




**Eastbourne
Homes** 

Brede Close – completed
in November 2022.

Tenants' Annual Report

2022-23

Vision and Values

Our vision

To maintain, develop and set pioneering standards for the provision of homes and housing services across the Borough.

Our values

- **Excellence as standard** – we will have clear measures to demonstrate our commitment to every resident based on genuinely caring about their homes and how their tenancies help support positive life chances.
- **Transparency** – we will operate in an open, honest way and be accountable to residents and stakeholders.
- **Inclusivity** – we will make sure that our services and homes enable all members of our communities to be included and to benefit from our services.
- **Innovation led** – we will work with our stakeholders to continuously improve and adapt our homes and services to meet changing demands and expectations.

We are proud of our staff and the services we provide, and work hard to deliver what we promise by setting clear targets to achieve great outcomes. We also recognise the important role tenants play in ensuring that we deliver value for money with effective, efficient, and accessible services. Tenant involvement is central to delivering great outcomes to ensure communities thrive, and we offer a range of ways to get involved:

- Area Panels
- Chat cafes
- Communications Panel
- Community pop-ups
- Focus Groups
- Mystery Shopping
- Quality Checkers
- Residents Voice
- Retirement Housing Forum
- Spends and Saves
- Tenant Days
- Tenant Scrutiny Team
- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Panel (TIE)
- Virtual 300

For more information on how to get involved, see pages 8 & 9.



Introduction by Roger Eastwood

The Chair of the Board of Directors



Welcome to this year's Tenants' Annual Report.

Our job here at Eastbourne Homes covers a lot of ground but the most important thing we have to do is make sure that the homes you live in are safe and decent places and the best way of helping to ensure this is by listening to you. As you will see from this report, we are doing more and more to involve people in helping us improve the way we do things, which includes the introduction of Tenant Satisfaction Measures that we have commissioned Acuity to deliver on behalf of Eastbourne Homes.

As you know, we are all facing the challenges of price inflation and higher interest rates. As a result, repair and other costs have increased by significantly more than rents have in the period. This makes it more difficult to deliver services within already tight budgets and we will have to work hard to do as much as we can within those constraints and consult with you about the sort of compromises that this may result in.

Finally, earlier this year Eastbourne Homes took part in a pilot inspection to help inform the Social Housing Regulator's approach to inspections in the future. The feedback we got was good with 'assurance on every area reviewed', meaning the regulator was happy with our existing approach or happy that plans were in place to address any shortfalls identified.

That was good news but doesn't mean we won't continue to find ways of getting better at what we do with your help. We are always looking for new people to get involved so please volunteer if you would like to be part of that.

Thank you for your continued support.



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Working in partnership with Eastbourne Homes



Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

On 21 July 2023, the Social Housing Regulation Bill became the law. This legislation requires housing providers like Eastbourne Homes to be regularly inspected to ensure the health and safety of residents and their homes. The Government's Regulator of Social Housing has developed a new system to assess how well landlords are providing excellent quality homes and services. Among other things, the system uses a set of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) which Eastbourne Homes must report on to help tenants understand how well we are doing.

There are twenty two TSMs, covering five main themes. Ten of these, including gas and electrical safety checks and anti-social behaviour, will be measured by Eastbourne Homes, but the remaining twelve will use tenant perception surveys to capture and measure our tenants' general views of us in relation to:

- Overall satisfaction
- Satisfaction with repairs
- Satisfaction with the time taken to complete a recent repair.
- Satisfaction with the home being well maintained.
- Satisfaction with home safety.
- Satisfaction that the landlord listens and acts on tenant views.
- Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them.
- Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect.
- Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints
- Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained.
- Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods.
- Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to managing anti-social behaviour.

Protecting privacy

Any information tenants provide will be covered by privacy and data protection laws. This is important because tenants need to feel comfortable about giving honest answers, and protecting tenant confidentiality helps with this. Eastbourne Homes has commissioned Acuity Benchmarking and the Housemark STAR framework, both widely used in the UK housing sector, to run surveys and enable us to compare ourselves with other housing providers. Eastbourne Homes will make sure perception survey results are meaningful by getting enough responses and involving all our tenants. We will also make sure that the mix of people responding reflects the mix of people living in our homes to ensure accuracy.

In future annual reports, we will publish our TSM results, and report on how we conducted tenant perception surveys, including the number of responses we received. This information will also have to be reported to the Regulator of Social Housing.

Complaints Handling

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by Eastbourne Homes, our staff, or those acting on our behalf. We try very hard to resolve any complaints informally, but sometimes this is not possible.

Anyone who uses or receives a service or is affected by a service from any part of Eastbourne Homes can complain, and when a formal complaint is made, this is allocated to a Specialist Advisor in the Customer Experience Team. A Stage 1 complaint investigation then takes place, hopefully with a resolution. In situations where a customer is dissatisfied with a Stage 1 outcome, they can escalate their complaint to a Stage 2 for further investigation. This usually requires the customer to provide more information to help explain the reason for their dissatisfaction with the Stage 1 review. In cases where the customer is unhappy with the Stage 2 outcome, they have the option to further escalate the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

In the 2022/ 2023 period, we received 257 complaints including

43 which were escalated to Stage 2. Of the complaints received, the vast majority related to the repairs service which received 189 complaints. Overall, 61.7% of our complaints were closed within our target times of 10 working days at Stage 1, and twenty working days at Stage 2. One complaint was escalated for investigation by the Housing Ombudsman.

Complaints Success

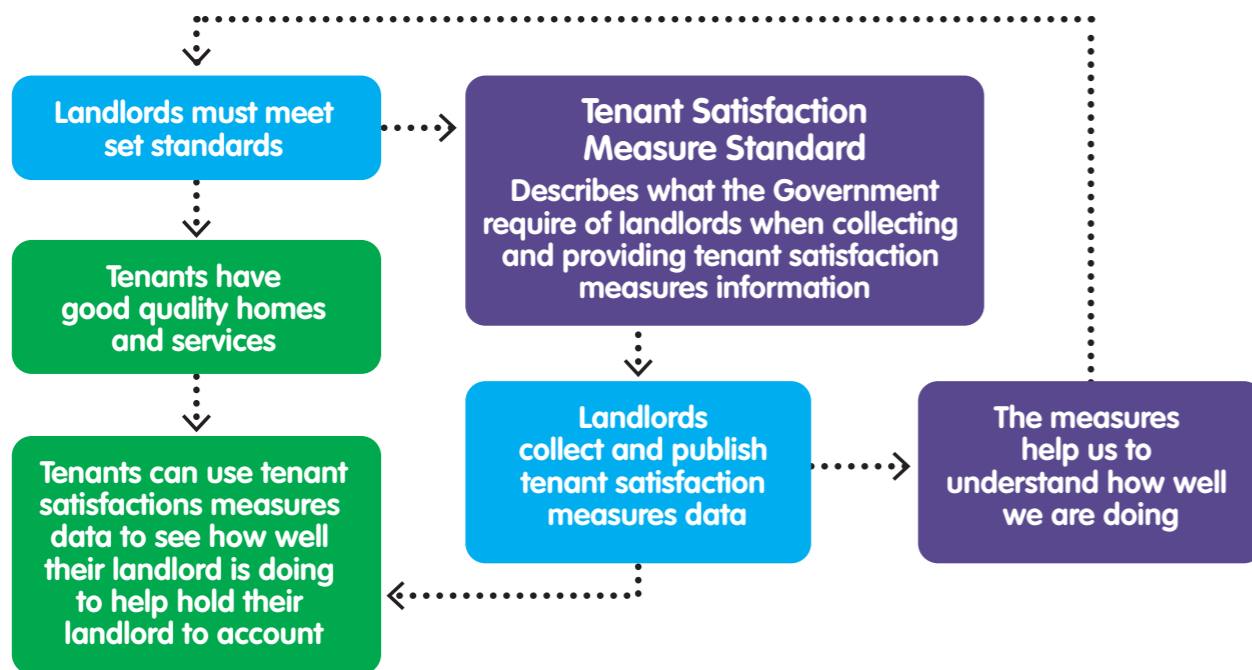
Eastbourne Homes are committed to providing high quality services and we do our best to make sure any contact with us is professional, courteous and goes beyond expectations. However, sometimes things do go wrong and when they do, we recognise the need to listen and put things back on the right track. The Customer Experience Team work hard to try and make sure that complaints are dealt with professionally, though the number of complaints continues to increase significantly, and the increased workload creates significant pressures on this small but dedicated team.

During 2022-23, we have worked to identify trends and collaborate with Service Leads and Managers to

implement changes and improvements where resources allow. These have included:

- Further streamlining of the repair complaints process, to keep on top of onward case management.
- The implementation of joint visits with surveyors where this is likely to support resolution.
- The immediate implementation of a damp and mould protocol when a tenant expresses concern in a customer survey.
- The delivery of awareness-raising sessions for Councillors and MPs to support them in their tenant and constituent advocacy role.
- The delivery of complaints management training to Retirement Housing Advisors and Customer Advisors.
- The introduction of a triage approach to increase the number and percentage of informal resolutions to complaints.
- The introduction and increased monitoring of pro-active customer contact when repairs are cancelled or not able to be completed.
- The introduction of an Eastbourne Homes Complaints Resolution Policy and Procedure to meet full compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code.

How will Tenant Satisfaction measures work?



Did you know..?

The government launched the 'Make Things Right' campaign in March 2023 to ensure more social housing residents know how to make a complaint. The campaign was based on the idea that everyone deserves a home that's safe, secure, and well-maintained, and if a resident has reported an issue that hasn't been fixed, it should be easy to 'make it right'.

The campaign explained the steps that residents can take if they are unhappy with the service from their social housing provider.

The **Make Things Right** toolkit provides materials which residents can use to spread the word about how to make complaints, including by signposting to: [gov.uk/socialhousing-complaints](https://www.gov.uk/socialhousing-complaints) for advice. More information can be found on www.gov.uk – search using the words 'make things right'.



On the 19 April 2023, **Four Million Homes** was launched by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities to empower residents in the 4.4 million social housing sector homes across England to engage more effectively with their landlord. Through training and the availability of information, it is hoped that tenants will feel more confident about their legal rights and their landlord's responsibilities. To support the campaign, certificated training modules are taking place across the country alongside free live webinars, and there is also a 'resident sounding board' where tenants can share their ideas and influence the campaign as it progresses. To support the campaign, Eastbourne Homes will promote and share information on the campaign at every opportunity.



You can find out more, book free training and use the sounding board at: www.fourmillionhomes.org

The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

looks at how we **involve you** and **respond** to your needs

How do we know?

Each quarter tenants were telephoned and invited to take part in a telephone interview conducted by a company called Acuity. Eastbourne Homes commissioned Acuity to create a survey using the Regulator of Social Housing Tenant Satisfaction Measures outlined on page 4 of this report. The telephone surveys were confidential, and the results anonymised unless permission was given to be identified. The views of approximately 148 tenants per quarter were proportionately sampled by tenure, area, and age, to allow Eastbourne Homes to -

- Collect information on tenants' perceptions of current services
- Compare the results with previous surveys, where possible

- Compare the results with other landlords (where appropriate)
- Report to the Regulator of Social Housing from April 2023 onwards.

Annual satisfaction was lowest for complaints handling (42%), followed by how views are listened to and acted upon (56%) and the handling of ASB (56%). The most frequent negative comment area was for the repairs service, in particular the timescales to complete repairs. Customer service, contact and communications were also key areas of concern for tenants.

When combining all the results for 2022/2023, the most important driver for tenants' satisfaction with overall services, was that Eastbourne Homes is easy to deal with, followed by the provision of a safe home, the repairs and maintenance service, and the quality of the home. The implication is that if improvements around the

72% of you expressed overall satisfaction with the service provided by Homes First in 2022/23



77% of you said you were treated fairly and with respect by Eastbourne Homes

most influential measures can be achieved, it is more likely to lead to increased satisfaction with the overall services provided, so Eastbourne Homes will strive to make these improvements with the help of tenants in 2023 / 2024.

The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Panel (TIE)

The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Panel (TIE) is made up of tenant representatives who will help Eastbourne Homes drive tenant satisfaction improvements in 2023 / 2024 by:

- Working with senior managers to ensure good governance, best practice, high levels of performance and value for money.
 - Making sure tenant priorities and views are at the heart of everything Eastbourne Homes does, and fully considered in all aspects of strategic decision making.
- Making sure that the services Eastbourne Homes provide meet tenant needs.

- Representing, and being representative of, all aspects of the tenant community.
- Ensuring effective engagement and consultation with tenants.

Area Panels

There are now two area panels operating in Eastbourne. The **Langney and Central & Archery Area Panels** 'joined forces' to form the Eastbourne Area Panel and held their first meeting in May 2022, attended by 15 residents. The Eastbourne Area Panel spent £24,867.84 of their £25,500 community improvement budget on several projects in 2022 / 2023. Highlights include:



- A resident consultation on an overgrown piece of land on Port Road (Hampden Park land) which resulted in Panel money being used to clear the land and discussions with the Eastbourne Allotment Society to explore a sustainable use for the area.
- Using art in the widest sense to work with Housing Services and Compass Community Arts to develop a referral process and identify residents who have been difficult to engage with for repairs access, managing rent accounts or low level ASB.
- Supporting the warm hub located in the old TJ Hughes building, and Tubbs Computers to give residents access to IT support.
- Establishing a walking cricket programme in the Shinewater area.
- Supporting a community growing initiative called Rooted which enables children to get outside and grow things at the Gorrington Road allotment site.
- Helping families from Tollgate School to enjoy outdoor activity experiences they would otherwise be unable to afford.
- Supporting litter picks and other community initiatives.

The **Hampden Park Area Panel** continued to operate in 2022 / 2023 and successfully ran Christmas and Easter fayres, supported open spaces by replacing play equipment and a new notice board in Hampden Park, and repaired pathways near the Surgery on Elm Grove.



Residents Voice

Residents Voice (RV) has a committee made up of three former Area Panels Chairs, but any Eastbourne Homes resident can come along to the sessions and be involved in discussions on the Housing Revenue Account, repairs, and hear updates on other service areas. Highlights of 2022 / 2023 included -

- A meet the Eastbourne Homes Board themed event which included workshops on energy saving, getting involved, communications, and waste and recycling. Those attending enjoyed being able to meet staff and other residents, resolve issues, build trust and respect, and pick-up useful guidance and information. The event received an 8.5 / 10 approval rating from attendees, and Leah, who lives at Cumbria Court, said 'It's amazing how hard people work, and how

things are created and managed. This event made me see the whole thing differently. I can see how much you care.'

- Being involved in a Regulator of Social Housing pilot inspection alongside EHL Board members and Councillors. The feedback we received from the Regulator was good with 'assurance on every area reviewed', meaning the regulator was happy with our existing approach or happy that plans were in place to address any shortfalls identified.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, Residents Voice approved 21 projects submitted by the Area Panels to support mental wellbeing, challenge loneliness, help with financial hardship, deliver inclusive sports, training, and education, and improve allotments and gardens. To find out more about how you to apply for some community improvement funding, contact: tenant.involvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk



Did you know..?

In 2022/2023 we launched an Estate Services Improvement Project, to make it easier for our tenants to contact the right team. Essentially, Estate Services are different teams in the Council and their contractors who work together to provide services to the estate. With the help of tenants, we also developed branding for Estate Services and produced and delivered estate zone newsletters to all our tenants.



There are lots of opportunities to get involved and make a difference!



Formal ways to get involved:

Board Membership

Eastbourne Homes Limited provides housing management and property services to Eastbourne Borough Council tenants and is led by a Board of Directors, two of whom are tenants – Gina Morgan and Sheila Roberts.

Residents Voice

Residents Voice meets quarterly to review and influence policies, services, and performance. Meetings are open to all tenants and leaseholders in Eastbourne and every session has a Microsoft Teams connection to encourage broader participation.

Area Panels

We have two active Area Panels which give residents the

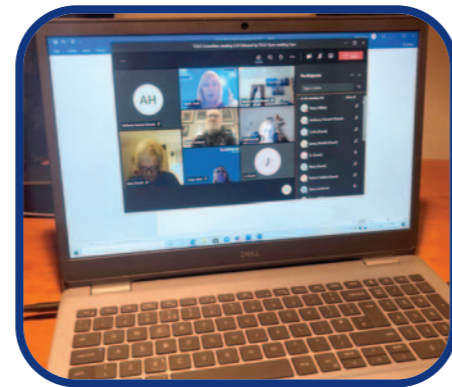


opportunity to get involved, have an input into community improvement budget funding in their areas, run events in their communities, and discuss housing and neighbourhood issues.

The Hampden Park Willingdon Trees Area Panel meet on the first Friday of every month between 10 and 12pm at the Hampden Park Community Centre. The Eastbourne Area Panel supports residents in Langney, Old Town and Central & Archery areas. Meeting dates are advertised on local noticeboards and on the Eastbourne Area Panel Facebook page. Locations are rotated to encourage people in different areas to attend.

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment (TIE) Panel

We worked closely with members of the TIE panel to refocus their involvement and avoid duplication of time and effort. Members have aligned themselves to service improvement projects working closely with Service Leads to ensure that tenant consultation and communication is embedded in the projects, and we will report back on the approach next year.



Tenant Scrutiny Team

The Tenant Scrutiny team is made up of Eastbourne Homes and Lewes District tenants. The team conducts in-depth reviews of service areas identified by the TIE panel. Each review produces a report with recommendations aimed at making improvements to the service. In 2022 – 2023, the team completed a review of rents arrears management which made 18 recommendations for improvements.

The Retirement Housing Forum

This is a joint forum that works across Eastbourne and Lewes District made up of representatives from retirement housing schemes in both areas. New members are elected every year to represent residents from their scheme at the forum. The group also agrees the allocation of community improvement funding for projects in retirement housing schemes.

Spends & Saves

This group is made up of tenants who have been trained to be involved in the selection of contractors, contract requirements, and contract delivery.

Less Formal ways to get involved:

Love Clean Streets

The “Love Clean Streets” mobile app can be used to make us aware of any environmental problems when you are out and about. You can send a photo with the location which is directed straight to the right member of Neighbourhood First staff to deal with.



Focus Groups

We sometimes run informal one-off discussion groups online or face to face to help us to look deeper into the customer experience in relation to key areas, such as our repairs service.

The Virtual 300

The Virtual 300 are a group of tenants who share their views on our services from the comfort of their own homes. We email members for their views on new policies, service improvement ideas and sometimes to judge competition entries. It is easy to be involved as much or as little as you like with the bonus of regular prize draws and incentives for taking part.

Communications Panel / Armchair Advisors

These tenant armchair advisors make sure that communications are as easy to understand as possible, and we use their feedback to help us review drafts before they are published.

Community Pop-ups

Periodically we join other Council teams and their contractors who work together to provide services to an estate at community pop-up events to discuss local issues.

Mystery Shopping

Tenants sometimes help us to evaluate our services to make sure they are delivering in line with agreed standards, and that the standards are appropriate.

Chat café

Sometimes we ask residents to join us at a local community café or online with a cuppa to talk about local issues that matter to them.

Tenant Days

We sometimes arrange tenant days such as a conference, community event or door-step consultation so people can discuss issues that matter to them.



Surveys & questionnaires

Sometimes we use surveys and questionnaires to ask you what you think. Surveys can be sent by post, by telephone, text, or email.

Tenant Involvement Strategy

We published a new Tenant Involvement Strategy in 2023, which will enable our tenants and staff to respond positively to the new Social Housing Regulatory Framework and make sure we are prepared for initiative-taking regulation and in-depth assessment.



The benefits of getting involved...

We believe that tenants possess the skills and the knowledge they need to be involved, because tenants are social housing experts. It is also true that tenants who participate in their communities are best placed to make improvements in their local areas. Between April 2022 and March 2023:

Hampden Park Willingdon Trees Area Panel

- Funded equipment for a Jubilee party
- Contributed to bingo, Christmas, and Easter events.
- Bought new chairs for a Scout hut.
- Provided a notice board and play equipment in Hampden Park, and supported the Hampden Park Shed
- Helped with pathway repairs on Elm Grove

Eastbourne Area Panel

- Funded walking routes for the disabled
- Provided recycling bags in flats.
- Supported the Shinewater Fun Day and funded a reception canopy at Shinewater School.
- Funded replacement tree planting
- Helped the Warm Hub in the town centre.
- Funded outward bound opportunities for primary school children.
- Provided litter picking equipment.
- Funded walking cricket in Shinewater.
- Supported a gardening project for children in Upperton.

Tenant Group Meetings

We will continue to offer hybrid meetings giving tenants the opportunity to meet in person or join online using Microsoft Teams. For more information on meeting dates, please contact: tenant.involvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

The **Homes Standard** looks at how we provide homes that are **safe**, good quality and well maintained

89.51% of our homes meet the Decent Homes Standard

Did you know..?



The Property Services team lead Simon Watts has over 40 years' experience in housing and property services, the last 15 at leadership or director level. Simon is supported by three senior managers:



Marie Cooper is the Asset Investment Manager. She is also a chartered surveyor who heads-up teams of planned maintenance surveyors and those managing the stock investment programmes looking after replacement kitchens, bathrooms, roofs, doors, and windows.



Peter Bowley is the Repair Services Manager. He is a chartered surveyor and heads up everything repairs related. Peter is supported by a team of experienced Eastbourne area surveyors.



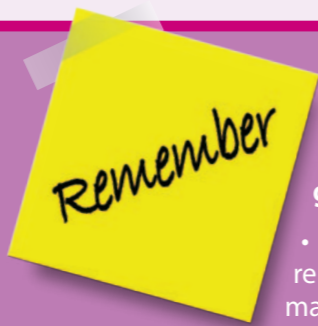
Akin Fadairo is the Estates & Facilities Manager. He is a leading leasehold management specialist and leads our new managing agent service which includes the leasehold and health and safety compliance teams.

How are we doing?

Between April 2022 and March 2023, we completed **9583 responsive repairs**, of which **2725 were emergency**, **2224 urgent**, **3679 routine** and **282 planned**.

We also completed 41 replacement kitchens and 20 bathrooms, and two separate WCs.

Overall Eastbourne Homes Limited spent £2,104,486 on 3381 properties, giving an average amount spent on responsive repairs per property of £622. We also spent £5,781,643 on planned improvements in 1624 homes, giving an average spend of £3,560 for each property.



If you have an emergency repair out of office hours, you can still get the help you need -

- For general emergency repairs you can use the main contact number which is **01323 410000** – listen for the out-of-hours message.
- For heating and hot water breakdowns only, you can call BSW Building Services on **01444 836036**
- If there is a gas leak you can contact the National Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999**

73% of tenants were satisfied with the overall quality of their home

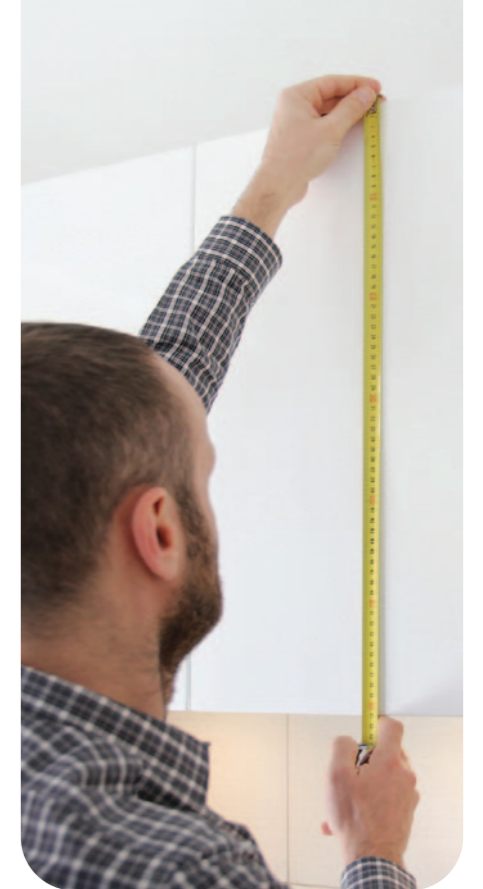
74% of you were satisfied with the standard of repairs conducted in the last year



The Decent Homes Standard

Whilst 89.51% of our homes meeting the Decent Homes Standard is a significant decrease from the figures reported last year, it should be noted that each year properties will become 'non-decent' because a building component will be due for replacement, for example, a boiler, kitchen, or roof. Our target is to reduce the number of non-Decent Homes within the investment programmes. During 2022-2023 ad hoc projects such as Fire Risk Works at Green Point came up that had to be funded from the existing budgets which had an impact on the number of decent homes works that could be completed. Now that the new financial year budgets have been released, we have already reduced

the amount of non-decent homes from 89.51% to 91.93% in Quarter 1 of 2023-2024 and there are plans in place for these all to be rectified to return to full decency by the end of this financial year - 31st March 2024. The Decent Homes Standard recommends the life span of 'key building components.' For Kitchens this is 30 years, which means that kitchens over 30 years old should be replaced. For bathrooms, a similar rule applies, but this based on 40 years old. In the past we have tried to replace kitchens and bathrooms before they get too old, but due to budget constraints we are having to stick to the Decent Homes Standard recommendations.



Did you know..?

Dealing with damp and mould is a particular priority for us and we have taken a number of steps to improve our response:

- In May 2022, we took call-handling back in-house, so that we are no longer solely reliant on Mears for assessment and action.
- Our surveyors and call handling team have undertaken refresher training on damp and mould reporting and diagnosis.
- Our gas servicing contractor attends most properties annually to conduct gas safety checks and reports back if they see any damp or mould issues.
- It is often assumed that the cause of mould growth is condensation, and although this is more often the case, we have been revised our procedures to ensure a surveyor inspection takes place at an early stage. These visits are followed up at 3 monthly intervals and closely monitored.
- Our surveyors have access to specialist suppliers and consultants if necessary.
- An additional surveyor has been recruited to focus on damp and mould issues, inspections, and advice.

- We install electric or over-bath showers, with mechanical ventilation to reduce condensation and energy costs.
- The Property Services Team have also delivered presentations to teams across the Council about damp and mould to promote awareness and accountability.



The **Tenancy Standard** looks at how we **end tenancies**, manage **empty properties**, and **allocate homes**

Between April 2022 and March 2023, we let:

- **106 general needs homes** • **5 Studio properties**
- **49 one-bedroom flats, bungalows, and maisonettes**
- **41 two-bedroom flats, houses, and maisonettes**
- **8 three-bedroom houses** • **3 four-bedroom houses**

We also let **52 retirement housing flats**, which included **29 one-bedroom flats, 8 two-bedroom flats** and **15 studios**.

The average number of days taken to re-let our empty properties was **50.6 days**.

Eastbourne Homes recognises that mutual exchanges encourage tenant mobility and support sustainable communities by making the best use of our housing stock. Being able to Mutual Exchange gives our tenants a broader range of choice on home size, type, and location. It also provides the opportunity to find a home that's suitable for household needs and the chance to move to other parts of the country.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, we helped 28 tenant households to mutually exchange using HomeSwapper (the UK's leading exchange service for tenants) and SwapTracker which provides an online portal for information sharing, that helps tenants to track the progress of their mutual exchange application easily.

74% of you said you were happy with the overall quality of your home

Between April 2022 and March 2023 we let **106** general-needs homes...

49 One-bedroom flats, bungalows, and maisonettes...

5 Studio properties...

41 Two-bedroom flats, houses, and maisonettes...

8 Three-bedroom houses and...

3 Four-bedroom houses

The Housing Solutions service adopted a new IT system in October 2022, so data is not available for the first two quarters of 2022/2023.

Between 1 October 2022 and 31 March 2023, we assisted 757 households who were homeless or at risk of homelessness by providing advice and assistance, producing personal housing plans, signposting to services and financial help to secure accommodation.

We successfully enabled 28 households to remain in existing accommodation or find a new property, and another 55 households were relieved from homelessness by the local authority taking reasonable steps to help the

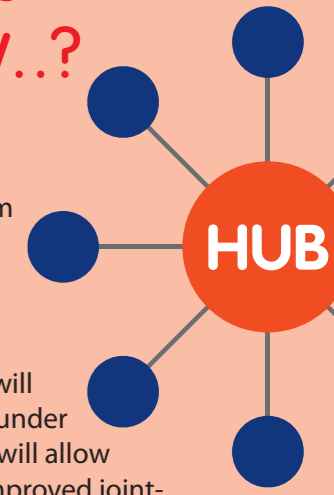
applicant secure suitable accommodation for at least six months. 127 households were considered for a Main Housing Duty decision (i.e., they were provided temporary accommodation until this duty ended) and 65 were accepted. The others were found to have not been in priority need, not eligible or intentionally homeless.

To demonstrate its commitment to Value for Money, Eastbourne Homes collects key performance data on how much we spend on emergency accommodation every month.

Did you know..?

The Housing Options & Wellbeing team are working to create a 'hub and spoke model' with partners who will be co-located under one roof. This will allow significantly improved joint-working relationships and interventions and help to deliver a one-stop-shop which the community can use to access the support they need from multiple agencies, both statutory and non-statutory. The goal is to offer a seamless joined-up approach, which links in with other buildings in the local area (the 'spokes') when necessary to provide easier access for clients. It's hoped that this will allow housing related issues and other needs to be identified and resolved at the earliest opportunity, improving outcomes for our shared clients, avoid repeat access to frontline services, and reduce the need for high-cost interventions at crisis point.

We hope to move our dedicated Triage Team into the Hub by October 2023 to provide face to face appointments for those customers who are unable to access our on-line services.



Did you know..?

Last year the Housing Needs Team renamed their service to Housing Options & Wellbeing to better reflect what the team offers. Their aim is to provide an effective housing needs service with strong partnerships that foster a range of sustainable options, long-term solutions for an individual's housing and wellbeing needs, and prevent homelessness wherever possible by:

- Preventing people from becoming homeless through the provision of timely and personalised holistic interventions.
- Intervening to relieve homelessness with a range of high quality and affordable housing solutions, and providing expert advice, guidance, and decisions on homeless and housing applications.

- Sustaining independent living through the provision and enablement of strong wellbeing and employment interventions with our partner agencies

A new in-house Triage Team has been established to take calls and improve the customer journey by offering advice, support and/or appointment at the first point of contact.

Ongoing plans for the coming year include :

- The completion of a Housing Register Review
- A review of the Allocations Policy
- A review of the Voids Process
- The introduction of a new performance management framework
- The implementation of a Homelessness Partnership Hub

78% of you said you were satisfied with the safety of your home

The Neighbourhood and Community Standard

looks at how we **manage** and **improve** your neighbourhood and **deal with** anti-social behaviour

We work hard to be visible in our communities and provide tenants the opportunity to engage positively, including, where possible, in preventative measures relating to antisocial behaviour (ASB). Last year the tenancy management team resolved an average of 72 ASB cases every month. The team also completed 42 Hate and ASB Risk Assessments (HARA) with the Police, Adult Social Care, Mental Health, Children's Social Care, Victim Support and Drugs and Alcohol services. 99 'formal tenancy actions' were taken to combat ASB, including Notices of Seeking Possession. There were also 73 referrals for safeguarding made, and 28 referrals for mediation delivered by Mediation Plus - www.mediation-plus.org.uk

Being in conflict with your neighbours can be really difficult

Eastbourne Homes works with Mediation Plus to offer a comprehensive range of mediation, dispute, and conflict resolution services.

Mediation Plus are the recognised independent mediation organisation in the Eastbourne area and have helped hundreds of people resolve many distinct kinds of disputes, and helped neighbours and families from all kinds of backgrounds improve communication and relationships.

What is mediation?

Mediation is a form of alternative dispute resolution where two or more people involved in a dispute are helped to understand each other and recognise that they can find their own resolutions to conflict. Mediation can help with disputes between neighbours, within families, or between any people doing business with each other.

Mediation is recognised as an effective way of problem solving that can help avoid costly and lengthy legal proceedings or formal procedures. Mediation Plus use accredited mediators to help our tenants identify their needs, clarify issues, explore solutions, and negotiate agreements. The mediators function as facilitators, helping people to work out a

solution that is realistic, practical, and workable. The decision-making rests with the parties involved and the mediation process is entirely voluntary.

Benefits of Mediation

- Mediators can meet at a neutral venue or connect via phone, to listen to the issues from your point of view.
- They can arrange meetings at a time to suit you.
- Mediators will make as many return visits, as necessary.
- You are in control and can disengage from the process at any time.
- Mediation is confidential, and all meetings are conducted in private. Information will not be shared with others unless you say so (subject to child protection and other safeguarding requirements).
- Mediators are impartial and do not take sides.

63% of tenants are satisfied that Eastbourne Homes makes a positive contribution to their neighbourhood.



What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse is defined as a pattern of behaviour in a relationship used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Abuse is physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats that influence another. This includes behaviours that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure, or wound someone. Domestic abuse can happen to anyone and knowing what abuse is helps us all to recognise it when it happens. Whatever form abuse takes, it is never justified, and any behaviour that demeans, frightens or distresses has to stop. We can all do something to keep people in our communities safe.

On average two women are killed by their partner or ex-partner every week in England and Wales and 75% of deaths take place inside the person's home. Housing providers like Eastbourne Homes can help in the prevention of further deaths by spotting the signs of domestic abuse and making earlier interventions.

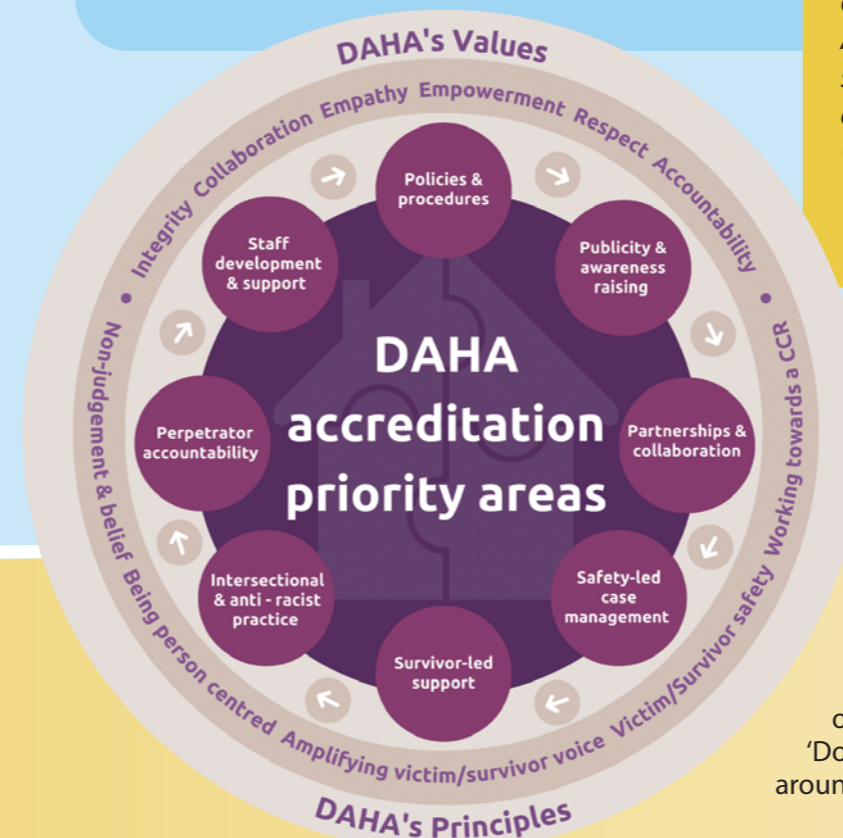
Eastbourne Homes is working towards gaining Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation (DAHA) for their handling of cases relating to Domestic Abuse.

In September 2022, we began the journey towards achieving the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation which is a UK benchmark that sets out how housing providers should

respond to domestic abuse. We intend to use the DAHA best practice framework to improve services for those who have suffered domestic abuse. The framework sets out eight priority areas that are needed to deliver safe and effective interventions in domestic abuse cases and builds in processes that guide staff to address the needs of survivors and hold perpetrators to account.



Ray Brickley, who was recruited as project lead for the DAHA Accreditation process, said: *"I am extremely proud to help lead the organisation towards achieving the DAHA Accreditation and with it help to ensure that survivors and their families feel empowered and supported by Eastbourne Borough Council throughout their journey. We will continue to strive for the best possible outcomes for them and their families."*



As part of the accreditation process, we have developed a Domestic Abuse Policy which explains our responsibility as a social landlord and our offer of support to those who may be presenting to our Housing Options and Wellbeing team. We have also developed a Domestic Abuse Policy for our staff which sets out the support that is available for our colleagues who are victims/survivors.

The next step on the journey will be to improve our data, develop our domestic abuse training offer for staff and create a volunteer network of 'Domestic Abuse Champions' to help embed the work around domestic abuse across our organisation.

The Value for Money Standard

looks at how we collect **rent** and other **charges** and how we **provide value for money**

Eastbourne Homes is subject to a range of regulations and standards it needs to meet which are set by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). This includes

an assessment on whether the auditor is satisfied that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its use of resources,

including consideration of financial sustainability and governance arrangements and that services are of value for taxpayers.

Economy (Less) – the price paid for what goes into providing a service (for example, salary of staff, material costs of a repair).

Efficiency (Well) – a measure of productivity, i.e., how much you get out in relation to what is put in (for example, the efficiency of services such as rent, and arrears collection may be measured by the cost of the service compared to the total rent collected).

Effectiveness (Wisely) – the outcome for customers (for example, satisfaction levels among residents with tenant participation arrangements).

Therefore, value for money is high when there is an optimum balance between low costs, high productivity, and successful outcomes. We have a Value for Money Strategy to help us understand the costs, work to reduce them, improve performance and service delivery, and increase customer satisfaction. The initiative

seeks to embed value for money in every aspect of our work and make it 'everyone's business' and at the heart of everything we do. To support this, a network of Value for Money 'champions' was established across Eastbourne Homes which promotes value for money so our teams can identify where we can:

- Make savings
- Streamline processes
- Improve our overall performance
- Increase customer satisfaction

One of the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Panel (TIE) regularly meets with the Value for Money champions to provide input and review the progress made. Eastbourne Homes' goal is to ensure that the rent our tenants pay is used in the most cost-effective and efficient way, and we work hard to make sure that our estate work and contracts are providing not only value for money, but assurance around compliance.

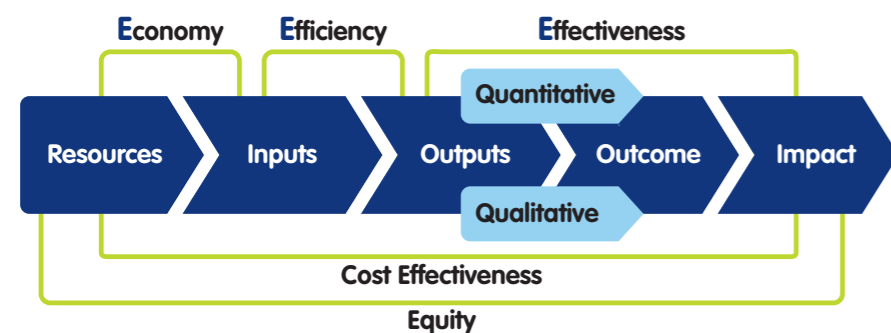
Did you know..?

The VFM Estates Project has established new ways of working on our estates by using best practice to review our services. We started by using a place-based approach to map out what services were already on offer and the partnerships that existed so any gaps in service could be identified. The project has helped to make teams more visible to tenants, review processes, bring about improvements and create a stronger culture of shared responsibility and personal ownership across our estates.

Successes in 2022 / 2023 include:

- Reviewing the lettable standard to make savings.
- Reviewing the voids and allocation process, and void property clearance
- The introduction of guest rooms and hybrid technology in Retirement Housing Schemes
- An ongoing review of repairs processes
- Reviewing our list of local contractors
- The Housing Options & Wellbeing hub

This diagram shows how the three 'E's' link together to help services to demonstrate Value for Money...



On the 01 April 2023, Sara Cosham (above) was recruited as a Project Manager to develop a data strategy for the organisation, refine IT processes, find new ways of managing information across our services, and give staff greater control over the planning and management of maintenance contracts for example.

It is hoped that a new review of our allocations policy will also deliver significant efficiencies in 2023/2024.

How are we doing?

In 2022 / 2023 we collected **96.7%** of our rent. **77%** of our tenants said they were treated fairly and with respect.

The average weekly rent for an Eastbourne Homes property including service charges was **£83.58** (this is the average for all properties from bedsits to five bed houses). The average weekly rent for all properties in the Eastbourne area was **£190.38** per week (Office of National Statistics).

Did you know..?

We sustain tenancies by working collaboratively with external partners to maximise tenant income and by focusing on prevention and early intervention. The use of eviction proceedings is a last resort action - there were no evictions carried out between April 2022 and March 2023.

This is how we raised our income...

£8,714,012 Eastbourne Borough Council.

This is the management fee paid to Eastbourne Homes Limited by EBC. It is funded by the rents tenants pay.

We spent **£9,734,846** (112%) due to double digit inflationary pressure, energy costs tripling and increased wages. These exceptional circumstances required the council to pay a higher management fee from rent as well as supplement the income with reserves.

How income is spent...

From each £100 we collected, we spent:



Governance and Risk Management

Robust governance is essential to achieving Value for Money, so we have arrangements in place to monitor performance, and challenge risk through Eastbourne Homes formal governance frameworks. In addition to this, residents can influence decisions, identify areas for improvement and review services through Residents Voice, the Area Panels, the Tenant Involvement & Empowerment, the Virtual 300 and a range of surveys. Gary Hall - Head of Homes First oversees the Value for Money risk register in line with government's Code of Practice.

Help and Support available

The Councils have put together information on the support which is updated regularly on our website:

www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

use the keywords 'help with the rising costs of living' in the search box.

There are also pages on **Benefits and grants:**

www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/benefits-and-grants/

And a **Benefits Calculator** giving you an idea of what you might be entitled to:

<https://lewes-eastbourne.entitledto.co.uk/home/start>

If you don't have access to the internet, you can also call or write to us:

Telephone: **01323 410000**

Postal Address:

Income Maximization and Welfare Department, Eastbourne Borough Council, Town Hall, Grove Road, Eastbourne, BN21 4UG.

The Household Support Grants

If you're finding it difficult to keep warm, buy enough food or pay essential bills, you may be able to get extra help.

Eastbourne residents can apply for help from the government's Household Support Fund, which Eastbourne Council is helping to pay out. You must live within the council's area, be over the age of 18 and be liable for the council tax, rent or mortgage, and be finding it difficult to pay for heating, lighting, water bills or food.

You can check your eligibility on our website: www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

Type 'housing support grants' into the 'enter search text' field and press return.

Please note, if you have received an award from the Household Support Fund 3 scheme you do not need to apply and will receive an award based on your previous application.

Free school meals

Your child may be able to get free school meals if you get any of the following:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit - if your household income is less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

Children who get paid these benefits directly, instead of through a parent or guardian, can also get free school meals.

To find out more about free school meals in East Sussex visit www.eastsussex.gov.uk and type 'free school meals' into the 'search our site' box.



Healthy Start

If you're more than 10 weeks pregnant or have a child under four, the Healthy Start scheme can help you:

- buy healthy foods like milk or fruit.
- get free vitamins.



You need to be claiming certain benefits to qualify unless you're pregnant and under 18.

You can find out more here: www.healthystart.nhs.uk

Discretionary East Sussex Support Scheme (DESSS)

The Discretionary East Sussex Support Scheme (DESSS) provides emergency help in certain situations. It does not provide cash or loans but may provide the food or utilities that you need. Your household will usually only be able to receive support from the scheme once in 12 months.

For more information and to apply visit www.eastsussex.gov.uk and type 'Discretionary East Sussex Support Scheme' into the 'search our site' box.



Citizens Advice

Citizens Advice have up to date advice pages with information on what help is available:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Type 'Get help with the cost of living' into the search box and press return. They also have online chat available, or if you prefer, you can call using: **0800 1448848**.



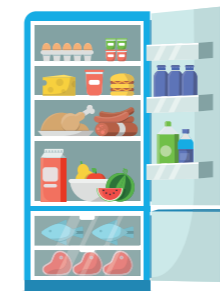
Help if you are struggling to afford food

Eastbourne food bank

The Eastbourne foodbanks can help provide food, and some can also help with advice and advocacy, toiletries, nappies, shoes, bedding, baby equipment, crockery, and cutlery. There's more information on the back page of this report. To find your nearest foodbank search by using: www.eastbourne.foodbank.org.uk



Community fridges and pantries



Community fridges, larders and pantries redistribute surplus or donated food, providing an important function in reducing food waste and improving access to food in the community.

In Eastbourne there are currently two community fridge/pantries:

Langney Community Centre,

Etchingham Road, Eastbourne.

Community Fridge and Larder – Tuesday and Wednesday, 10-1 £2 for up to 10 items, everyone is welcome to become a member, one visit per household.

Telephone: 01323 763762

Facebook: Langney Community Centre

Seaside Community Hub,

125 Seaside Road, Eastbourne.

Community Fridge and Larder – Wednesday and Friday, 10- £2 per visit for up to 10 items, everyone is welcome to become a member.

Telephone: 01323 371322

Facebook: Seaside Community Hub

The Transfer Incentive Scheme

The Transfer Incentive Scheme (TIS) is for Council tenants who have one or more bedrooms they don't need who and are interested in downsizing. It can also help tenants who have a reduction in the Housing Costs Element included in a Universal Credit award. You need to have held a secure tenancy with us for at least one year to access this scheme. More information and an application form can be found on www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk by using the search term 'cash incentives for downsizing.'

Did you know..?



Other useful Information



**Ask
ELLIS**
Your
intelligent
Chatbot

Our intelligent chatbot ELLIS is available 24hrs a day, 7 days a week and can answer many types of different questions. ELLIS was launched in March 2021 and has answered 87,000 queries, almost a third of which have been out of office hours. ELLIS has achieved a 95% accuracy rate, and when a question can't be answered, customer service staff are still free to chat online between 8.30am and 5pm (weekdays). If you're not able to find what you're looking for on www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk or you don't want to use chat services, there's also a **Contact Us** form available, or you can call: **01323 410000**.

- Option 2** – For repairs, including communal repairs.
- Option 3** – Council tax queries and paying council tax – except council tax reduction.
- Option 4** – Planning.
- Option 5** – Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction
- Option 6** – Licensing, including taxis and Licensing Acts
- Option 7** – Homelessness Queries
- Option 8** – Everything else, including Waste and recycling, street and open spaces, and Council Tenant Rent accounts.

Office opening times.

Reception services are open at the Eastbourne Town Hall between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. A limited service is available for dropping off documents, answering basic enquiries, and signposting to relevant organisations and services. There is also a phone inside the reception areas you can use to contact the council if you don't have a mobile device available.

If you have no money for food...

Food banks can help if you can't afford the food you need, but you will need a referral from Citizens Advice, a children's centre, a health visitor, or your Housing Senior Caseworker before you can use one. The food bank will provide the essentials you need and sometimes they can also signpost you to support on your income and spending.



Eastbourne Foodbank (The Trussell Trust)
Unit 3, 55 Brampton Road, Eastbourne, BN22 9AF
T: 01323 409925
E: admin@eastbourne.foodbank.org.uk
W: www.eastbourne.foodbank.org.uk

Willingdon Trees Community Fridge and Pantry
Holly Place, Willingdon Trees, Eastbourne, BN22 0UT
T: 01323 504438
E: eastbourne@sussexcommunity.org.uk
F: Willingdon Trees Community Fridge and Pantry

Old Town Community Fridge
Victoria Baptist Church, Eldon Road, Eastbourne, BN21 1UE
T: 01323 737974
E: helpdesk@victoriabaptist.org.uk
F: Old Town Community Fridge

The Brodle Hall Drop-in Centre (Matthew 25 Mission)
Seaside, Eastbourne, BN22 7NN
T: 01323 726960
E: manager@matthew25mission.org
W: www.matthew25mission.org

Seaside Fridge & Community Shop
Seaside Community Hub
125 Seaside, Eastbourne, BN22 7NN
T: 01323 371322
W: www.seasidecommunityhub.com/community-fridge

Eastbourne Sunday Soup Kitchen
For details call Andy: 07710 480512
W: www.andrewholter.wixsite.com/sundaysoupkitchen

Langney Larder
Etchingam Road, Eastbourne, BN23 7DX
T: 01323 763762
E: manager@langneycommunitycentre.co.uk
F: Langney Community Centre

If you have an emergency repair out of office hours, you can still get the help you need:



- For general emergency repairs you can use the main contact number which is **01323 410000** – listen for the out-of-hours message.
- For all gas heating repairs contact BSW Building Services free on: **0800 865 4428**, or by using their landline number: **01444 836036**.
- For heating and hot water breakdowns only, you can call BSW Building Services on: **01444 836036**
- If there is a gas leak you can contact the National Gas Emergency Service on: **0800 111 999**

Other emergency numbers:

Electricity power cut: **0800 31 63 105**
Mains water leaks: **0333 000 0365**
Homelessness – After 5pm or at weekends: **01323 410000**

Other useful numbers:

Non-emergency police: **101**
NHS Non-emergency: **111**
East Sussex County Council: **0345 608 0193** for highways issues such as road maintenance, pavements and street lighting, adult social care, mental health services, schools and education services, grass verge cutting.
Shelter – Housing advice: **0808 800 4444**
Samaritans: **116 123**