



Customer Service Strategy

2024–2027



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Our Purpose

Together with our communities, we create affordable homes and great neighbourhoods that people are proud to live in.



←
Eastlight homes;
and resident
Rue Garande

Introduction

Central to the services we provide are our customers. They trust us to keep their homes and neighborhoods well-maintained, and to resolve their issues as best and as quickly as we can – this forms the foundation from which our communities can feel proud of where they live.

Eastlight is an ambitious organisation, and we want to transform the ways in which we deliver services to our customers, doing more to put them and their individual needs at the heart of the decisions we make, and to keep pace with their expectations.

The Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) Consumer Standards and Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) form a framework from which we can assess the standard of service we provide. However, we want to go further and set an ambitious proposition to our customers, articulating through this strategy the distinctive value and experience Eastlight will deliver.



An energy efficient
Eastlight home
at Thaxted



Eastlight resident
Sonata Dambraskiene
and Gizmo

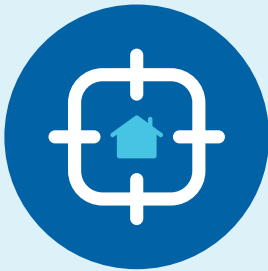
How this strategy aligns with our Corporate Strategy

The Customer Service Strategy directly aligns to the following principles of the Corporate Strategy:



We are resident-led

Hearing the experiences of customers involved in our governance framework, and other resident influence groups, is critical to improving the services we provide and adapting them to meet individuals' needs.



We focus on our core purpose

We use customer priorities to help inform and evolve what this means, placing emphasis in areas that matter most to residents, such as our repairs and maintenance service and dealing with anti-social behaviour.



We are place-based

We ensure simple, single points of contact and build trusted relationships between Eastlight and our customers, focusing on establishing local partnerships and accountability.



We use data and technology to inform our decision making

Customer insights help us to be more efficient and understand how to deliver better value for money. Our Technology Strategy will enable us to provide modern services to our current and future customers.

Current state

Our well-trained customer service function supports the successful resolution of customers' issues. Most customers are satisfied with the overall service Eastlight provides; however, we receive complaints more often than we should.

Dissatisfaction is often associated with more complex customer requests that require the involvement of more than one team to respond.

Team members want to provide the best possible customer service, and we have an opportunity alongside the delivery of the Data and Technology Strategies to utilise the latest analytics and software to drive this now and into the future.

Active regulation of Consumer Standards in the social housing sector presents a framework to ensure our customer services are up to scratch. Moreover, it is important we have a strategy to keep ahead of the sector-wide improvement in housing services and the increased expectations they are designed to drive.



An Eastlight
colleague resolving
a resident query

Scope and rationale

We are a regulatory compliant organisation that ensures our residents live in high-quality, safe, decent and well-maintained homes and neighbourhoods.

We care about the health and wellbeing of our existing customers, and we deliver new homes – for social rent, affordable rent and shared ownership – for our customers of the future.

We recognise that there are issues or challenges that fall outside our direct responsibility or expertise. In such cases, we actively engage with a broad range of partners to provide support and assistance to customers.

Within this scope, the strategy’s rationale is to foster:

- 1. Fairness and Respect:** We treat all our customers with fairness and respect, regardless of their individual circumstances or background
- 2. Flexible, Adaptable and Inclusive:** Our services will be designed to be flexible, adaptable, and inclusive, catering to the diverse needs of our customers.

Our customers in the context of this strategy are those to whom we provide landlord services – i.e. our tenants, shared owners and leaseholders. We expect, however, that the standards this strategy promotes are upheld in our engagement with everyone we interact with.



Knowing our customers

Our customers tell us what's important to them, what we do well and what we can do better. We know that around seven in ten customers are happy with the services Eastlight provide.

We understand that feeling heard has the greatest impact on overall customer satisfaction and that, to improve the perception of our services, we need to provide an excellent repairs and maintenance service and deal with issues – such as damp and mould and anti-social behaviour – more effectively. Emerging from our analysis of complaints, communication is a key area we need to improve.

Segmentation of our customer base highlights distinct groups that want and need to access our services differently. Three quarters (significantly more than we have recorded) have at least one condition that may affect how they interact with Eastlight. Over half of customers would prefer a digital-first experience to avoid needing to speak to us or to access our service around their busy lives.

Other customers have more complex needs, requiring a flexible, adaptable and/or understanding response. Many customers are lonely or isolated, anxious and overwhelmed, and we must ensure they all have equal access.

In terms of what we deliver, and how we deliver it, customer expectations of the housing sector continue to increase. Future customers will have greater needs and therefore be more demanding of our services.

Our customer population is also becoming more varied. We will need to be able to respond to more bespoke requests and raise awareness amongst our team members around matters of culture, gender diversity, disability, mental ill health and more.

Objectives

Specific objectives and deliverables are set out below. All will be delivered within the lifecycle of the strategy.



Deliver truly resident-centric services

- **Single point of contact** – We will provide a single point of contact for our customers, ensuring seamless and efficient service delivery
- **Launch and deliver our internal ‘Think Customer’ campaign** – This includes five crucial questions every team member should ask themselves through their workday
- **Individuals’ needs** – We will shift our recording to be needs-based and provide guidance/training to team members on updating and acting upon this data, flexing the service they provide accordingly
- **Fair, equitable and accessible services** – We will continuously review our services to ensure we are delivering the right outcomes for all our customers, reporting our findings periodically to Board and committing to publish the results.



Offer flexible services – at a time to suit

- **Digital self-service** – For those who prefer independence and convenience, we will offer a robust digital portal that allows residents to manage their accounts, report issues and access information when they want to
- **Personal support** – We recognise that some situations require the expertise and personal touch of our housing professionals. Our team will be ready to provide dedicated support through phone calls, in-person meetings or home visits when needed
- **Appointments** – We will be adaptable in our delivery of home appointments (including to complete repairs), ensuring our offer is consistent with the needs of customers
- **Customer segmentation** – We will reflect the diversity in needs of our customers in our design of policies, processes, services and systems.



Enhance our ability to respond to bespoke requests

- **Knowing our residents** – We will deepen our understanding of customers' needs, aspirations and experiences
- **Training and awareness programme** – We will ensure our team members' awareness and ability to support customers effectively is kept up to date through targeted training, including on gender diversity.



Restorative approach, creating and rebuilding trust

- **Place-based** – We will adopt a place-based approach to service delivery, tailoring our services to the specific needs and characteristics of each neighbourhood
- **Consistent regional approach** – We will ensure that customers across our area of operation receive the same high level of service
- **Estate and neighbourhood investment** – We are committed to investing in our estates and neighbourhoods, ensuring our customers live in well-maintained and safe environments.



Eastlight colleague
visiting a resident
in Braintree

Evaluation and monitoring

Success of the strategy will be gauged through customer feedback and a channel shift towards an online solution from more traditional contact methods.

Across the lifecycle of the strategy, we expect:

- Fewer complaints, particularly relating to areas identified as a priority, e.g. communication, and improved satisfaction with complaint handling
- An increase in customer satisfaction, of at least two percentage points every twelve months, against the following TSMs:
 - Satisfaction with overall services provided
 - Eastlight listens to views and acts upon them
 - Eastlight makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods
- A substantial proportion (at least 25%) of households to be signed up to our digital contact solution, resulting in some (at least 10%) channel shift.

Governance and legislation

This strategy supports our ongoing compliance with the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the RSH's Consumer Standards, including the TSMs.

It reinforces our commitment to ensuring our staff and Board possess the necessary skills to provide high-quality services, necessary under the new **Competence and Conduct Standard**.

Additionally, we embrace the **Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code**, viewing feedback via complaints as a vital tool for continuous improvement.

Communicating the strategy

We will keep colleagues up to date with the progress of the strategy through regular communication via our staff intranet and organisation-wide ‘Shine a Light’ sessions, with the purpose of maintaining awareness and providing regular updates on our performance.

A suite of training will be delivered via a range of methods and through both specific sessions/courses and signposting. The aim is to ensure we have the right skills and knowledge to deliver the best possible services to our customers.

Supporting strategies and policies

This Customer Service Strategy is aligned to the following Eastlight publications: Resident Engagement and Community Empowerment Strategy; Technology Strategy; Data Strategy (including knowledge and information management); Customer Service Policy.

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