



Data Strategy

(including knowledge and
information management)

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
Martin Reeves

Introduction

To fulfil our purpose, a progressive Data Strategy is essential, especially in the context of the current operating environment and fast pace of change in the information technology sector.

We recognise that not having a sound strategic approach to data, and knowledge and information management (KIM), presents specific hazards and potential for missed opportunities. More broadly, good quality data supports the delivery of our principles and values, and is crucial in risk management, monitoring and mitigation.

As a sector, housing is data rich. Information is held on each of our assets and customers, and is generated with every customer interaction. At the same time as continuing to keep data safe, the aim of this strategy is to support the ongoing development of how we use data and make data-driven decisions, enhance our analytics maturity, and benefit from emerging opportunities, including that of machine learning (ML)/artificial intelligence (AI).

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) and Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) place significant emphasis on robust governance and management of data, knowledge and information. Confidence in our data is crucial to ensure compliance, customer safety, and to deliver a high standard of service.

In referring to KIM, we apply the same definition as the HOS. The HOS states that KIM encompasses how data is created, stored, used and shared. This includes information on customers, properties, finances, policies and maintenance schedules.

How this strategy aligns with our Corporate Strategy

Whilst the Data Strategy plays a key role in each of the other principles of our Corporate Strategy, it specifically supports:



We use data and technology to inform our decision making, our investments and to deliver better customer services.

Alongside data-led decision-making covered by this strategy, our Technology Strategy provides the vehicle for modernising our systems, necessary to fulfil this principle.



An Eastlight colleague resolving a resident query

Current state

The nature of our business is such that a wealth of data exists in relation to our customers and homes, and is further generated with each frequent customer interaction. There is a strong appetite to maximise the benefit this offers, with an explicit commitment to doing so through the principles of the Corporate Strategy.

Eastlight maintains ageing IT systems and reporting capability. Databases are disparate and therefore inefficient for advanced reporting and analysis. Our data culture is basic and analytical skills are limited. Reporting and analytics have until now been largely descriptive, i.e. analysing what has already happened and basing future action upon it.

There are several 'quick wins' we can exploit in making data available and educating users to interpret it. Taking action to modernise our infrastructure will simultaneously enhance data governance and compliance, and support advancing our analytics capability to a state that allows predictive (using data to predict and plan for future events) and prescriptive (using data to recommend specific action) analytics to be more easily undertaken.

The Regulator expects Eastlight to be mature in its governance, management and use of data, knowledge and information. Failure to do so risks failure to deliver services that meet standards and the possibility of regulatory downgrade. Almost all regulatory notifications and HOS determinations have their roots in data. Expectations of our customers too are increasing rapidly, in providers being able to respond effectively to demand and offer modern access to services.

Scope and rationale

Central to the strategy is improving the services we provide to customers, and strengthening our ability to keep them safe, informed and supported in their home, through the proactive use of data and insight.

The rationale for delivering the strategy is to mitigate risk to service delivery and regulatory performance, through the advancement of our data, knowledge and information management and assurance.

At a basic level, we will develop our data culture through the expansion of accountability for data, and capability to use it, within each service area. We will embed our Data Standard which sets out the minimum detail expected in record keeping, and be clear on our position in ethically processing data. We will expand our existing data catalogue (a list of all the key data we hold), or Information Asset Register, setting out the accuracy, completeness, uniqueness, consistency, timeliness, and validity of each type of data against its importance. In doing so, we will assess risk to prioritise any necessary action.

Our priority goes beyond a specialist data and analytics function to instilling confidence throughout Eastlight in managing and making best use of data, knowledge and information. This extends to fostering the confidence of our stakeholders in our ability to harness data for the benefit of our partnerships and their perception of the quality of our offer.

The scope of the strategy is limited to how we use and manage data, knowledge and information. Whilst the strategy refers to it, development and maintenance of the relevant IT systems is the domain of the Technology Strategy.

Objectives and deliverables

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



Modernise our data infrastructure*

- Create a data lakehouse (a modern way to store structured and unstructured data which will facilitate enhanced access to data, reporting and AI)
- Consolidate main databases into a single data source so it can be easily accessed and interrogated to provide better services to customers
- Build capacity to benefit from ML/AI opportunities for the enhancement and continuous improvement of our customer offer.



Develop data stewardship

- Establish a group of data stewards/champions to take a key role in the governance of data, especially in keeping customer data current and able to drive fair and accessible services
- Maintain an Information Asset Register of key data points to act as a criticality/risk-based catalogue of data quality, including that of customers so we can act in their best interests
- Develop a suite of data quality monitoring and error reports to address discrepancies that may impact our decision making around the services we provide to customers
- Through the partnering of Technology, Data and Governance teams, we will maintain compliance with Eastlight's data policies, data retention schedule and GDPR. We will be explicit about our position on the ethical processing of data and our responsible/transparent use of AI.

*Note crossover with Technology Strategy in delivering this objective



Grow analytics maturity and our ability to make data-led decisions

- Develop our performance management framework in line with customer priorities and embed a suite of metrics into risk management
- Efficiently and intelligently utilise customer profile, segmentation and insight data to shape future services for customers
- Facilitate straightforward self-serve user access to data, basic reporting, and FAQs, so that we have the information to deliver first-class customer service at our fingertips
- Train specialist analytics function in presenting data from the data lakehouse, expanding skills to utilise tool(s) most suited to the task
- Consolidate key datasets to overlay, for example, stock condition with customers' needs so that we can act proactively in supporting customers and identifying those potentially at risk
- Proof of concept followed by programmes of predictive and prescriptive analytics models, developing our data science (the study of data to extract meaningful insights) capabilities and proactive customer engagement models
- Upskill wider staff in understanding core principles of data analysis and using data to make evidence-based decisions.



Deliver an effective approach to knowledge and information management

- Establish governance arrangements for, and continuous improvement approaches to, KIM
- Continue with horizon scanning and benchmarking, and ensure appropriate KIM controls around safeguarding, recording customer needs and the Equality Act 2010
- Ensure minimum data standards internally and for contractors/partners, including having a clear system for STAIR requests and keeping FAQs up to date
- Regularly review database capability, storage of sensitive information, and ensure staff are trained. Establish KIM checklist in case of merger/acquisition
- Given the transactional volume and importance to overall satisfaction, we will ensure appropriate focus on repairs data.

Evaluation and monitoring

Progress in delivering the objectives of the strategy will be monitored on a regular basis. The outcomes we expect are as follows:

- Ability to query data in all databases from a single source, with clear 'version of truth' for primary metrics
- Readiness to run MI models and exploit AI opportunities
- Capacity established within each service area to access data and perform analysis for decision making. FAQs are answered within a few clicks
- Where applicable, data is used to inform every decision made, and can be evidenced
- There is clear accountability for data governance and quality, and the mechanisms in place for identifying and managing gaps are effectively utilised
- Substantial assurance against compliance with relevant policy and legislation
- Clear transition to specialist skills being used for advanced (predictive and prescriptive) analytics. Significant majority of work currently undertaken reactively is fulfilled through user self-service
- Culture such that individual service areas facilitate much of their own data-led decisions, and advanced analytics/MI/AI models are continuously monitored, reviewed and acted upon
- KIM self-assessment demonstrates a maturity and roadmap for continuous improvement, which minimises risk to service delivery and ensures compliance with regulatory standards.



Eastlight
colleagues working
at our head office
in Braintree

Governance and legislation

The strategy commits to acting in accordance with the Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, in line with Eastlight’s Data Protection Policy and Privacy Statements. It recognises the importance of KIM as a tool for compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

The HOS has set out a clear direction within its **Spotlight on Knowledge and Information Management**. Throughout the lifecycle of the strategy, we will regularly self-assess against the recommendations the HOS sets out.

Good quality data is essential for meeting each of the RSH’s Financial and Consumer Standards. Specifically, providers are required to meet data reporting requirements in fulfilling the RSH’s **Value for Money Standard** and **Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard**.

Communicating the strategy

We will keep colleagues up to date with the progress of the strategy through regular communication via the staff intranet and organisation-wide ‘Shine a Light’ sessions, with the purpose of raising awareness and providing access to new and existing data tools.

A comprehensive suite of training will be delivered via a range of methods and through both specific sessions/courses and signposting. The aim is to upskill specialist in-house analysts and end-users so maximum benefit is gained in improving services to customers from our enhanced access to data and analytics.

Supporting strategies and policies

This Data Strategy is aligned to the following Eastlight publications:

- Technology Strategy
- Data Protection Policy
- Data Retention Schedule
- Artificial Intelligence Policy.

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