

Autumn 2024

Shine

Your Eastlight residents' magazine

Eastlight
Community Homes

CREATING A COMMUNITY!

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Welcoming **new residents**

We'd like to offer a warm welcome to new Eastlight residents after we acquired their homes from other landlords.

We are now providing services to residents living in 703 homes in Essex and Suffolk from Clarion Housing Group, and 29 homes in Halstead from Estuary housing association.


We funded this purchase by borrowing, so there has been no change to the money spent on services provided to current residents. As well as providing

what we hope is a better service to incoming residents, we have invested further in your services, including recruiting seven new housing officers over the summer.

In the longer term, growing will help Eastlight to invest more in the type of services that you want and need.

Managing more homes in our communities will make us a stronger and more efficient organisation, with speedier repairs and a stronger community presence.





A PRIDE day for Braintree

We had a fantastic time at the first ever Braintree Pride in August.

It was an honour to welcome visitors to our stall and share information about support and resources for residents, including those from the LGBTQ+ community.

Missed the event but want to know more? Join our new LGBTQ+ Residents Group to have your voice heard and help ensure LGBTQ+ residents feel safe, secure and happy – both at home and out and about.



For more information, call **0330 128 0330** or email customer.services@eastlighthomes.co.uk



Grounds Maintenance

We've changed our Grounds Maintenance contractor because there were too many issues this year.

We're sorry for the standard of service many residents received. Work was often not completed, or not completed to a high enough standard.

In July, Countrywide took over the contract, and are completing grass cuts and other services at sites we are responsible for.

Residents who pay for Grounds Maintenance through their service charge were not charged between April and July.

NEW WAY TO SHARE FEEDBACK

We've introduced a new way for you to give feedback on our services.

After you receive a service from us, you may receive an email or a phone call, where we will ask you a few questions.

Understanding what went well and what needs to change helps us improve your services, so please take the time to let us know your thoughts.

These surveys replace the text messages you used to receive after receiving a service.

MODERN SLAVERY

Even in 2024, slavery can affect anyone, including Eastlight residents.

We take our responsibility seriously in helping to prevent it.

At Eastlight, we work closely with our partners to safeguard our communities and help you to spot the signs of slavery and exploitation, such as young people being coerced into drug dealing and our homes being used for illegal purposes. We also ensure our suppliers follow our same strict standards.

If you're concerned that slavery may be happening to anyone associated with Eastlight, please contact us immediately on **0330 128 0330**.

Read our Modern Slavery statement on our website: eastlighthomes.co.uk



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 our Healthy Homes Team is here to support you to manage it.

We 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 contact us. We'll arrange an appointment for a member of our Healthy Homes Team to visit you within two weeks.

To book a visit, please contact us using any of our contact details.

If you are online, complete the short form on our website eastlighthomes.co.uk. If you can, please submit pictures of the affected areas, which will help us diagnose the issue.



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, if required, use stain block
- Complete minor repairs they can do on the spot, and book any repairs that can't be completed
- Check whether you need support to heat your home from our Tenancy Sustainment Team
- Write to you within two days with a summary of our visit and any next steps.



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

Condensation can lead to damp and mould. In some cases, there are simple steps you can take to reduce the likelihood of condensation 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
- When drying clothes indoors, use a clothes horse in your bathroom, if possible. 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.

If you can't afford to heat your home, please contact us, as we may be able to help.



WHAT HAPPENS 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 support you.

REPORT DAMP & MOULD



[eastlighthomes.co.uk](https://www.eastlighthomes.co.uk)



0330 128 0330



customer.services@eastlighthomes.co.uk

INVESTING IN YOUR SERVICES

WE HAVE RECRUITED SEVEN NEW HOUSING OFFICERS TO SUPPORT YOU WITH ISSUES IN YOUR HOME AND COMMUNITY.

Our new investment means that wherever you live, you will have a dedicated Tenancy Co-ordinator and Intervention and Enforcement Co-ordinator here for you.

Our Tenancy Co-ordinators:

- Visit your home annually, and as and when required, to make sure you're ok
- Deal with any tenancy breaches – all while supporting you to remain in your home
- Make sure you have support for any mental health struggles, domestic abuse and paying bills, if needed
- Work closely with other teams to keep your home safe.



“We want to be more proactive than reactive”

Meanwhile, our Intervention and Enforcement Co-ordinators support you if you're experiencing anti-social behaviour (ASB) or hate crime by:

- Offering guidance on what ASB and hate crime is, and what you and we can do to help resolve issues
- Working closely with the Police, local councils and, where necessary, specialist organisations
- Working closely with other Eastlight teams.

Our Braintree Office near Braintree Village is a Hate Crime Reporting Centre, meaning



you can visit to report and seek support, whenever needed.

Keeley Dow, Eastlight's Tenancy Housing Manager, said:

“We want to ensure you have enough support in place all year round.

“We want to be more proactive than reactive, and help you feel comfortable contacting us, and we think these changes will help.”







CONTENTS INSURANCE... FOR AS LITTLE AS 90P A MONTH!

WE'RE EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE THE LAUNCH OF OUR NEW CONTENTS INSURANCE SCHEME, DESIGNED TO GIVE YOU PEACE OF MIND IN PROTECTING YOUR BELONGINGS.

Whether you're a tenant, shared owner, or leaseholder*, this insurance covers the costs of repairing or replacing your possessions if your home is affected by fire, theft, flooding, or other serious incidents.

Partnering with Aviva, one of the UK's leading insurers, we're offering this cover from just 90p a month for £4,000 of standard cover. Plus, you won't need to pay any excess on claims under this scheme.

The cover also includes things like:

-  Replacing door locks if your keys are lost or stolen
-  Accidental damage to audio, video or computer equipment in your home
-  Personal liability
-  Broken glass.

“Protecting your possessions is a simple way to avoid financial hardship”

Optional extras are available for full accidental damage, personal belongings away from home, and more, enabling you to tailor the policy to suit your needs. There's no long-term commitment and you can cancel at any time.

While we believe this policy offers excellent value, we encourage you to shop around to find the best cover for your situation. Eastlight doesn't receive any commission or benefits from promoting this product.

Protecting your possessions is a simple way to avoid financial hardship in the event of an unexpected incident.

*Scheme not available to sub-let properties

i To learn more or to apply, visit our website: eastlighthomes.co.uk/contents-insurance/



It happens!

Having home contents insurance can't prevent floods, thefts or fires from happening, but it can help you get back on your feet.

Eastlight
Community Homes



FPE.NT.LC.98.ELC

Find out more ➔

Acceptance restrictions may apply for conviction and claims experience. Terms and conditions apply. The policy is arranged by Aon UK Ltd and underwritten by Aviva Insurance Limited and administered by Wessex Administration Services Limited who are all authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. FPTCI.2024.191.GG

“ I WANTED TO GET PEOPLE OUT OF THEIR ROOMS AND CREATE A COMMUNITY ”

SITTING IN HER NEW HOME IN COGGESHALL, EMMA ROOKE CAN REFLECT ON A TRANSFORMATIONAL FEW YEARS.

It was only three years ago that Emma moved into Braintree Foyer, a housing development for those aged 18-35 experiencing homelessness.

Fast forward to today, and after launching a remarkable series of activities at the Foyer, she has been nominated for a national award and is settling into her new Eastlight home.

Emma recalls how she struggled with the move to the Foyer at first.

She said: “At the start, I was very quiet and reserved. I had a lot of mental health problems. Then Mark Watson, the manager of the Foyer, arranged for me to go on a residential trip near Brighton, to help me build my confidence.”

Whilst there, Emma took part in team building and socialising activities. She said: “I came out 100% more confident.”

Emma’s new-found confidence led her to meet with the Foyer Federation, a national organisation supporting those in

the 50+ foyers across the country. They, along with Mark, guided her in running a programme of activities at Braintree Foyer for a month, including community cooking, go karting, beach trips and a stay at Hadleigh Farm.

“I wanted to get people out of their rooms and create a community,” recalls Emma.

Due to the success of the programme and the effect on residents, last year Emma was shortlisted for a UK Housing Award for all she has done to support Foyer residents. Fantastic work, Emma!

“ I came out 100% more confident ”



She now supports others to run their own activity months, and has helped to create a fishing group, a neurodiversity group and Braintree Pride, who organised their first ever event in August (see page 3). Drag bingo may also be in the pipeline too!

Two months ago, Emma had a dream come true when she moved into her own Eastlight home.

Emma is adjusting to having more than one room, saying: “I’m in love with my new home.

“It’s a massive change – I’m taking in all the newness and getting used to paying my bills myself.”

Emma continues to support the Foyer, visiting regularly and helping others move into their own homes.



Emma at the UK Housing Awards.

She is also very interested in getting involved with community activities in Coggeshall, saying: “It’s a really nice community.”

Mark, the manager at Braintree Foyer, said: “Emma is a really remarkable resident. She is the leading light of co-production amongst resident groups, and we were really proud to nominate her for Tenant of the Year at the UK Housing Awards.”

Lots of luck in your new home and community, Emma!

COMMUNITY EVENT RAISES £800 FOR CHILDREN’S CHARITIES

When Beccie Westbrook’s son’s football teammate, Oscar Poole, was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer, Beccie and others wasted no time in organising a special festival with live music, food and entertainment last summer to raise money for children’s charities.

The event, called CourageFest and held in The Bell Inn, Panfield, was so successful that they decided to do it all again this year!

Eastlight resident Beccie, whose son plays for Great Bradford’s Football Club, said: “Oscar is doing really well, but we wanted to continue to raise awareness of the great work Lennox Children’s Cancer Fund does, and donate money to such a worthy cause by bringing the community together at CourageFest 2024.

“I work for POP Essex, who provide play and respite sessions for those aged 0–19 with special educational needs and disabilities. I was so pleased to nominate them to be the second chosen charity this year.

“Thanks to everyone who came along and supported and enjoyed the festival – we raised a brilliant £800. I really hope we can do it all again next year!”



WHAT THE

CIC*

HAS DONE FOR US

*CIC = Customer Influence Committee

HI THERE, I'M CATHERINE, AND I'M THE NEW CHAIR OF EASTLIGHT'S CUSTOMER INFLUENCE COMMITTEE (CIC).

As residents on the Committee, we work to make sure your voice is heard and that it leads to lasting improvements for you, your families, neighbourhoods and communities.

The Committee has been rather busy lately, helping residents and teams at Eastlight to make sure you get the services and support you want and need, driving real change!

In recent months, we've:

- Scrutinised policies to ensure you remain at the heart of Eastlight – including around complaints, compensation, empty homes and domestic abuse
- Helped to shape our Resident Engagement & Community Empowerment Strategy to ensure Eastlight's activities directly benefits residents

“

We work to make sure your voice is heard and that it leads to lasting improvements for you, your families, neighbourhoods and communities.”

- Contributed to our Shareholding offer (see page 12), with more work still ongoing
- Focused on improving services for different minority groups, including disabilities. We recently launched our British Sign Language (BSL) for our deaf and hard-of-hearing residents
- Ran the rule over this year's Annual Report for Customers – which you can expect to see over the coming weeks. Keep an eye out!

SO WHAT'S COMING UP?

In the coming months, we'll be carrying out a deep dive into hate crime in our communities and focusing on how Eastlight can meet your service and communications needs, regardless of your personal situation. We'll also be building more links with other involved residents, including members of the Active Residents Network.

Exciting times are ahead of us! We'll make sure to keep you posted along the way.





Dale Butcher, previous Vice Chair of Eastlight.

The Dale Butcher Residents Work Experience Programme is an opportunity to gain practical experience in asset management and development.

Designed to be flexible and to work around your busy lives, the programme provides meaningful hands-on experience and the opportunity to gain a recognised entry level qualification, paid for by Eastlight.

You'll spend time with our Asset Management Team, who look after your homes to ensure they're safe, comfortable and energy efficient places to live. And you'll discover how colleagues in our Development Team build new, high-quality homes for the thousands of people in your community who are in housing need.

You don't need any relevant experience – just a desire to develop new skills, to explore career options, or to simply learn more about how a housing association operates.



APPLY NOW!

eastlighthomes.co.uk/work-for-us or contact us for more information.

WANT A CAREER IN HOUSING?

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN A CAREER IN HOUSING, THEN WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU!

THE PROGRAMME

- **Duration:** 6-9 months (one day a week, flexible)
- **Location:** Eastlight House, Charter Way, Braintree, CM77 8FG
- **Expenses Covered:** Travel and food costs

Participants will be mentored by experienced professionals, including Dale Butcher, former Vice Chair of Eastlight's Board.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

- **Training Opportunities:** You can attend short courses and access Eastlight's EastLearn platform. You can also gain a professional Chartered Institute of Housing qualification
- **Mentorship:** Each participant will be assigned a mentor to guide them
- **Varied Tasks:** You'll take part in a range of activities, with access to the tools and support needed
- **Certificate:** On completion, participants will receive a Certificate of Achievement presented by Dale Butcher.

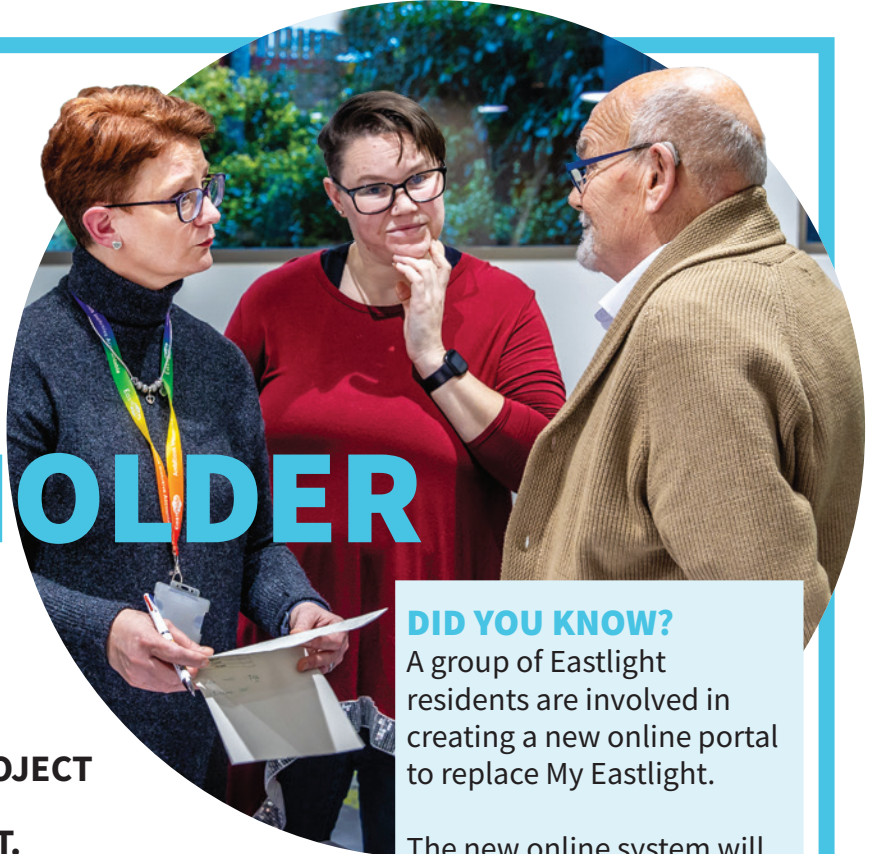
IMPORTANT DATES

- **1 November:** Register your interest
- **26 November:** Drop-In event at Eastlight House
- **Early December:** Interviews
- **6 January:** Programme start date.

This programme is open to Eastlight residents and members of their households, offering a practical way to gain experience and contribute to important projects.



SHAPE YOUR SHAREHOLDER OFFER



THERE'S STILL TIME TO GET INVOLVED IN AN EXCITING PROJECT TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF SHAREHOLDING AT EASTLIGHT.

We have around 4,500 resident shareholders who are invited to Annual General Meetings (AGMs) and vote on resolutions, including for Board Members and who our auditors should be.

However, typically fewer than 100 shareholders vote at our AGMs.

This year, we've held a series of workshops and conversations with shareholders to see if we can make it more meaningful to more people.

At those meetings, residents told us:

- They want more connection and communication with Eastlight, and feel the connection isn't as strong as it once was

- Many residents want to give their time and energy to make a difference in their communities
- Some felt shareholding itself is a misleading term, as it suggests shareholders have a financial stake in Eastlight, which they do not.

We have now begun working alongside a group of shareholders to co-design a new offer.

If there are any substantive changes, then we would put that proposal to shareholders.

It's not too late to get involved! If you're a shareholder and want to share your views, please email community@eastlighthomes.co.uk or call us.

DID YOU KNOW?

A group of Eastlight residents are involved in creating a new online portal to replace My Eastlight.

The new online system will provide a range of services at the touch of a button, including managing your rent account and updating your personal details.

GET INVOLVED

If you want to shape Eastlight and your community for the better, then join our Active Residents Network!

Members get monthly updates on opportunities to improve the homes and services provided by Eastlight.



To sign up, visit our website, call us or email community@eastlighthomes.co.uk or scan the QR code



OUR EASTLIGHT RESIDENTS GROUPS (ERGS) FOR BRAINTREE, HALSTEAD AND WITHAM ARE BACK IN BUSINESS AFTER A BREAK – AND YOU CAN BE INVOLVED!

Our neighbourhoods are full of potential, but fulfilling that potential requires your help.

From organising community clean-ups to advocating for better local services, the groups can help to transform your areas and create positive change.

WHAT DO THE GROUPS DO?

At quarterly meetings, you can:

- Agree where in your community needs some attention, and take part in a walkabout with Eastlight staff to identify potential improvements
- Use funding allocated to each group to pay for these improvements
- Invite Eastlight staff to update on what they are doing to tackle any issues in your community
- Get the latest updates about what's happening at Eastlight and opportunities to get involved.

So, if you're passionate about making a positive difference in your neighbourhood, why not get involved? Whether you're a long-time resident or new to the area, your involvement can have a lasting impact no matter your background or experience.



Eastlight resident and Braintree group member, Robert Yates.

Eastlight resident and Braintree group member, Robert Yates, says:

"I'm very passionate about getting involved with Eastlight and I'd encourage other residents to get involved too. The ERGs are a chance for you to have a say on what's happening in your neighbourhood, make the changes you want to see, and have your voice heard.

“Together, as a group, the ERGs can make a difference to your community.”

"Being a part of the ERG gives me a great sense of achievement and I already have a few things I want to put forward to the group and a couple of projects in the community that I want Eastlight to support too.

"Together, as a group, the ERGs can make a difference to your community."

If you live in or near Colchester, then watch this space! We are planning to launch a new group in 2025!

TO GET INVOLVED

Fill in the short form on this QR code:



0330 128 0330



community@eastlighthomes.co.uk



TACKLING LONELINESS ONE BURGER AT A TIME!

BIG-HEARTED ELDERLY RESIDENTS HAD A FLIPPING FANTASTIC TIME WHEN THEY CAME TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE THEIR ESTATE WITH A COMMUNITY BARBEQUE.

“Things like this help make them feel less isolated and gets them out of their flats for a few hours.”



The residents, who live at Eastlight’s John King Court, a Housing for Older People Scheme in Brightlingsea, decided to come together to celebrate their small community and help older residents socialise and stave off loneliness.

To organise the event, Lyn received support from Eastlight, with Tenancy Co-ordinator, Sherri Beresford, allocating funding to help supply food for the barbeque and buffet.

“
Things like this help make them feel less isolated and gets them out of their flats for a few hours.”

Eastlight resident,
Lyn Hayward

The event was spearheaded by organiser, Lyn Hayward, 63, a resident at John King Court who has lived there for three-and-a-half-years and previously worked as a carer.

Lyn added: “I spoke to Sherri about it, saying: ‘I’ve got this idea; we want to get together and have a barbeque.’ I asked would Eastlight be able to help us with funding.

She said: “I think as they get older, people do feel more isolated and a lot of them can’t get out now because they’re getting older.

“She got back to us and said they’d allocate us £100 towards the food.

“They’ve sorted a lot of stuff out for us. There’s always someone there if you need them.”



LILLY'S BUZZING

A NEW PLAYGROUND HAS BEEN CHRISTENED 'BUMBLE BEE PARK' AFTER A YOUNG RESIDENT WON AN EASTLIGHT COMPETITION.

Lilly, 6, took part in the contest among fellow residents at Eastlight's Mount Hill development in Halstead, Essex. Her entry was selected as the winner by Eastlight judges, and we caught up with her and her family in person to award her a £50 Amazon voucher.

Lilly was all smiles as she accepted her prize, and will be there when Eastlight officially unveils the new playground in a few weeks. The 71-home Mount Hill estate is a completely affordable, Eastlight-led development, which means all the homes are built to our rigorous standards, are highly sustainable and energy efficient.

Since forming in 2020, Eastlight has built 1,343 homes. This year we've so far built 135 – 79 for affordable rent, four for social rent and 52 for shared ownership.

“
There definitely needs to be more housing schemes going up”

Lilly's family moved to Mount Hill five months ago and say shared ownership has allowed them to get the home they need. Her mum, Charlea, 28, said: “With having children, it means a lot because we're quite young ourselves and are trying to get onto the property ladder and have a big enough house for two children, so to have this site and the shared ownership scheme has done us wonders.

“There definitely needs to be more housing schemes going up because there are a lot of people I know that can't always afford a full mortgage outright, so to have new-build estates and more houses that offer help is quite important.”





MAKING A COMPLAINT

AT EASTLIGHT, WE AIM TO GIVE YOU CONSISTENTLY GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE.

However, we recognise that – from time to time – we fail to meet your expectations.

Please tell us if you're not happy with the service you receive. We will work with you to try and find a resolution, and we also review our complaints to identify trends and improve your services.

We accept complaints made over the phone, in-person, by email or letter and online – including via social media. Our contact details are below.

“
We accept complaints made over the phone, in-person, by email or letter and online”

Contact us


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 magazine in a different format or language, please let us know.

