

Annual Report
2019/20

Stronger Together

Eastlight
Community Homes

Your Annual Report

We're very pleased to introduce Eastlight Community Homes' first Annual Report!

Welcome to our look back over the last year.

Eastlight Community Homes was formed on 1 July 2020, through the merger of Colne Housing and Greenfields Community Housing.

This report includes how your previous landlords performed - and how we are now **'stronger together'** as one.

Through working with and listening to you, we are:

- Investing more in your homes
- Improving services we provide you
- Building new homes
- Supporting our communities to thrive in these challenging times

We want this report to be full of information that is of interest to you. That's why this year we've contacted or invited many of you to tell us what you care about when it comes to your home, your community and your housing association.

We hope it's of interest, but if there is other information you would like then please tell us!

We've also looked at the feedback you give us and included information you have told us you want.

For more information, please take a look at our Financial Statements on our website: www.eastlighthomes.co.uk

This report covers the period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. It seems a lifetime ago, but it was only in March that the coronavirus pandemic began having such a dramatic and often appalling impact on our lives and livelihoods.

So while the effects of the coronavirus aren't measured in this report, the impact on your lives may have changed what you need from us.

The last few months have demonstrated how we are stronger together. We're proud of the work our people have done to keep everyone safe while still providing you with the homes and services you need.

Equally, we have been proud to see how so many of you have supported each other and our

communities. From working on the front line, collecting essentials for shielding families or simply checking in on each other, we have all been stronger together.

Long may that community spirit continue. We hope you all stay safe and well.

With kind regards

EPalmer



Emma Palmer
Chief Executive

Eastlight Community Homes

H Llewelyn-Davies



Hattie Llewelyn-Davies
Chair

Eastlight Community Homes

Reporting back 2019/20

Net Promoter Score
would you recommend us to family and friends? A + score means more would recommend us than wouldn't

Colne +22
Greenfields +27



Homes let



Colne 315



Greenfields 533

Reporting Back 2019/20

Dave and Matt did a great job fitting my new boiler. They were professional and pleasant and whatever the highest score is that you can give them... **DOUBLE IT!!**

I have an autistic grandson and they were both really good with him and took the time to talk to him, which was lovely.

Ann Gurnett, Witham



New aids and adaptations

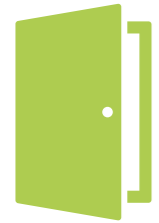
Colne 113
Greenfields 478

Energy Efficiency:
% of homes with EPC* of D (average) or higher

Colne 96.3%
Greenfields 95.5%

*Energy Performance Certificate

Home improvements (Greenfields)



144

Doors



80

Kitchens



77

Bathrooms



72

Roofs



308

Heating Systems



212

Rewires

Your homes and repairs

Our mission is to offer you the repairs service and home improvements you want and need. Our merger plans made it clear that you would benefit, either through further improvements to your home or a better repairs service. That's what Eastlight intends to deliver.

We will be offering the in-house repairs service currently available to former Greenfields customers to former Colne customers. We are also reducing the backlog of repair requests which built up in some services during the lockdown.

The coronavirus pandemic has forced us to adapt and innovate in how we deliver services at your homes. We want to continue this to adapt to your changing needs, so we are looking at the potential of things like diagnosing problems over video calls, and

even helping you carry out the repair, if you feel comfortable doing so!

We are also all spending more time at home, so it is absolutely crucial that we do what we can to reduce your heating costs through energy efficiency.

Finally, your safety at home remains our number one priority. Thank you to everyone who has let us into your homes during this pandemic to safely carry out checks on your gas boilers. We will continue to invest in your homes so that you feel safe.

This work will take time to complete, so thanks for bearing with us. Whatever the future holds, we will listen to and work with you to develop your homes and services. Together, we will develop the Eastlight Way to ensure you get the support you need to live safe, comfortably and independently in your home.

Charlotte Todd,
Property Director



Home improvements (Colne)



63

Doors



64

Kitchens Modernised



123

Bathrooms



8

Roofs



89

Heating Upgrade

Reporting Back 2019/20



Where I lived before, I had a dodgy landlord who would not do repairs, sometimes for years. What I most like about Colne Housing (now Eastlight) is that I have security of tenure. I had not realised, until I moved to my flat, just how anxious I had been about whether my previous landlord would have me evicted, even though I paid my rent.

If I could change one thing, I would hope that Eastlight will develop a more effective out-of-hours emergency service to report urgent repairs, as I have struggled to report them at weekends in the past.

Elizabeth Knowlson, Colchester

Compliments

Colne
28
Greenfields
431

Complaints

Colne
111
Greenfields
130

Households supported to sustain their tenancy

Colne
208
Greenfields
582

Victims of domestic abuse supported

Colne
15
Greenfields
59

Residents gained

£1 million

following benefits advice

Delivering your services

The coronavirus pandemic has completely changed how we have provided services to you over the past few months.

It has been difficult for everyone. We are proud of the way our teams have worked with you to provide safe services. To give just a few examples, our people have offered virtual viewings of homes, carried out tenancy visits over the phone and even arranged meetings to resolve anti-social behaviour problems.

We are developing an Eastlight Way to ensure you can request and receive the services you need, when you need them.

As customers, we are all used to receiving goods and services at the touch of a button, whether that's from Amazon, our supermarket or our

bank. We believe you should receive a similar level of service from your landlord. This will take time to deliver, so you will not notice too many changes overnight.

We know this will not be for everyone, so if you prefer to call us then you will still be able to speak to the people you know and trust. If you are having problems at home, then we will absolutely continue to support you.

Scott Bridge, Housing Services Director
and **Charlotte Todd**, Property Director



Reporting Back 2019/20



What I love about my community is that we all come together in times of need; I am very lucky. For example, my daughter didn't have to shield during the lockdown so she got shopping for a lady and her disabled son down the road from me. We are all there for each other. And we have the Witham Hub, where help is always on hand.

There are a few changes I would like: a little more lighting in the park area on dark winter nights, and maybe a secure field where people could walk their dogs safely up Templars End. A couple more waste bins would be nice, too!

Irene Bemister, Witham

Grants to local community and voluntary groups

Colne

£20,000

Greenfields

£108,000

Community Improvements

Greenfields 50 improvements funded with £50,207

Rural Roadshows:
13 Greenfields volunteer-led events in our communities

Together, we supported:

- Community 360
- Abberton Rural Training
- Outhouse East
- Braintree Area Foodbank
- Citizen Advice Uttlesford
- Families InFocus
- Colchester and Tendring Youth Enquiry Service (YES)
- Witham Town Luncheon Club

Stronger Together



Eastlight is committed to listening to our communities, empowering and investing in them beyond simply providing new homes. We are now the largest Community Gateway Association in England and this will enable us to have greater influence and become a trusted partner of choice for other organisations serving our communities.

Our grant funding will build on the great work carried out by Colne and Greenfields, who have supported countless good causes such as Citizens Advice and Braintree Area Foodbank. We have continued the partnership with Essex Community Foundation and they are now managing two funds on Eastlight's behalf. A panel will review proposals from the community to distribute grants ranging from £10,000 to £40,000.

This panel includes residents, who choose projects which either help to improve health and well-being, increase aspirations and opportunities, or develop skills through training.

Our people will continue working with you to make changes, potentially small ones, that make a large difference. That could be anything from a new bin store to a donation to fund cinema screenings for people with dementia. We have a number of partnerships which we will continue to support, from local food banks to wellbeing initiatives.

Scott Bridge, Housing Services Director

Reporting Back 2019/20



Getting involved with Colne Housing gave me a better understanding of the housing association and their staff. I felt that my voice was there to help others and my passion grew. The more I become involved the more I am able to help others by passing on my knowledge and understanding.

I was very happy to be chosen to be part of a "Task and Finish Group" looking at the proposed merger and also a group to help to decide Eastlight's branding. This gave me a better insight of the way forward for the new company. I felt that my views and opinions were being listened to and was very pleased to be part of the team.

Marlene Carter, Tiptree

5
resident and staff
Task and Finish
Groups agreed service
improvements



183 residents
took part in the merger consultation

200
residents helped
shape Eastlight's
new identity

Involvement
residents sat on
17 panels
covering recruitment,
procurement,
complaints and home
improvements

Shaping our future together

We want you to influence the way we do things, now and into the future. We will be increasing the opportunities for you and ensuring they are accessible to all.

You are the experts. You know what works well and what does not. We want to harness your experience and knowledge so that together we can do three things:

- **Improve services**
- **Provide Value for Money**
- **Create strong communities**

Residents, Board and our people have teamed up with independent tenant engagement experts TPAS to shape the Eastlight way of doing this.

We held five workshops to identify the ingredients that contributed to resident engagement working well in the past. These included a range of residents - new, involved and those who have not engaged with us before.

Volunteers then worked together to explore what excellence looks like and design a new way of getting you involved in how we operate. This will be shared for your thoughts in the autumn.

Our major aim is to create a framework where you're empowered to have a real say and influence on your services and our future direction. We are really keen to hear what you think about it!

Sandra Crosby, Project lead



Reporting Back 2019/20



Moving into my new home in Spalding Close all happened so fast and it is just amazing. I keep waiting for someone to pinch me to wake me up from a dream!

My two kids and I have been in the same house for 11 years, which was too small for our needs; particularly as my son has ADHD and will now have much more room to burn off energy. He is so happy that he has even been helping with the washing up!

Stacey Bell, Braintree

Homes built in 2019/20

Colne **167**
Greenfields **204**

Shared Ownership sales

Colne **40**
Greenfields **46**

Total number of homes

Colne **3,367**
Greenfields **8,907**

Cost to buy an average home

Braintree **£341,400**
Colchester **£279,500**
Tendring **£256,500**

Tackling the housing crisis

We all have family and friends who are struggling to find a suitable home that they can actually afford. The creation of Eastlight enables us to make a significant contribution to tackling the acute housing crisis in our communities.

Our influence and financial strength will allow us to build 3,800 new affordable homes over the next five years. These homes will be genuinely affordable to the communities in which they are built. We are committed to delivering social rent homes, alongside affordable rent and low cost home ownership.

Eastlight has made a solid start to meeting this ambitious new homes target. We're already working to deliver more than 800 of these new homes, with 600 more in the pipeline delivered both by Eastlight and our development partner Icen Homes.

Building homes is not just about numbers. Our emerging New Homes Strategy will set-out what, where and how we build. Eastlight's development programme aims to complement existing communities as well as creating great new places where people can live well. Our recent customer survey asked you what you would value in a new home, and your feedback will help shape our priorities in the future.

We are increasing our focus on developing low-carbon homes, underpinned by a design guide that will ensure high-quality homes, in attractive locations, which are well connected with private open space.

Andrew Hull,
Development Director



Your feedback

In compiling this report, we:

- Contacted all involved residents for their thoughts
- Asked our social media followers what matters to them
- Reviewed customer satisfaction survey results and complaints trends
- Looked for trends in text and email feedback

Here is just some of the feedback we received. Please keep it coming – whether good, bad or anything in between, we want to hear from you so we can offer the best homes and services possible!

What involved residents said

“The one thing I love about my home is that it’s now totally wheelchair accessible and mostly designed by me, for me.”

“I would like to see our garden kept up nicer. At the moment it is an eyesore.”

“I have found everybody who works for Eastlight friendly and helpful.”

“I love the fact that I feel safe and secure in my home, especially as I live alone and I am a pensioner.”

Text and email feedback

Most common positive comments:

1. Helpful
2. Polite
3. Speed
4. Friendly
5. Knowledgeable

Most common negative comments:

1. Standard of service
2. Waiting times
3. Poor communication
4. Staff behaviour/attitude
5. Issues with contractors

Complaints

Top 3 complaints reasons (Colne)

1. Missed appointments
2. Failure to fix a repair first time
3. Delays in carrying out repairs

Top 3 complaint reasons (Greenfields)

1. Standard of service
2. Contractor service
3. Poor communication

Customer Satisfaction Survey

One thing I would improve:

1. Property repair or upgrade needed
2. Communication, including speed and customer service
3. Quicker or more flexible appointments
4. Dealing with anti-social behaviour
5. Communal area cleaning and maintenance

Facebook feedback

“Would like external insulation and improved glazing to make more energy efficient.”

“Our community doesn’t do anything anymore. They did once have regular neighbourhood walkabouts and newsletters and even competitions for children to take part in but now we hear diddly squat! Nobody cares anymore.”

“I love everything about my home & area. I am comfortable and grateful to have a home.”

“Our communal area looks awful. It has probably never been repainted since the place was first built and the standard of cleaning is really shoddy. It is a very depressing area to walk into and is a really bad first impression to guests.”

“EV (electric vehicle) charging points would be great and negotiating a compromise with Essex County Council on the rules on driveways & drop kerbs. I’d also like to see solar panels on all south facing properties that could generate enough energy to supply others, not just ourselves.”

“I love the security of having a permanent home, the newly painted exterior fixtures look great thank you, I would like the option to have solar panels.”



For more information see our Financial Statements 2019/20 at www.eastlighthomes.co.uk

Get in touch

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