

COMMUNITY
CONNECTION
STRATEGY
2020-2025



NORTH STAR

Creating homes, building futures

INTRODUCTION

WHO IS NORTH STAR?

We're a North East based Housing Association and our purpose is to provide affordable housing, invest in our communities and develop new homes across the Tees Valley, North Yorkshire and County Durham.

We care about the people and the communities that we serve. We work, in collaboration with others, to create stable, secure, trusting and supportive environments where people feel they belong.

AT OUR CORE ARE OUR VALUES:

CREATIVE

We create environments to enable people, places and communities to thrive. We believe many things are possible and that our energy brings about exciting change.

CONNECTED

We are connected to the world we live in. Therefore, we are relevant, informed and knowledgeable. We develop strong relationships that are based on integrity and trust.

COURAGEOUS

We challenge ourselves and others. We experiment; pioneer and we dare to be different.

At North Star, we place people at the forefront of everything we do. Our vision, our values and our organisational strategy are all centred on creating and sustaining great places for people to live and work in.

WHAT DOES THIS STRATEGY DO?

This strategy sets out how North Star will continue to invest in the projects and organisations that matter to the communities we operate in, connecting them to the core purpose of our organisation. It details the resources we will commit and how we will distribute them. It provides clear explanations of the priorities we have identified and how we will work with partners and residents to co-create community led solutions.

This strategy will support both the delivery of the Communities Team vision and North Star's wider organisational vision to 2023; specifically our ambition to invest in communities to transform lives.



WHAT IS COMMUNITY CONNECTION?

At North Star we have always recognised the impact our work has on the communities we work in. We have always worked hard to ensure this impact is as positive as possible.

Connecting communities to our business gives us the opportunity to understand what really matters to our tenants, demonstrate our role as an anchor organisation and support people to realise the ambition and achieve their potential.

OUR APPROACH

North Star practice asset based community development principles. This means we start with what is strong in a community, rather than what's wrong, working with strengths rather than addressing deficits.

We commit funding and a team of three people each year to our community investment work. Our team allocate our community investment funding, support the projects during their delivery, monitor the progress they have made and the impact the work has made.

We work hard to understand the communities we work in. We utilise data from the Housing Association Charitable Trust's (HACT) Community Insight tool alongside our knowledge from working in the communities to know what really matters. Using this knowledge we prioritise the communities we invest in to ensure we are able to create the largest positive impact possible. Some communities may remain a priority for longer period of time in order to embed community work. Some may receive support over a relatively short period of time to provide flexible support for a time limited challenge. Ultimately, our goal is build community capacity from within that stands the test of time.

Our grants target grass roots organisations, embedded in the communities we work in. The organisations we support have high levels of community trust. We prioritise supporting projects that work, whether they have been delivered for many years or are completely new and innovative. We are also keen to support the creation sustainment of community anchors. This could be asset or an organisation that is vital to the community around which great community work takes place. In order to do this, we will consider funding core costs for organisations allowing them to concentrate their efforts and funding on providing services.



We have a streamlined, yet robust grant-making process that is proportionate to the amount of funding we are allocating. Above all, we want to understand the ideas and creativity of our communities whilst also making sure they have the necessary infrastructure and assurances to carry them out safely and effectively.

We ensure our decision making and evaluation processes are proportionate and robust. This allows our partners to focus on the delivery of outcomes for the communities we serve. We also provide partners with core funding grants that allow them to be as flexible as possible in response to community needs.

We also work closely with our contractors to deliver social value in our communities. Our approach allows us to focus their contributions on communities and projects that will generate as much positive impact as possible. You can read more about our approach in our social value from procurement process document.

Ultimately, like our vision to 2023, people are right at the centre of our community connection work and we work hard to ensure as many people as possible are able to influence our investment decisions. We know how important it is that this influence is meaningful. Therefore, we ensure this involvement comes as early in the decision making process as possible.

Our Vision for Community and Tenant Connections

We are Pioneers, working together to transform lives and create a sense of belonging. We build thriving communities and share power with tenants to make change happen.

- Our insight is developed through our close relationships and strong links with tenants and communities. This insight shapes what we do and how we do it
- Tenants and Communities connect with us in ways that they want to
- We work together to identify what is strong and build on this to change what is wrong
- Social value and impact is maximised in all that we do
- We are future focused and connected to the outside world, sharing, learning, experimenting
- The best of the old ways are built on to develop stronger, new ways

Our Objectives

Through our community connection work we will contribute to the delivery of four of the United Nations' Sustainability Goals, specifically:

- **Goal 1** – No poverty
- **Goal 3** – Good health and well-being
- **Goal 4** – Quality education
- **Goal 11** – Sustainable cities and communities

We realise the scale of the challenge that these goals present however, we believe that by focussing on making a contribution to them we can play our part in tackling the most important challenges of our times.



GOAL 1 NO POVERTY

HOW WILL WE CONTRIBUTE TO THIS?

We will seek to:

- Offer communities support or experiences they would not otherwise be able to access
- Provide access to advice and support that can help communities make the most of their income
- Supporting projects that tackle the stigma of poverty
- Supporting projects that challenge inequality
- Supporting projects that build community capacity to tackle poverty, build confidence and achieve potential

- Supporting projects that build resilience and reduce the stress that poverty can create
- Supporting people to gain qualifications and work experience that can support career progression

Our approach to tackling poverty is informed by the findings and recommendations of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's report We can solve poverty in the UK available here:

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/we-can-solve-poverty-uk>



GOAL 3

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

HOW WILL WE CONTRIBUTE TO THIS?

We will seek to:

- Support projects that build community capacity to take action together on health and the social determinants of health
- Support projects that develop the capabilities of individuals within communities to provide advice, information and support or organise activities around health and well-being
- Support projects that build collaborative approaches to health between services and communities
- Support projects that connect communities to resources, practical help, activities and volunteering opportunities to meet health needs and increase social participation

Our approach to health and well-being is informed by the findings and recommendations of Public Health England and NHS England's report A guide to community-centred approaches for health and well-being available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/768979/A_guide_to_community-centred_approaches_for_health_and_wellbeing_full_report.pdf



GOAL 4 QUALITY EDUCATION

HOW WILL WE CONTRIBUTE TO THIS?

We will seek to:

- Support projects that offer training and education opportunities linked to the skills and employment needs of our region and communities
- Support projects that pay attention to the wider benefits of education and training. For example those that promote better health and tackle inequalities
- Support projects that provide safe, secure environments in which children and young people can learn and develop
- Support projects that provide opportunities for children and young people to explore, investigate and satisfy curiosities; experience success and develop a positive attitude to learning.

Our approach to education and skills development is informed by research carried out by the University of Warwick, which can be found here:

https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/research/adult_education/adult_education_ier_report_final_2401018.pdf

And, guidelines from the Department for Education:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>



GOAL 11

SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

HOW WILL WE CONTRIBUTE TO THIS?

We will seek to:

- Support projects that work within and promote the values of Community Development, specifically:
 - Social justice and equality
 - Anti-discrimination
 - Community empowerment
 - Collective action
 - working and learning together
- Projects that seek to not only engage but understand the communities they work in
- Projects that promote and facilitate group work and collective action
- Projects that utilise, promote and facilitate co-creation with whole communities
- Projects that support community learning
- Projects that support good community governance and organisational development

- Projects that support the sustainable use of community assets and resources
- Projects that support the creation and/or maintenance of community anchors

Our approach sustainable communities has been shaped by the National Occupational Standards for Community Development available here:

<http://cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CDNOSTandards2015.pdf>

Also, A research report from the John Ellerman Foundation and NFP Synergy: 'Taking nothing for granted: a research report into what charities think a model grant-maker looks like' available here:

<https://ellerman.org.uk/uploads/Taking-nothing-for-granted-Report-June-2012-nfpSynergy-and-John-Ellerman-Foundation.pdf>



HOW DO WE MEASURE IMPACT?

North Star has an impact measurement system which is simple, proportionate, meaningful and flexible.

It includes clear measures and targets, a toolkit of methods depending on the type, size, and scope of projects and a comprehensive range of outcomes.

The outcomes are usually a mix of the qualitative (views and opinions) and quantitative (facts and figures).

Where possible, the outcomes are given a monetary value based on the Social Value Bank (SVB), a Treasury approved set of values which provides figures for qualitative experience.

We recognise and work with some limitations to the system: The Social Value Bank doesn't have values for all outcomes; further ones are being developed.

The values are not the only/main measurement; outcomes without current values are equally important. We also record impact through case studies and stories that give life to the figures and investments.

Each year we review the success of our community investment activity and with feedback from partners, make any necessary adjustments to ensure we are as effective as possible.






North Star

North Star brings together the skills, resources and values of Endeavour, Teesdale and Darlington Housing Associations.

We are a strong organisation with a clear vision of what we want to achieve for the people who live in our region - creating homes, building futures.

GET IN TOUCH

 03000 11 00 11

 customer.services@northstarhg.co.uk

 www.northstarhg.co.uk

 @northstarhg

 /NorthStarHG

Visit / Write:

Endeavour House, St Marks Court, Thornaby,
Stockton-on-Tees, TS17 6QN

14a Redwell Court, Harmire Enterprise Park, Harmire Road,
Barnard Castle, County Durham, DL12 8BN

Please note that all calls to our Customer Services Team are monitored and recorded.

Creative

Connected

Courageous