

The community at the Gantry Close and Saw Mill estate said goodbye to unwanted items at the Community Clean-up in October.

Eastlight staff also lent a helping hand to litter-pick with Colne Valley Tree Service, giving some TLC to the communal green spaces.

It was also a chance for Eastlight to consult with residents on further improvements and additional support they'd like to see.

Eastlight resident, Danny Burgess, said:

“This event is fantastic timing as we have just moved here and have lots to clear out! Thank you.”

Eastlight staff hit the Open Road!

Open Road is a charity which supports those affected by drugs and alcohol.

Their SOS Bus Outreach project aims to listen to and advise vulnerable people by stopping at different communities to offer support.

Our Tenancy Sustainment Team hopped on the bus last summer, visiting Eastlight residents and others in Braintree, Halstead, Witham and Silver End. Together with others on the bus, we spoke to those who could use some extra support to help improve their lives.



Struggling with drugs and alcohol? Contact Open Road by calling 0844 499 1323 or visiting www.openroad.org.uk

How to spot a scammer

Scammers (or bogus callers) advertise fake services or products that aim to get your money or collect your personal information. They typically target people through emails, letters, phone or text, and succeed because they look and sound legitimate.

Please consider the following if you have been contacted by someone asking for information from you:

- Remember, if it seems too good to be true, it probably is
- If you have never met the person contacting you, or are unsure if the business is genuine, take some time to do some research
- Check the spelling and grammar within emails, texts and letters – it's often wrong if it's a scam
- Check to see if you recognise the name, email address or telephone number of the person contacting you – if not, it may be a scam

- Be alert to anyone asking for money or your bank details, and do not provide them with any information if you have any doubts

- Be wary of clicking on any links and attachments. And never enter your personal information, password or bank details if you do mistakenly click on a link.

- ➔ If you think someone is trying to defraud or scam you, please contact us immediately if it concerns your home, and report it to Action Fraud on **0300 123 2040**.



The Resident Academy

We have launched the Resident Academy to give you the tools you need to work with us to deliver great homes and services.

In a recent survey you told us you wanted to learn more about how Eastlight works. Visit our website now to access the first course of our Resident Academy Online, which covers the origins of social housing in the UK.

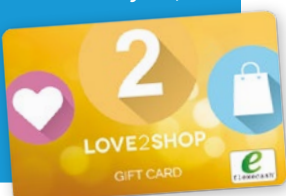
➔ Visit www.eastlighthomes.co.uk/my-community/resident-academy



Shape Eastlight

Thank you to the 450+ residents who completed the survey included in the Autumn edition of Keeping Connected.

We initially offered shopping vouchers to the first 100 responses. But as a thank you, we have sent £20 vouchers to everyone who took part!





One number for all

Our previous Colne and Greenfields contact numbers have now been switched off.

Those who try to call our old Customer Services numbers will be redirected to our Eastlight Customer Services Team phone number:

0330 128 0330

If you know who you would like to speak to, please call the phone number above and enter their four-digit extension number when prompted to do so.

Thank you.

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.



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