

Summer 2024

Shine

Your Eastlight
residents' magazine

**CELEBRATING
50 YEARS ON
THE TEMPLARS
ESTATE**

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Review your shareholder offer

Eastlight shareholders, we want to hear from you!

Most Eastlight residents can become an Eastlight shareholder, attend our Annual General Meetings and vote on certain decisions, like the appointment of Board members or auditors.

But only a minority of our shareholders participate in

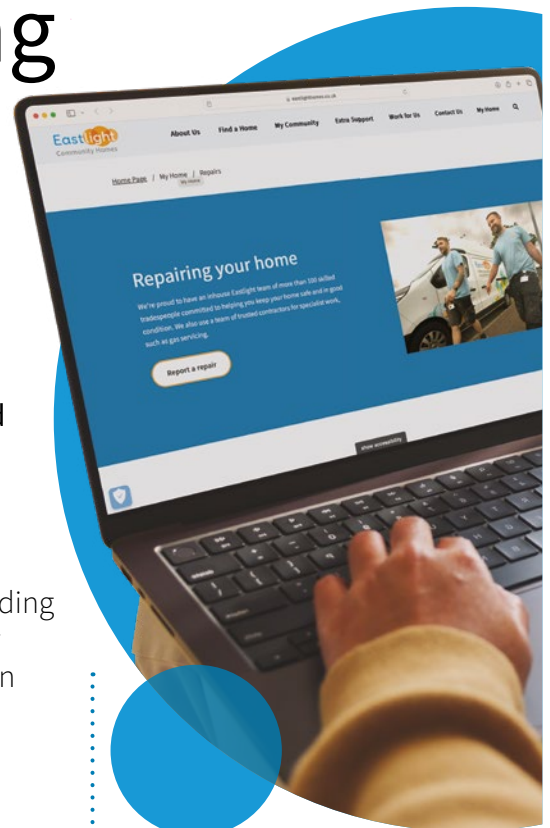
this way. So we're reviewing our current arrangements and exploring ways to attract more residents to get involved in shaping Eastlight for the better.

If you're a shareholder, we'd love to involve you in this review. Please give us a call or email us at governance@eastlighthomes.co.uk to find out more.

Improving your website

We want to make it as easy as possible for you to find what you're looking for. That's why we've improved your website to include:

- Your new 'My Tenancy' hub. From making improvements to succeeding your tenancy, this is your one-stop shop for living in one of our homes
- Clear repair timeframes and a form to book your repair on our 'Repairing your home' page
- More information on the services we provide in your estates, including grounds maintenance, cleaning, our ranger service and our safety work.



To find out more and see the changes, visit: www.eastlighthomes.co.uk



FUNDING CHILDREN'S WELLBEING

Primary school children are enjoying a new wellbeing space, following a £5,000 donation by Eastlight residents.

The revamped room at John Ray Infants School in Braintree now has sensory toys, instruments, a quiet corner and calming music and videos.

Funding came from our Eastlight Residents Group, a group of volunteers who meet regularly to identify and fund improvements in the local community.

“ We were so proud to fund this incredible initiative that makes such a difference to these children.”

Group member Robert Yates

ABUSE SUPPORT

It can be very hard to talk about domestic abuse, but we're here for you.

We can support you with practical help, like changing the locks to make your home safer, and we can discuss your housing options if you want to move.

If you're experiencing abuse and are ready to talk about it, please contact us. We want to support you.

IF IN DOUBT, CALL US

When Eastlight staff and contractors knock on your door, they will carry an ID card to prove who they are, which they'll be happy to show to you.

If you're unsure whether the person on your doorstep is genuine, please call us – we'll be able to confirm for you.

If this happens at weekends or bank holidays, and you're concerned, contact the Police.

ASBESTOS SAFE

If your home was built before 2000, there's a chance it will contain asbestos. Asbestos is a mineral fibre used in building materials until it was banned. It's safe if left undamaged, but it could be dangerous if disturbed, for example, by building work.

We've updated our website with key 'dos' and 'don'ts' to be aware of, particularly for major DIY work.

Contact us or visit:

www.eastlighthomes.co.uk/my-home/safety-checks/

Let the sun shine

Some Eastlight homes could have solar panels installed on them as part of a new project.

Eastlight has joined the SHIELD project, a group of organisations looking at technologies that could reduce energy costs and carbon emissions.



We have invited some residents living in suitable homes which are not energy efficient to indicate whether they are interested in trialling this technology.

This is part of our ongoing efforts to reduce your heating bills and the carbon footprint of your homes.



For more information, search for SHIELD at www.eastlighthomes.co.uk

Shaping Eastlight for the future

INTRODUCING EASTLIGHT'S
CORPORATE STRATEGY, 2024-27

Our new Corporate Strategy sets out how we plan to develop your homes, services and neighbourhoods over the next three years.

It's built around what matters most to you:
high quality, safe, decent, and well-maintained homes and neighbourhoods.

You can read the strategy on our website, but here is a brief summary of some of the principles that will guide us in the coming years.



Read all about it:
[www.eastlighthomes.co.uk/
about-us/we-are-eastlight](http://www.eastlighthomes.co.uk/about-us/we-are-eastlight)



SHAPE YOUR SERVICES

As an Eastlight resident, you can get involved and tell us what we get right – and what we have to change. We will listen to you, treat you fairly and continue to develop opportunities so you can have an input across Eastlight.



A HAPPY HOME

Eastlight exists to provide you with safe and well-maintained homes in neighbourhoods that you are proud to call home. Getting this right for you is going to be our #1 focus over the next three years and beyond.



IMPROVING NEIGHBOURHOODS

We have a responsibility to ensure your neighbourhoods are places you feel proud to call home. We are going to increase our investment in this area, including a programme where we'll work with you to refurbish and update your communal areas.



ONLINE SERVICES

Many residents tell us they want to be able to access more Eastlight services and information about their tenancies online. This won't happen overnight, but we are working to provide services that better suit your needs.



CUTTING HEATING BILLS

We care about our environment, and we're committed to reducing the impact of the work we do. We also recognise the impact higher heating bills are having, and we're exploring ways to make your homes warmer and cheaper to run.



BEHIND THE SCENES

We can only provide you with the homes and services you want and need if we continue to be a well-run and well-led organisation. Eastlight staff will work with the right partners and spend every £1 like it's our own.



YOUR VIEWS ON YOUR SERVICES

EVERY THREE MONTHS, WE ASK HUNDREDS OF EASTLIGHT RESIDENTS HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT THEIR HOMES AND SERVICES.

On these pages, we publish the results of these Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) – and our plans to respond to them.



OVERALL SERVICES

Resident satisfaction with Eastlight has fallen in recent years, as it has with housing associations in general.

We want to change this, and our new Corporate Strategy sets out some of our plans to meet your expectations, from heightening our focus on the services that matter to you, to investing more in your local neighbourhoods. Please see pages 4–5 for more information.

I'm satisfied with Eastlight overall

70%

National average: 72%



I'm satisfied with repairs

72%

National average: 75%



I'm satisfied with the time taken to complete my repair

66%

National average: 70%



MY HOME

We receive lots of praise for our staff when they visit your home. You tell us they are polite, friendly, efficient, and carry out their work to a high standard – which is brilliant to hear.

However, we recognise that we need to continue to speed up the time it takes to complete your repairs, and improve communication when the issue is more complex.

Our improvements include new local patches for our Repairs Teams – turn to page 8 to find out more.

My home is well maintained

72%

National average: 72%



I'm satisfied my home is safe

80%

National average: 79%



Communal areas are clean and well-maintained
59%
National average: 66%



Eastlight makes a positive contribution to my neighbourhood
59%
National average: 64%

I'm satisfied with Eastlight's handling of anti-social behaviour
55%
National average: 58%

MY COMMUNITY
Your feedback tells us that we could do more to create neighbourhoods that you're proud to call home, and our plans include a major investment in your communal areas.

We are also recruiting more housing officers, including those who support residents affected by anti-social behaviour.

Find out more about your Estate Ranger service by turning to page 9.



YOUR COMPLAINTS
We received a large number of complaints last year. We have created a Customer Experience Team who will work with you to fully understand the issue and find the best solution.

We also review your complaints to identify improvements to the services you receive. These include:

- Reimbursing you for the additional cost when we issue temporary heaters if your boiler or other heating system isn't working properly. We previously made this payment after the issue had been resolved.
- Reviewing your feedback about our damp and mould service, after it was a factor in 15% of complaints.
- Too often, residents with disabilities tell us that they face barriers when trying to access services. We've launched an action plan to address this.



I'm satisfied with Eastlight's approach to handling complaints
35%
National average: 34%



Eastlight listens to my views and acts on them
61%
National average: 61%

Eastlight keeps me informed about things that matter to me
70%
National average: 71%

Eastlight treats me fairly and with respect
78%
National average: 78%

COMMUNICATION
Your Shine magazine is just one way you can keep up-to-date and get involved with Eastlight.

Turn to page 12 to learn about our new Active Resident Network, which is regularly invited to make a difference by helping to shape Eastlight's services and communities.

You can also join the 2,500 people who follow Eastlight's Facebook page, which is regularly updated.





YOUR LOCAL REPAIRS PATCHES



“
Ian did a great job at my home and was very kind, polite and considerate.”

SHORTER WAITS FOR YOUR REPAIRS ARE COMING FOLLOWING THE LAUNCH OF NEW “LOCAL PATCHES” FOR OUR REPAIRS TEAMS.

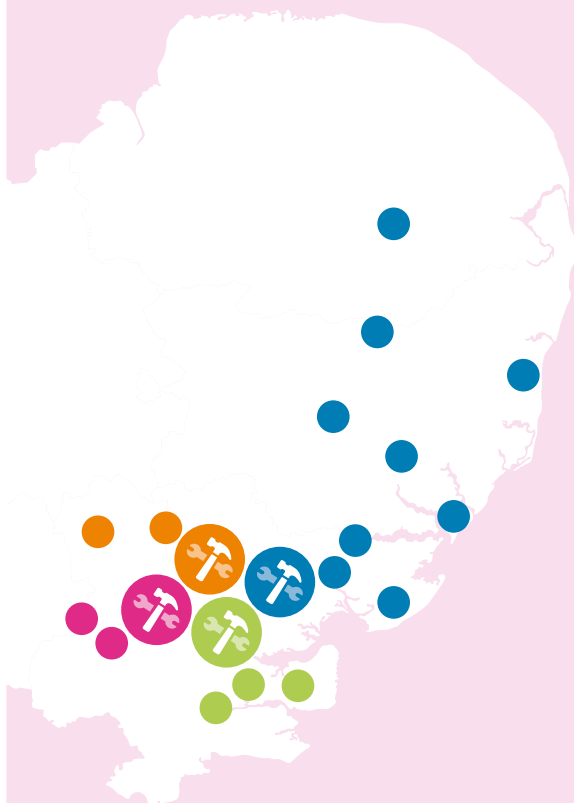
Each member of our repairs teams now work in one of four new patches, created following

workshops with Eastlight staff and residents.

Our new service should mean:

- Shorter waits for your repairs, as our teams spend less time travelling
- More familiar faces, who have a better understanding of your homes and neighbourhoods

- If you need further repairs, it's more likely that the same team member will be able to make a return visit.



THE NAME GAME

Last year, we launched a competition inviting you to help us name the new patches.

Members of our resident-led Customer Influence Committee assessed the entries and chose Rebecca as the winner. You can see her choices on the map.

-  **Cherry** – Colchester & the East
-  **Willow** – Witham & the South
-  **Birch** – Braintree
-  **Hazel** – Halstead & the North

Rebecca said: “**I chose tree names because there is lots of beautiful woodland and green areas that holds our communities together. And the first names correspond with the names of the patches, to make it easier to remember. Thank you so much for my hamper!**”

MEET YOUR RANGERS

ESTATE RANGER, MARC ALLISTON, HAS BEEN OUT AND ABOUT ON OUR ESTATES FOR OVER A DECADE ENSURING THEY'RE CLEAN, SAFE AND TIDY FOR OUR COMMUNITIES.

We caught Marc on a quick tea break to ask him about his role.

Hi Marc, what are your day-to-day responsibilities?

Well, the rangers have a variety of skills. We clear fly tips and help with community events, and we also carry out our supported garden maintenance service, which helps those who are unable to look after their own gardens.

Plus, we look after local parks and play areas, change the locks and springs on garages, and even help to reprogramme your central heating, if needed. There's lots of ways we can support residents in their homes.



What's your favourite part of being an Estate Ranger?

I love working on the gardens, and I really like being able to see that you've made a real difference.

Have you got a low-cost gardening tip for residents this summer?

Create a compost heap in your own garden. It's completely free to do, or very low-cost if you haven't got the necessary materials lying around, and you can spread the compost over your flower beds to help boost growth.

Some residents on the Woodlands Estate in Braintree have created a fantastic allotment, so it's always great to find out what they've been growing in their garden.



FACT FILE

Favourite sports team:
Formula 1's
Oracle Red Bull Racing
Favourite film: Top Gun
First record bought:
Sheer Heart Attack
by Queen

And finally, what should residents do if they spot a fly-tip on Eastlight land?

We're currently clearing more than 40 fly tips a week of varying sizes after residents have reported them. Please contact our Customer Service Team if you spot a fly tip. Our rangers will then be notified and someone from the team can attend to clear it up as soon as possible. Wherever we can, we'll identify those responsible and share that information with our Estate Safety Officers.

Thanks Marc!

50 YEARS

ON THE TEMPLARS ESTATE: VAL'S STORY

IN 1974, VAL AND MICHAEL AHERN MOVED ONTO WITHAM'S TEMPLARS ESTATE, PART OF A GENERATION OF LONDONERS WHO MOVED TO ESSEX IN THE 1960S AND 1970S IN SEARCH OF A NEW LIFE – AND EMPLOYMENT.

50 years on and Templars remains Val's home – the place where she raised a family and tirelessly supported her community – work which saw her receive a British Empire Medal back in 2012.

But it hasn't always been plain sailing.

"It was difficult at first, but I love it now," Val said: "We came here because there was no work in London.

"You couldn't get a council house back then without being married, and it took ages to get my name on the tenancy as well as Michael's.

"On the day me and Michael moved in from London, it was snowing, and we had no heating

all weekend, as it was set up separately back then."

Sadly, Michael has passed away, but Val still lives in the same house with Bert, one of her three children. The Templars Estate is a series of courts in Witham in which many Eastlight families have settled over the years.

"It was built as courts so children could play safely," Val explains: "There were lots of empty homes, back then, but as more people moved here, there were big families but no trouble. We never fell out with our neighbours.

"They still look out for me now. They'll get my shopping if I need it, and they know that if my kitchen window is open, then I am ok."

Main:
Estate Safety Officer Mark Garnham presents Val with flowers to mark 50 years on the Templars Estate.

Right:
Val at home, and being presented her British Empire Medal.

COMMUNITY HERO

Like many, Val was spurred to get involved in her community to tackle problems on her estate – in this case a spate of anti-social behaviour around 25 years ago.

She joined the Templars Tenants and Residents Association, and her determination and plain-speaking manner soon paid dividends.

Val said: "I decided to join because I realised there was no point moaning about things when you could actually do something about them. So, I joined the committee and worked my way up to Chair.





“
The best
dinner lady that
Rickstones had.”



“
Such a
lovely lady with
a heart of gold.”



“Working with Eastlight (originally Braintree District Council, then Greenfields Community Homes), and other organisations, we have added CCTV, fixed the streetlights, improved the paths, have regular litter pickers in place, and have changed the service so that a check is carried out in residents’ homes by Eastlight prior to them moving out.”

On one occasion, Val highlighted the lack of lighting on her estate by inviting Greenfields’ Housing Director to walk around Templars in the dark, and the problem was quickly resolved.

It’s not just safety that Val cares about – she wants all her neighbours to feel part of something: “The association has had rubbish amnesties, Fun Days, Christmas events and a Dickensian Night. It’s good fun to bring the community together. The last one was a turning point – I put a note in the shop to thank the youths for coming, and you could see things changed for the better after that.”

It’s this passion for community that led Val to receive a British Empire Medal in 2012, including a visit to Buckingham Palace.

“The medal was due to teamwork – you’re only as good as your team,” she says. Val continued

to chair the committee until 2018. Mark Garnham, an Eastlight Estate Safety Officer who has worked with Val for many years, helped her to find the right “stalwart” successors.

After all, as Val says: “If you have somewhere nice to live, you take pride in it.”

WANT TO GET INVOLVED IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

Turn to page 12 to find out about our Active Resident Network!



MAKE A DIFFERENCE

JOIN YOUR ACTIVE RESIDENT NETWORK



Are you looking for an opportunity to make a difference in your community? Then join the Active Resident Network!

We recognise that you understand your homes and neighbourhoods better than anyone.

The network has been created because we want to work with anyone willing to share their expertise and passion to improve your homes, services and communities.



WHAT COULD I GET INVOLVED IN?

Network members receive regular newsletters with updates and opportunities to get involved.

In recent months, members have:

- told us how we can improve the support we offer to residents experiencing anti-social behaviour or domestic abuse
- helped us identify better ways to adjust our services based on your needs

- built on the compensation we offer by including vouchers where appropriate.

Members can also:

- make a difference in your neighbourhood through our volunteer Eastlight Residents Groups
- learn about Eastlight and the housing sector through our Resident Academy
- apply for paid roles, like our resident-led Customer Influence Committee.

HOW DO I SIGN UP?

Visit: www.eastlighthomes.co.uk/my-community/resident-involvement

Email: joanne.jackson@eastlighthomes.co.uk

Or call us on **0330 1280330**

“I COULDN’T FIND A BABY & TODDLER GROUP SO I STARTED MY OWN!”

WHEN HALSTEAD MUM EMILY HUME DECIDED TO VOLUNTEER AT A LOCAL TODDLER GROUP IN 2022, SHE DISCOVERED MANY HAD CLOSED DURING THE PANDEMIC.

So the Eastlight resident and mum-of-two took matters into her own hands and created two of her own.

Fast forward to today, and Emily has just opened her third SunnyDays group, this time just for babies and their parents, with the support of funding from Eastlight.

‘LOVELY COMMUNITY’

Emily holds sessions at Halstead Baptist Church on Wednesday mornings, Gosfield Hall on Thursday mornings, and at Queens Hall, Halstead on Friday afternoons (for babies).

Children enjoy craft activities, while parents get to join an invaluable community and support. Entry is £4, and if someone is struggling to pay, they’re still welcomed with open arms.

Emily’s contribution to the community led to her being named ‘Outstanding New Volunteer’ at the Braintree District Volunteer and Active Braintree Awards 2023.



“I want people to walk into an environment and feel welcome and not judged.”

Emily’s dad and stepmum, both retired childminders, have supplied toys, rugs and games. However, keeping costs low doesn’t cover the rent and other costs, so Emily has secured funding from Halstead Town Council and Gosfield Golf Club, alongside the Eastlight grant.

“I want people to walk into an environment and feel welcome and not judged.”

Ultimately, she hopes to create a Community Investment Company to help secure the groups’ futures.

In the meantime, Emily has created a baby-only group after noticing that newborn parents were often overwhelmed. She also books expert speakers on subjects including post-natal depression and sleep.

Emily said: “Bringing experts to parents is a pioneering idea. Local services are stretched, but we do signpost parents to them, where support is available.”



Emily said: “It’s such a lovely community – we know people can be nervous to attend groups but everyone is welcome.

“It’s good for parents moving into the area – it creates connections. I absolutely love doing it.

TO FIND OUT MORE



Visit:
Sunnydays Baby and Toddler Group on Facebook



Call:
07950839155

GOOD LUCK MICHELLE!

MICHELLE BAKER, EASTLIGHT RESIDENT, BOARD MEMBER AND CHAIR OF OUR CUSTOMER INFLUENCE COMMITTEE (CIC), IS TAKING ON AN EXCITING NEW ROLE WORKING FOR THE REGULATOR OF SOCIAL HOUSING.



“
I would never have envisaged a future in housing if Eastlight hadn't given me that first break and provided me with endless support and encouragement.”

Having joined Eastlight in 2020 as a Trainee Committee Member, Michelle has become a high-profile resident advocate for Eastlight residents and social housing tenants across the UK.

Drawing on her accountancy background, as well as the strategic housing experience she has gained at Eastlight, she is joining the governing body that sets consumer and economic standards for social housing providers like Eastlight as a Financial Analyst.

Sadly, due to potential conflicts of interest that could arise for Michelle, she must stand down from her Eastlight roles before she begins her new job in June.

Michelle said: “I'm proud of everything we've achieved at Eastlight, but especially the formation and evolution of the CIC, which puts power back into the hands of residents and ensures our views influence decision-making at the

very top of the organisation and throughout.

“I would never have envisaged a future in housing if Eastlight hadn't given me that first break and provided me with endless support and encouragement. I can honestly say that becoming an involved resident completely changed my life.”

Hattie Llewelyn-Davies, Chair of Eastlight's Board, said: “We're extremely sad to see Michelle go, but also over the moon to see her taking everything she's learned with us to become even more influential within the housing sector.

“It's been a privilege to watch as Michelle has embraced every opportunity that's come her way. In four years, she's gone from being a Trainee with no previous housing experience, to the Chartered Institute of Housing-qualified Chair of the CIC and the Senior Independent Director on our Board, as well as a prominent tenant representative.”

ESSEX PRIDE: PLEASE JOIN US!



BY MAGENTA LAVEY, EASTLIGHT RESIDENT AND CUSTOMER INFLUENCE COMMITTEE MEMBER.

As an Eastlight resident, I have a keen interest in making sure my needs, and the needs of my neighbours, are heard by Eastlight. That's why I love being a member of Eastlight's Customer Influence Committee (CIC), as that enables me to ask the right questions.

I identify as queer, but nobody at Eastlight has ever questioned me on this or made me feel judged. The fact that people don't take any notice of my identity shows it doesn't matter. I find Eastlight to be very welcoming: I feel taken in and accepted here.

For me, being proud is about being authentic to yourself and comfortable with who you are. I had a boyfriend one week and a girlfriend the next, and my Mum didn't judge me. I couldn't imagine being in a situation where I didn't have that family

support. Losing your home and that security prematurely, for something as simple as being yourself, is awful. We want every resident to come into a property and make it a home in which they feel safe and supported to be themselves.

To celebrate LGBTQ+ Pride month this June – a time to honour the achievements and

“I identify as queer, but nobody at Eastlight has ever questioned me on this or made me feel judged.”

struggles of the LGBTQ+ community – Eastlight will be sponsoring Essex Pride in Chelmsford on Saturday, 22 June, together with fellow housing association, CHP, under the banner of the BuildEast network of housing associations.

As well as attending the Pride march, we'll be hosting a stall. The day is going to be lots of fun and a great way to meet other LGBTQ+ residents, celebrate with the community and have our voice heard. We look forward to welcoming you all there.



For more information on support for our LGBTQ+ residents, please contact us: customer.services@eastlighthomes.co.uk



HELP IS AT HAND

WE CAN HELP WITH FINANCIAL SUPPORT, BENEFITS ADVICE AND HELP TO MANAGE YOUR RENT IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING.

If any of these issues apply to you, please contact us to see how we can help.

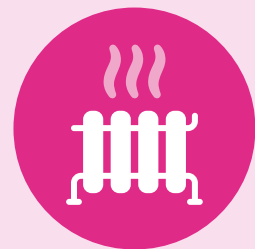
Call 0330 128 0330 and press 2 for concerns about the cost-of-living.



For more information about support available, visit this page: www.eastlighthomes.co.uk/cost-of-living



“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”

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.



Eastlight
Community Homes