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## **Congratulations** to our prize draw winner

Happy spending to prize draw winning Eastlight resident, Paula Stone!



Paula completed our feedback survey in the summer edition of Shine and is very pleased to win one of five £50 shopping vouchers. Paula said: "This is fab, I've never won anything before." Congratulations to our other winners too and thank you to everyone who took the time to fill out the survey – your feedback matters to us.

If your children fancy themselves as budding artists, check out the 'Draw your dream house' competition on page 15.

## **Heating services** are closer to home

We know how crucial it is that your heating system works properly.

After hearing that you were waiting too long for some repairs to be completed in your homes, we've made some changes.

Since September, two new contractors have begun carrying out all gas and oil services and repairs in your homes.

Axis Europe will be servicing homes with postcodes beginning with CO, IP and NR. If your postcode begins with CM, CB or SS, then Gas Call Services will support you.

This ensures that engineers can provide services more locally and reduce response times.

Plus, from 2024, Axis Europe and Gas Call Services will also be completing more safety checks during the warmer months to ensure more engineers can respond to emergency call outs across the winter period.



If your heating system needs a repair please call our **Customer Services Team** on **0330 128 0330.** 



Our All In Alliances have been busy in your communities, working closely with local people to find out how, together, we can make a difference to our towns and cities.

The alliances have been acting in Witham to tackle the issue of parking, and joining forces with local groups to form a Community Hub in Braintree. They've also been supporting

the community in Halstead and Colchester too. With your help, we can make our communities a lovelier place for us all. The next meetings are planned for this winter.



If you'd like to join an Alliance near you, head to www.weareallin.co.uk/join-all-in

## Fire door safety

If you live in a flat, you should have recently received a personalised door hanger from us.



These contain crucial information about ensuring your front doors can keep you safe in the event of smoke or fire.

We're sending these to you annually in line with new Government legislation introduced following the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

Please read the information carefully, keep it in a safe place and contact us with any questions.

## A place to

Last year, we built a record 324 new homes.

We do this because there are thousands of people in our communities who cannot afford to buy or rent a home privately.

At the same time, there are not enough affordable homes to provide a roof over the head of everyone who needs one.

Until recently they included Perry, who was living in temporary accommodation and struggling with his mental health until securing a newbuild home in Feering.

Perry said: "Since Eastlight has been in contact, my entire life changed in a week. I cannot explain the significance of having a safe, affordable place to call my home."





## SUPPORTING YOU WITH DAMP AND MOULD

AS YOUR LANDLORD, IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE YOU ARE SAFE IN YOUR HOME. IF YOU'RE EXPERIENCING DAMP AND MOULD, THEN PLEASE CONTACT US.

We recognise damp and mould is a big issue for many Eastlight residents and have created a new Healthy Homes team to support you to manage it.

We will work with you to understand why it's affecting your home and to find the best solutions to remove it and prevent it from returning.



WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY HOME IS AFFECTED BY DAMP OR MOULD?

Please get in touch with us. We will arrange an appointment for a member of our Healthy Homes team to visit you, usually within two weeks.

To book a visit, please go to our website www.eastlighthomes.co.uk, and complete a short form. This includes the option to submit photos of the damp or mould. We will then contact you to arrange your visit.



You can also call us to speak to our Customer Services Team on 0330 128 0330, or email us at customer.services
@eastlighthomes.co.uk



## WHAT WILL YOU DO WHEN YOU VISIT?

Members of our specialist Healthy Homes team will:

- Check the levels of damp, moisture and humidity in your home
- Clean and when required use stain block
- Complete minor repairs they can do on the spot
- Book any repairs that cannot be completed
- Check whether you need support to heat your home from our Tenancy Sustainment Team.



#### HOW CAN I REDUCE THE LIKELIHOOD OF CONDENSATION BUILDING UP IN MY HOME?

In some cases, there are simple steps you can take to reduce the likelihood of mould building up:

- Open windows, even for a short amount of time a day. Keep your curtains open during the day and ensure your window vents are open and clear
- Close doors and use extractor fans when cooking or showering
- Use lids on pots when cooking to reduce steam moisture in the air



#### "A FABULOUS SERVICE"

**BILL BISHOP CONTACTED US EARLIER THIS YEAR AFTER DAMP** APPEARED IN SEVERAL ROOMS IN HIS HOME IN HALSTEAD.

ur team promptly visited, used anti-fungal spray to clear the affected areas and arranged for several repairs to be completed to reduce the likelihood of the damp returning.

"I have now had a fan fitted in the kitchen and am waiting for my windows to be done and my front and back doors to be inspected to see if they should be replaced. A fabulous service."

I was very pleased with your two operatives, Simon and Jack."

- When drying clothes indoors, use a clothes horse in your bathroom. Shut the door and either turn the extractor fan on or keep your window open
- Where condensation appears, use mould and mildew spray on affected walls and wipe it off windows and other surfaces
- Keep the area around radiators and other heaters clear, so they heat the entire room
- If you can, heat your home at a consistent temperature - between 16 and 21 degrees Celsius. : support you.

This reduces the chance of condensation building up. If you cannot afford to heat your home, please contact us as our **Tenancy Sustainment** Team may be able to help.



**IF IT COMES BACK?** 

Please contact us and we will arrange a return visit, either from our Healthy Homes team, a surveyor or a third party, who will investigate further.

We will keep in contact with you to ensure you are up-to-date on the actions we are taking to



We recognise that you know better than anyone what you need to feel safe and happy in your home, so please give us your feedback to let us know if our services are meeting your needs.

If you receive a survey following a visit, please respond to it, or you can share your feedback, positive or negative, by contacting us.



If you're unable to pay your rent, heat your home or buy enough food, please do contact us.

We have a range of resources and advice available for you.

We can help with applying for grants to afford essential items, and also help you access food bank youchers.

Call us on **0330 128 0330** and then press 2 to talk to someone about cost-of-living support.

More information on fuel vouchers will be shared later this year. Keep an eye on our website for regular updates.

Our free and confidential Tenant Support and Wellbeing helpline is free for all Eastlight residents to call 24 hours a day, 365 days per year.

No matter what you might be struggling with, our experts are just a phone call away to help advise and guide you through it.

Speak to someone today by calling: 0330 094 8845

STILL RISING AND IMPACTING PEOPLE ACROSS THE UK, WE UNDERSTAND THAT MANY OF YOU ARE FACED WITH DIFFICULT CHOICES ON HOW BEST TO SPEND YOUR MONEY.

#### WHAT HELP IS OUT THERE THIS WINTER?

#### **COST-OF-LIVING PAYMENTS**

If you received the previous cost-of-living payments, you should be receiving two further payments this winter. The first payment of £300 will be paid during autumn 2023, whilst the second payment of £299 will be paid during spring 2024.

If you're entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment, you'll get an extra £150 or £300 paid with your normal payment in November.

#### **WINTER FUEL PAYMENT**

If you're eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment, you'll receive a letter in October or November informing you of how much you'll be receiving. The amount is based on when you were born and your circumstances last month. Payments are usually made automatically in November and December.

#### **WARM HOME DISCOUNT**

The Warm Home Discount scheme opens this October and offers a one-off payment discount on your electricity bill.

#### **BROADBAND**

If you, or someone in your household, claims Universal Credit or certain other benefits, you could switch to a social tariff that is cheaper than a regular broadband package with the same fast, unlimited broadband. It costs nothing to switch, and the price won't go up mid-contract.

Check with your provider to see if they're offering a social tariff.



#### **WATER BILL**

If you're on a low income, water companies can help reduce your bills. Every water company should have a social tariff scheme that can help you, and some may have funds that can help to clear your debt.

#### **WARM SPACES**

Check out <u>www.essexmap.</u> **co.uk/listings** to find the closest Warm Space to you.

### LIKE TO VOLUNTEER OR DONATE TO THE FOOD BANK?



Please visit: www.braintreearea. foodbank.org.uk or call 01376 330694

## "THE FOODBANK ISN'T JUST ABOUT THE FOOD"

THE TEAM AT HALSTEAD FOODBANK, LED BY EASTLIGHT RESIDENT BARRY EVERETT, SUPPORTED 2,000 RESIDENTS LAST YEAR. BUT, AS BARRY EXPLAINS, THE SERVICE USERS RECEIVE MORE THAN JUST A FOOD PARCEL.

66 The foodbank is not only about giving out food, but also about making clients feel welcomed and relaxed – not stigmatised or embarrassed. A lot of people want to talk and there's no other outlet for them."

Barry, 75, volunteered to join the foodbank in 2011 after moving from Witham to an Eastlight (then Greenfields) home in Halstead.

After becoming manager seven years ago, he says he is in the "lucky" position to support thousands of local residents with his team of volunteers.

As well as food parcels, they provide support and a listening ear to an increasing number of people.

Barry says: "The increase in demand since Covid is phenomenal – we have a queue outside the door before we open now. We don't leave

them waiting though
– we welcome them
in, give them a hot
drink and snack and
sit them down to wait
until we're ready."







All In, Eastlight's community programme where teams get a year to create a solution to a big issue impacting their community.

Gemma and a team of Braintree residents spent a year creating a programme offering communitybased activities which help people manage their mental wellbeing.

Now, with further support and funding from Eastlight, Gemma has opened A Place To Be You, a community wellbeing hub in Braintree town centre.

Gemma said: "The people of Braintree deserve to feel supported when they're not quite feeling like their best selves. We shouldn't have to get to a crisis point before getting the help we need.

"A Place To Be You has already become important to so many. It's a lifeline for those struggling best suits them."

#### **DROP-IN ACTIVITIES**

Partnering with Essexbased mental health charity, Heads2Minds, Gemma hopes A Place To Be You will be there for people when they need a little support.

"We'll be open from 10am-4pm every day for people to drop-in whenever they want to," says Gemma. "Our weekly arts & crafts, meditation and chill & chat sessions will still be taking place on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and we'll be hosting one big activity each month too.

"I want people to know that they're not alone and they can come to us whenever they need to. We can offer support and guidance through various ways and can signpost people to other support networks if we don't have the answers ourselves."

For Gemma, joining All In was a turning point, helping to make her dream of creating a space to support Braintree residents into a reality.

"It's been such a big journey for me, personally," she added: "There's been many learning curves and teething problems, but I wouldn't have had the opportunity to create something this important without joining All In. It's the best thing I've ever done."



#### A Place To Be You

2a Corner House, Fairfield Road, Braintree, CM7 3HQ.

To find out more, visit: A Place To Be You (Kinder Minds) on Facebook.



### **HAVE YOUR VOICE HEARD**

By Sam Oborne, Head of Customer Insight

**ARE YOU HAPPY WITH YOUR LANDLORD?** DOES OUR REPAIRS SERVICE MEET YOUR NEEDS? DO YOU FEEL SAFE AT HOME? DO WE LISTEN TO YOU?

very three months, these questions and more will be posed to hundreds of residents on our behalf by an organisation called TLF Research.

The results, which are called Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), show where you are happy with the homes and services we provide - and where we need to make improvements.

Other TSMs, such as how often we complete repairs on time and whether vour homes meet the Decent Homes standard, are collected by us.

All housing associations: providing, and some like Eastlight must report these to the Regulator of Social Housing, which will shortly receive more powers to ensure landlords meet the needs of their residents.

Below are some of the results. You can see more information about our performance on our website, which will be updated following each survey.

#### **NEW COMPLAINTS TEAM**

As you can see, there are some areas where most residents are happy with the services we are

areas where we must do better.

In particular, we have made a series of changes to improve how we handle your complaints.

You have told us that we are often too slow to respond to your complaints and that sometimes, you are not happy with the response when it arrives.

In response, we have launched a new Customer Experience Team of specialists who are now your point of contact when you make a complaint. They will work with you and colleagues at Eastlight to fully understand your issues and find the best solution as quickly as possible.

#### **KEEP TALKING** TO US!

If you have an issue with your home or the services we provide, please tell us and we will try to resolve it.

You can use any of the contact methods on the back of this magazine, and if you are contacted by phone or email about a survey, then please complete it.

#### **RESIDENT SATISFACTION**



Overall



73% Repairs



31% Complaints handling



**53%** 

Anti-Social Behaviour response



**79%** My home is safe



70%

You keep me informed

Want to find out more? Visit www. eastlighthomes.co.uk

## MEET YOUR NEW RESIDENT LEADERS

THIS SUMMER, WE INVITED APPLICATIONS TO JOIN OUR RESIDENT-LED CUSTOMER INFLUENCE COMMITTEE (CIC), WHICH EXISTS TO ENSURE YOU RECEIVE THE HOMES AND SERVICES YOU WANT AND NEED.

Thank you to everyone who applied. Here, you can meet your new CIC representatives.



#### **RUE GARANDE**

Zimbabwe-born domestic abuse survivor Rue is on a mission to improve and increase representation across our estates.

Many people think landlords just want their rent, but I've witnessed first-hand how Eastlight cares for us, takes an interest and aims to give us the best customer experience – and the CIC is key to that success.

Having lived in my Eastlight home with my husband and daughter for ten years now, I've always been one to hold Eastlight to account.

In my new role, I want to encourage residents who look like me to speak up and get involved in ways big and small. I want to help put power behind your words, so show up and help make a difference.



#### **MICHAEL RYAN**

Halstead-based retiree Michael lives in an Eastlight bungalow with partner Pauline, and he can't wait to put his skills to the test.

During my career, I've led some iconic rail and construction projects in the UK and overseas, and spent the last 15 years focused heavily on health, safety and wellbeing. And while that journey's come to an end, I still have a lot to give.

I joined Eastlight's Resident Academy back in February. I hope to use my expertise to provide our residents with an improved standard of life.

I want to ensure that Eastlight prioritises safety issues and the care that elderly and other vulnerable people need – especially those who never ask for it.



#### **MAGENTA LAVEY**

New-build resident Magenta has lived in Long Melford for three years, and you might recognise her from All In.

I was so grateful to have joined Eastlight's All In programme, working in the Colchester Community Team to create Trusted – an initiative providing people with invaluable support through the cost-of-living crisis.

I want to do more to help Eastlight's residents, specifically those in my own microcommunity in Suffolk, and a role on the CIC just seemed the most natural fit.

My Eastlight home is my forever home, and I'm excited to ask the simple but important questions around how we're building homes with residents in mind: What's Eastlight's thinking? What haven't they thought about?



# ...AND SHAPE EASTLIGHT FOR THE BETTER

## YOU KNOW BETTER THAN ANYONE WHAT YOU NEED TO BE SAFE AND HAPPY IN YOUR HOME AND YOUR COMMUNITY.

The Resident Academy has been created so you can bring your passion and experience to ensure we deliver the best possible homes and services for residents.

The free boot camp is an opportunity for 20 residents to join together, learn how Eastlight works and discover how you can make a difference for you, your family, your neighbours and the wider community.

Over the weekend, you can learn from inspiring speakers,

discover how Eastlight works and take on the issues you're passionate about.

Your next step could be a paid role like our resident-led Customer Influence Committee, taking part in community groups such as our All In Alliances and Eastlight Resident Groups, or creating new ways to shape the services you are passionate about.

If you have a desire to learn and a passion to make a difference, then the Resident Academy is for you.





If you can't attend the boot camp, or if you want a peek at some of the content, check out our Resident Academy Online!

Our bite-sized videos take you through the history of social housing, introduce you to the wider housing sector and explain the past, present and future of Eastlight.



Find them on our website: www.
eastlighthomes.co.uk/
my-community/
resident-academy

#### **APPLY NOW!**



wnen:

November 10–12, 2023

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Where:

Wivenhoe House Hotel, University of Essex



To apply, visit:

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



**Any questions?** 

Call us on 0330 128 0330





THE AVERAGE TIME
YOU ARE WAITING
FOR REPAIRS TO YOUR
HOME HAS FALLEN
BY MORE THAN
TWO WEEKS AFTER
WE INTRODUCED A
RANGE OF SERVICE
IMPROVEMENTS.

n your last *Shine* magazine, we revealed we were moving trades teams and using more contractors after you told us you were waiting too long for some repairs.

Since then, we have also restructured our Home Solutions Team and worked with our resident-led Customer Influence Committee to update our Repairs Policy and our targets for completing repairs (see table).

Back in May, it took us, on average, **44 days** to complete your repair. The average waiting time is now down to just under **29 days**.

#### **BETTER COMMUNICATION**

This summer, we also introduced extra calls to check that you are home and still require a repair before we visit.

In May, 9% of our visits to your homes resulted in no repair being completed, usually because noone was at home when we visited.

Thanks to these changes and your support, this has been reduced to just **3%**.

#### **STILL WORK TO DO**

In a handful of areas, including general building works, we are still sometimes taking too long to complete your repairs.

Our teams are working hard to reduce those waits and are focused on giving you updates as soon as possible.

If you're not satisfied with the repairs service we provide, then we want to hear from you. Please get in touch using any of the contact methods on the back page, and do complete any surveys you receive from us.

### HOW LONG SHOULD MY REPAIRS TAKE?

#### **EMERGENCY**



a serious risk to the health, safety or security of you or your home.

#### **URGENT**



an issue that needs to be repaired quickly but does not pose an immediate risk to you or your home.

#### **ROUTINE**



an issue that may be inconvenient, but does not seriously affect your ability to enjoy your home.

#### **PLANNED**



larger or more complicated repairs, such as fencing, where there is no risk to you or your home. NOT LONG AGO, THIS COMMUNITY GARDEN IN SILVER END WAS AN UNLOVED PLOT OF LAND, OVERGROWN WITH UNSIGHTLY SHRUBS AND THORNY BLACKBERRY BUSHES.

#### **NOW LOOK AT IT!**

A community-minded group of villagers have transformed the site into a resplendent nature garden, run by and for local residents.

#### **LABOUR OF LOVE**

After noticing the eyesore, pals Jeff Spencer, Steve Wicks and Danny Ball approached Eastlight, as we own the land, to ask if we would lease it to them. Impressed by their go-getting approach and green-fingered goals, we agreed.

After diligently ploughing through various administrative tasks and adding Lisa Knight and Tony Frogget to a newlyformed committee, they set to work

Steve and Danny have been the backbone of the gardening work. Danny says: "We cut down six-foot-high weeds, rotated the land and planted new seeds.

"We brought on a shed to store plants, built a polytunnel greenhouse, and even created a pond from an old fibre glass rowing boat. We've planted more than 400 bulbs since we started."



More recently, the team has built rockery walls and perfected the pond, now home to more than 30 fish species. Their work isn't done, and Jeff and team are exploring the potential for solar panels.

Helped by donations from donations from Braintree District Council, Perrywoods Garden Centre and British Garden Centres, the garden is thriving.

Steve said: "We've got raspberries, gooseberries, apples, pears, lettuces, cucumbers and beetroot – and local residents now come to buy their £1 bundles of the produce. We've also added hedgehog houses, bird boxes and insect boxes."

#### **COMMUNITY HUB**

This summer the garden has become a hub of activity for local residents. Lisa explained: "We've had a lot of interest from the community, and it's been fantastic to see everyone sat there and thoroughly enjoying the food donations and the space.

"It's peaceful here and at the heart of nature – a great place to meet up and have a chat. Everybody looks forward to coming and speaking to their neighbours here now."

Got a community project idea? We may be able to help! Email: Lauren.Brimson@eastlighthomes.co.uk



## THAT'S THE **COMMUNITY SPIRIT!**

IF YOU'RE LOOKING TO MEET NEW PEOPLE, SUPPORT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH OR SIMPLY BECOME MORE CONFIDENT IN SOCIAL SITUATIONS, THEN HERE'S SOME FANTASTIC GROUPS TO HELP YOU.

### **Black Cactus Choir**

Based in Colchester, Black Cactus Choir are bringing people together through their love of music. With regular socials and monthly coffee mornings, the group are much more than just a choir.

"Our choir now has 50 members with a growing catalogue of tunes including ABBA, Elton John, Michael Jackson and more," says Choirmaster, Alex. "There's no audition to join, you don't need any previous singing

experience to get involved and your first session is totally free!"

Want to join?
Visit www.
blackcactuschoir.com
or call 07512 831843



## **Halstead**Road Runners



Since 1985, Halstead Road Runners have been clocking up some miles. Open to anyone, of any age and ability, the club organise training sessions and races throughout the year for their members.

"Everyone is on their own running journey, whether they are training for their own mental health and wellbeing, meeting people to run socially, or training for a race," says Victoria, Halstead Road Runners Ladies Captain.

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Get involved at <u>www.</u>
<a href="https://www.halsteadroadrunners.org.">halsteadroadrunners.org.</a>
uk or call **01376 343392** 

## Dates for your diary



October 23rd – 29th Halloween Family Self-Guided Trail.

High Woods Country Park, Colchester



October 25th
10.30am-11.30am
Walk and Talk in Braintree with
Essex Recovery Foundation.
Braintree & Bocking
Public Gardens



October 28th 10am-2pm Youth Café.

The Witham Hub, Grove Shopping Centre



November 9th
7pm-9.30pm
Stitch & Brew
intro to Cross Stitch.

Firstsite, Colchester



CALLING ALL CREATIVE

KIDS

WHAT'S YOUR IDEA OF A PERFECT HOME? WHETHER IT'S MADE OF BRICK OR CHOCOLATE, WHETHER IT'S IN A TOWN NEAR YOU OR ON THE MOON – WE WANT YOU TO USE YOUR IMAGINATION. THE SKY'S THE LIMIT!

If you're aged between 5 and 12, simply create your dreamhouse below, tear this page out and pop it in the freepost envelope enclosed, or take a picture and email it to **Shine@eastlighthomes.co.uk** by Friday, 10 November.

The competition will be judged by our very own Bob the Builders – the Development Team – and our Customer Influence Committee. We can't wait to see what you dream up!

Name Age Address

Phone

**Email** 

Describe your dream house







Well now's your chance to quiz chief executive Emma Palmer on the big issues that matter to you by emailing

#### shine@eastlighthomes.co.uk

Emma's ready to answer questions you have about the homes and services we provide and how we provide them.

You will get a response in return, and the answer may be featured in the next edition of *Shine* magazine.

If the question is about your home or services, please use the contact details below and our Customer Services team will work to resolve it with you.



### **Contact** us

**Call:** 0330 128 0330 (local rate)

**Text:** 07860 024 511

Email: customer.services@eastlighthomes.co.uk

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

**Visit:** www.eastlighthomes.co.uk

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.

facebook.com/eastlighthomes











