



NORTH STAR
Creating homes, building futures



INFORMATION FOR YOU

Tenants' Handbook



northstarhg.co.uk

Information correct as of March 2026



Welcome to Your North Star Home

**Thank you for choosing North Star.
We hope you'll be very happy in
your new home.**

This handbook gives you useful information to help you settle in and understand your tenancy. It explains your rights and responsibilities as a tenant, and ours as your landlord. Please keep it somewhere safe and refer to it whenever you need advice about your home or tenancy.

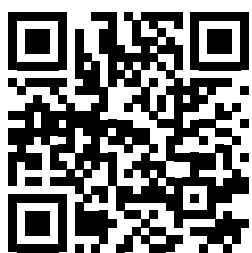


Contents

- Section 1** About Us **4-5**
- Section 2** Your Tenancy **6-11**
- Section 3** Moving In **12-15**
- Section 4** Paying Your Rent **16- 17**
- Section 5** Repairs and Improvements **18-25**
- Section 6** Your Neighbourhood **26**
- Section 7** Customer Involvement **28-29**
- Section 8** Moving On **30-31**
- Section 9** Complaints and GDPR **32-33**
- Section 10** Your Notes **34-35**

Save money on essentials

With discounts of up to **20% in-store** and **online** using **Housing Perks**. You can also use the savings to help reduce your rent arrears.



How it works:

- Download the free Housing Perks app and sign up using your tenancy reference number.
- Buy a discounted voucher (up to 20% off).

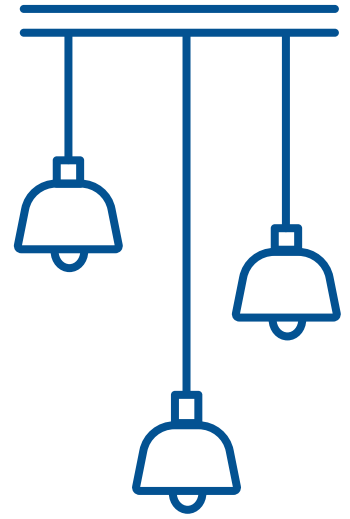
Your voucher appears in the app within seconds, ready to use in store or online. (Ts&Cs apply)

Visit the **North Star website** and search '**Housing Perks**' for advice on getting started.



About Us

- 1.1 About North Star
- 1.2 Our Vision and Values
- 1.3 How to Contact Us



1.1 About North Star

North Star is a not-for-profit housing association. We own and manage around 4,000 homes across the Tees Valley, North Yorkshire, County Durham and Tyne and Wear.

Our main aim is to provide safe, comfortable affordable and supported housing. We also invest in local communities and build new homes to meet housing needs.

1.2 Our Vision and Values

Our vision and aims are created together by North Star staff, our Board, and our customers. This helps make sure they reflect what matters most to the people and communities we serve.

Our Values are:

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.



1.3 How to Contact Us

If you need help or want to talk to us about your home or tenancy, you can get in touch in several ways:

North Star Online

Use the free app (search North Star Online on the App Store or Google Play) or visit: www.northstarhg.co.uk/north-star-online



Website

You can use the contact forms on our website to get in touch: www.northstarhg.co.uk/contact/

Phone

Our phone number for all enquiries is 03000 11 00 11.

Our Customer Service Team is available Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm (excluding bank holidays).

If you need to report an emergency repair outside of office hours, call the same number and you'll be put through to our out-of-hours service.

If you don't speak English, we can arrange for an interpreter to join the call.

Email

Our main email address for enquiries is: customer.services@northstarhg.co.uk

If you need to report an emergency repair, the quickest way is to call. If you can't make phone calls but need to report an emergency outside of office hours, you can email: emergencyrepairs@orbisprotect.com

Facebook Messenger

Our Facebook page is: facebook.com/NorthStarHG

You can send a direct message to the page during office hours.

Messages sent outside these hours won't be received, so please contact us during office hours only.

Write to or visit us (by appointment only)

North Star
Endeavour House
St Mark's Court
Thornaby
Stockton-on-Tees
TS17 6QN

If you live in Teesdale, please use this address:

North Star
Enterprise House
Harmire Enterprise Park
Barnard Castle
DL12 8XT

Your Tenancy

- 2.1 Your Tenancy
- 2.2 Your Rights
- 2.3 Your Main Responsibilities
- 2.4 If You Don't Follow Your Responsibilities
- 2.5 Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)
- 2.6 Hate Crime
- 2.7 North Star's Responsibilities
- 2.8 Notice of Proposed Home Visits
- 2.9 Number Of People On A Tenancy Agreement
- 2.10 Ending A Joint Tenancy
- 2.11 What To Do When Your Rent Changes
- 2.12 Council Tax
- 2.13 Ending Your Tenancy

2.1 Your Tenancy

When you move into a North Star home, you'll sign an Assured Tenancy agreement between you (the tenant) and us (the landlord). This is a legally binding contract that sets out what we both agree to do, including your rights and responsibilities, and ours.

As an Assured Tenant, you have security of tenure. This means you can only lose your home if we get a Possession Order from the County Court, and only if one of the legal grounds in the Housing Act 1988 applies. If your household or personal circumstances change, you must let us know straight away.



2.2 Your Rights

Your tenancy gives you certain legal rights.

These can be found in your tenancy agreement. Here's a simple guide to the main rights you have:

Your Right	What it Means
Right to repair	You can ask us to fix things we're responsible for.
Right to succession	If you die, a close family member who has lived in your home for over 1 year may be able to take over your tenancy.
Right to exchange	You can swap homes with another North Star tenant or someone else if both landlords agree.
Right to be consulted	We'll ask for your views before we make changes to your tenancy agreement.
Right to acquire	You may be able to buy your home in some circumstances.
Right to terminate	You can give notice to move out of your home.
Right to make improvements	You can make changes or improvements to your home with permission.
Right to shared ownership	You may be able to buy part of your home. You must have entered into a Shared Ownership agreement at the beginning of your tenancy.

The rights above are subject to conditions. Please check your tenancy agreement for full details.

2.3 Your Main Responsibilities

As a North Star tenant, you agree to follow the conditions in your tenancy agreement. These are the main things you must do:

- **Rent** - Pay your rent in advance each week.
- **Use of your home** - You must only use your home as your main place to live. It must not be used for business or any other purpose.
- **Behaviour** - You're responsible for the behaviour of everyone living in or visiting your home. They must not cause nuisance or disturbance to neighbours or the public (for example, loud music, shouting, or abusive behaviour).
- **Repairs** - Tell us as soon as possible if something needs fixing and it's our responsibility to repair it.
- **Access** - Allow North Star staff, contractors, or anyone working for us to enter your home when needed, for example, to carry out repairs, surveys, or safety checks.
- **Alterations** - Get written permission before making any changes or improvements to your home. You'll normally be responsible for maintaining any alterations you make.
- **Pets** - Keep all pets under control. If you live in a home with communal areas, you must get written permission from North Star before keeping any pets.

- **Garden or yard** - Keep your garden or yard clean, tidy, and well maintained.
- **Decoration** - You're responsible for decorating the inside of your home and keeping it in good, clean condition.
- **Illegal activity** - You must not take part in any illegal activity in or around your home, including the use or supply of drugs or involvement in crime. Illegal activity can lead to legal action and you could lose your tenancy.

2.4 If You Don't Follow Your Responsibilities

If you break the terms of your tenancy agreement, we'll contact you to talk about it. We'll give you help and support to sort out the problem and give you every chance to put things right.

If the issue continues and there's no improvement, we may have to take legal action to repossess your home.

North Star can only end your tenancy by getting a court order for possession, and only if one of the legal reasons listed in Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1988 applies.

2.5 Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is any behaviour that unreasonably affects someone else's quality of life.

Most people are considerate neighbours, but as a tenant, you're also responsible for the behaviour of anyone living in or visiting your home.

Examples of anti-social behaviour include:

- **Loud noise such as shouting, parties, music or TV**
- **Dogs barking at unsociable hours**
- **DIY, car repairs or sounding car horns late at night**
- **Dumping rubbish or littering**
- **Graffiti or vandalism**
- **Aggressive or threatening language or behaviour**

If a neighbour is causing problems, try speaking calmly with them first if you feel safe to do so. If this doesn't help, we can work with other agencies to resolve the issue.

For more information or to report anti-social behaviour, log into North Star Online, contact our Customer Services Team on 03000 11 00 11, or speak to your Housing Officer.

2.6 Hate Crime

North Star works closely with other agencies to tackle harassment and hate crime quickly and firmly.

Harassment means doing something to frighten, threaten, or upset another person or to damage their home or belongings. Examples include:

- **Name-calling or abusive language**
- **Threats to someone or their property**
- **Offensive letters or graffiti**

- **Arson or attempted arson**
- **Physical attacks**

A hate crime is when someone is targeted or harassed because of who they are, or who someone thinks they are. This could be because of their:

- **Ethnic background**
- **Nationality**
- **Religion or beliefs**
- **Gender**
- **Disability**
- **LGBTQ+ identity**

If we have evidence that a tenant is responsible for harassment or hate crime, we will take strong action, which may include ending their tenancy.

2.7 North Star's Responsibilities

We're responsible for keeping your home safe, secure, and in good condition. For full information about which repairs we are responsible for, see our website or our Repairs Handbook.

Structure and Outside of Your Home

We look after the structure and exterior, including:

- **Drains, gutters, and external pipes**
- **The roof**
- **Outside walls and doors**
- **Windows, frames, catches, cords, and sills (including external painting)**

- **Chimneys, chimney stacks, and flues**
- **Paths, steps, and other ways of getting to your home**
- **Boundary walls and fences**
- **Garages and outside stores**
- **Defective plasterwork**
- **Repairs and installations**
- **Decent Homes Standard**
We are responsible for making sure your home meets the Decent Homes Standard. This is a set of minimum housing standards set by the government to ensure rented homes are safe, in good repair, energy efficient, and have good facilities.

Systems and Installations

We repair and maintain the following where they are provided by North Star:

- **Systems for water, gas, electricity, and waste**
- **Systems for heating and hot water**
- **Lifts and other shared or communal facilities**

Other Responsibilities

- **Consultation** - We'll consult with you before making any major changes to housing management or maintenance that may affect you.
- **Information** - We'll give you information about how we manage our homes.
- **Insurance** - We insure the building itself, but **you are responsible for insuring your own belongings.**
- **Rent changes** - We'll give you at least four weeks' notice before making any changes to rent or related charges.

2.8 Notice of Proposed Home Visits

From time to time, we may need to visit your home. This might be to check how things are going with your tenancy, look at the condition of your home, or offer support and advice. We will do our best to contact you in advance to arrange a time that suits you. Home visits will always be carried out by authorised officers. They will always carry ID and will treat you, your home, and your privacy with respect at all times.

2.9 Number of People on a Tenancy Agreement

Tenancy agreements are usually in one or two names. If you'd like more information, please speak to your housing officer.

2.10 Ending a Joint Tenancy

If you have a joint tenancy and one person wants to move out, you must contact your housing officer. In most cases, we can arrange for the tenancy to continue in one name, but there are some exceptions. If you're the person leaving the tenancy, you should contact your local council. They can give you advice and help you find a new home.

2.11 What To Do When Your Rent Changes

When there has been a change to your rent amount, it's important to report this to Universal Credit. Use the Report a Change section in your online journal so your housing costs can be updated. We will let you know when you need to update your account to ensure your payments are not affected. If you claim Housing Benefit, your rent change will be updated automatically.

2.12 Council Tax

You are responsible for paying Council Tax. You must notify your local council of any changes that could affect your Council Tax or any benefit you receive.

2.13 Ending Your Tenancy

You can end your tenancy by giving four weeks' written notice. You can also let us know you wish to end your tenancy by using North Star Online. For advice or help, contact your housing officer.

North Star can only end a tenancy if we obtain a court order for possession.



Moving In

3.1 Your Move-In Date

3.2 Checking the Quality of Your New Home

3.3 Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)

3.4 Previous Damp Works

3.5 Decoration

3.6 Insurance

3.7 Moving in checklist

3.8 Help to Cover Your Rent

3.9 Electricity and Gas

3.10 Making Improvements to Your Home

3.11 Fitting a Satellite Dish or Cable TV

3.1 Your Move-In Date

Your housing officer will contact you to agree a date for your tenancy to start and rent is due from this date.

3.2 Checking the Quality of Your New Home

Before a property is let, we inspect it to check for repairs and safety issues. Sometimes, minor repairs may need to be done after you move in. If this happens, we will give you details of when the work will be done.

There may also be **planned work** that is due, such as a new kitchen or bathroom. Your housing officer can give you more information.

You are responsible for:

- **Plumbing and drains for any extra appliances you add**
- **Adjusting doors to fit floor coverings**

- **Adjusting kitchen units or doors to fit your appliances**

If you find other repairs are needed, please report them to us.

3.3 Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)

We will give you an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for your new home. This shows how energy efficient your property is and includes advice on how to save energy and reduce running costs.

3.4 Previous Damp Works

If any damp repairs were completed before you moved in, we will tell you what was done. We will also provide guidance on preventing further problems. For more detailed advice visit the Manage My Home section on our website.

3.5 Decoration

You are responsible for decorating the inside of your home. **If your home is**

less than 12 months old, please avoid decorating while it is under warranty (which is usually 12 months).

If the property needs decorating because the current decoration is damaged or very worn, we may give you a decoration allowance to help with the cost. For more information, contact your housing officer.

3.6 Insurance

Make sure you have contents insurance to cover your furniture and belongings.

North Star insures the building and our fittings, but we are not responsible for your personal belongings. This includes damage caused by broken windows, fire, flooding, or burst pipes or water tanks.

3.7 Moving in Checklist

Don't forget to contact the following where necessary:

Utilities:

- Electricity supplier
- Gas supplier
- Water company
- TV licensing

Council and Benefits:

- Council Tax office
- Housing/Council Tax Benefit Department
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) / Job Centre

Personal and Financial:

- Banks / building societies
- Credit card companies
- Employer

Health and Education:

- Schools / nurseries
- Doctors
- Dentists

Official / Legal:

- DVLA

Family and Services

- Family and close contacts
- Postal service

3.8 Help to Cover Your Rent

If you are on a low income, you may be able to get help with your rent through Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.

Housing Benefit

You can apply for Housing Benefit if you (and your partner, if applicable):

- Have reached pension age
- Live in supported, sheltered, or temporary housing or any other exempt accommodation
- Are entitled to a Severe Disability Premium in your current benefit



There are some other eligibility requirements but only one of the above needs to apply to be considered.

To claim Housing Benefit, contact your local council. Most claims are made online, but you can request a form by phone.

Universal Credit

If you do not meet the Housing Benefit rules, you must claim Universal Credit.

Apply online at: www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit

Your Universal Credit payment may include a housing costs element to help pay your rent.

The amount depends on your rent, the number of bedrooms, and who lives in your home.

Your responsibilities if you claim Universal Credit include:

- Using the housing element of Universal Credit to pay your rent.
- Making sure your full monthly rent is paid, even if the housing element does not cover the full amount.

Unlike Housing Benefit, payments are made directly into your bank account. They do not go straight to your landlord. The first payment normally takes about five weeks so make any new claims as soon as you move in.

You are responsible for your rent from the start of your tenancy, even before your claim is processed. After your first payment, you'll normally be paid on the same date each month.

3.9 Electricity and Gas

It is your responsibility to contact your electricity and gas supplier. Most homes will not have gas or electricity connected when you move in. Once connected, we will arrange any safety checks, which must be done before you move in. Gas and electricity meters belong to your supplier. Any questions about your meters must be directed to them.

3.10 Making Improvements to Your Home

If you want to improve or alter your home, you must get written permission from North Star. Any future maintenance of improvements you make is usually your responsibility.

3.11 Fitting a Satellite Dish or Cable TV

You must get written permission from North Star before fitting a satellite dish or cable TV.





g in partne
NORTH S
reating homes, h

ian williams
Looking after Buildings

Working in partnership with
NORTH STAR
Creating homes, building futures

Paying Your Rent

4.1 How to Pay Rent

4.2 What To Do If Already Claiming Universal Credit

4.3 When is Rent Due?

4.4 Rent Statements

4.5 How Much Is My Rent?

4.6 How We Set Your Rent

4.7 Service Charges

4.8 What To Do If You Cannot Pay Your Rent

4.9 Consequences of Rent Arrears

4.1 How to Pay Rent

You can pay your rent in several ways:

- Paypoint outlets – At the start of your tenancy, you will receive an Allpay Swipe Card. Take this card and your payment to any Paypoint outlet (shops, garages, or post offices with the Paypoint sign). Most are open 24 hours and there is no charge.
- Direct debit
- Standing order
- Online via Allpay through North Star Online (Get started by visiting: www.northstarhg.co.uk/north-star-online)
- By telephone with your debit card

4.2 What To Do If Already Claiming Universal Credit

If you are already claiming Universal Credit when you move in, you must update your online journal using the Report a Change facility.

You will need to provide:

- The date your tenancy started
- The date you moved in
- Details of your rent and service charges
- Changes of circumstances

If there are any changes in your household or income, you must inform Housing Benefit and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). See Section 3.8 – Help to Cover Your Rent for full details about Universal Credit and Housing Benefit. If you need help, our Welfare Benefits Officers can provide guidance - call 03000 11 00 11 or email Welfare.Benefits@northstarhg.co.uk.

4.3 When is Rent Due?

Your rent is due each week. This means that you must have paid your rent by Friday (or the last working day if there is a bank holiday at the end of the week).

If you prefer to pay monthly or at longer intervals, make sure your payments are in advance.

4.4 Rent Statements

You can view your rent account online by using North Star Online. You can also contact Customer Services if you'd rather receive a rent statement via post.

4.5 How Much Is My Rent?

When you sign your tenancy agreement, you will receive a breakdown of your rent and any service charges.

4.6 How We Set Your Rent

We set rent in line with government policy for housing associations and local authorities. Rent is reviewed annually. We will give you at least one month's notice of any changes.

4.7 Service Charges

Some tenancies include extra services, such as cleaning, laundry facilities, and gardening. If this applies to you, these are included in your service charge, which is reviewed annually. We will give you at least one month's notice of any changes.

4.8 What To Do If You Cannot Pay Your Rent

If you cannot pay your rent, contact your housing officer immediately.

Your housing officer can refer you to a Welfare Benefits Officer for advice and help, including:

- Checking that you are claiming all benefits you are entitled to

- Setting up a realistic payment plan for any arrears

What are rent arrears? "Arrears" means rent that is overdue or unpaid. If you do not pay your rent on time, your account will go into arrears.

Rent pays for services, repairs, and improvements. If rent is not paid, it affects these services. We will take action if tenants do not pay or agree a repayment plan.

4.9 Consequences of Rent Arrears

If your rent account is not clear:

- You may not be able to transfer or exchange to another home
- A County Court Judgment (CCJ) may be issued, affecting your credit rating
- You may be refused credit, a mortgage, or future rented accommodation
- You will be responsible for any court costs

If you lose your home due to arrears, you may be considered intentionally homeless, and the council may not have a duty to provide alternative housing.

Our priority is keeping you in your home. If you are having difficulty paying your rent, please contact your housing officer as soon as possible.

Repairs and Improvements



- 5.1 How To Report a Repair
- 5.2 Information Needed To Report a Repair
- 5.3 Emergency Repairs
- 5.4 Repair Response Times
- 5.5 Appointments
- 5.6 Leaks to Other Properties
- 5.7 Re-attending for Repairs
- 5.8 Repair Contractors
- 5.9 Your Repair Responsibilities
- 5.10 Improvements and Alterations
- 5.11 Adaptations for Your Home
- 5.12 Damp, Mould and Condensation
- 5.13 Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors
- 5.14 Electrical Safety
- 5.15 Legionella
- 5.16 Gas Servicing
- 5.17 Asbestos
- 5.18 Repairs You Need To Pay For
- 5.19 Responsibility for Floor Coverings

This section has all of the key repairs information to know when you move in. We also have a dedicated Repairs Handbook that provides even more detailed information. You can find this on our website. We can also give you a paper copy upon request.

5.1 How To Report a Repair

You can report a repair in several ways:

North Star Online – Available 24/7. Quick, simple, free, and works on any device (smartphone, tablet, laptop, desktop).

Phone – Call our Customer Services Team on 03000 11 00 11.

In person – At our Head Office (you must make an appointment).

In writing – Send a letter to one of our offices.

Website – www.northstarhg.co.uk.

Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/northstarhg> (office hours only).

5.2 Information Needed To Report a Repair

When reporting a repair, please tell us:

- Your name and address
- A contact telephone number
- The best time for us to access your home (morning or afternoon)
- As much detail as possible about the repair or fault, including photos if you can
- Any vulnerabilities or disabilities we need to be aware of there are any vulnerable tenants living at the property

If the repair causes anyone significant risks or inconvenience, we may decide to give the repair a higher priority.

5.3 Emergency Repairs

We provide emergency cover outside office hours, including weekends and bank holidays.

If you have an emergency repair, call 03000 11 00 11 to reach our 24-hour emergency repair call centre.

Emergency repairs are issues that immediately affect your health or safety. We will make them safe and schedule follow-up repairs if needed.

Examples of emergency repairs are:

- **Loss of all electrical power**
- **Blocked main drain**
- **Blocked toilet (if only one available)**
- **Dangerous structures at risk of collapse**
- **Gas leaks**
- **Complete heating failure with no backup (winter only)**
- **Uncontainable water leaks**

5.4 Repair Response Times

Repairs are prioritised based on urgency and impact. Vulnerable tenants may receive a higher priority at our discretion.

Emergency Repairs - completed (or made safe) within 24 hours. See Section 5.3 for examples.

Urgent Repairs - completed within 3 working days. These are necessary to keep

you healthy, safe, and comfortable.

Routine Repairs - completed within 20 working days. These are non-urgent jobs that do not cause serious inconvenience or risk further damage.

Examples of routine repairs:

- **Indoor joinery (doors, window frames, woodwork)**
- **Small plumbing jobs (dripping taps, overflowing pipes)**
- **Gates and fencing**
- **Repairs to fittings such as worktops or cupboards**

Please note: Repair times may be affected by tenant availability, the need to order parts, or other unforeseen circumstances. We will keep you informed if there are any changes to the expected timescale.

For full information about repair times and legal requirements, see the Repairs Handbook.

5.5 Appointments

We offer appointments for most repairs. Emergency repairs are prioritised.

We can make appointments from Monday to Saturday and the options are:

- **All day: 8am–5pm**
- **Morning: 8am–1pm**
- **School run: 10am–2pm**
- **Afternoon: 12 noon–5pm**

Limited evening and weekend appointments are available for routine jobs:

- **Tuesday & Thursday evenings: 5pm–8pm**
- **Saturday mornings: 8am–12 noon**

Please note: Even if your appointment is booked for a morning or afternoon slot, the repair may not be completed until later in the day, depending on the nature of the job and when the contractor arrives.

If we cannot keep an appointment, we will phone you if we have a contact number.

If you cannot attend an appointment, please let us know in good time. If a contractor attends and you are not home and have not cancelled, you may be charged.

If the contractor calls and you are not in, they will leave a card. It is your responsibility to arrange another appointment, otherwise the repair may be cancelled.

5.6 Leaks to Other Properties

If you live in a flat and a leak affects the property below or next door, whether or not it is your fault, we will try to contact you. If we cannot reach you, a contractor may visit with a North Star employee to access your property and carry out the repair.

5.7 Re-attending for Repairs

Sometimes a repair may need a second visit to complete the work or fit additional parts. Contractors will inform you before leaving. This often happens with emergency repairs, where the priority is to make the situation safe.

5.8 Repair Contractors

All our contractors are expected to provide professional, courteous service. They will carry identification, which you should ask to see. Contractors must:

- **Be polite and professional**
- **Agree to suitable appointments**
- **Aim to complete repairs first time if parts are available**
- **Respond positively to tenant complaints**
- **Respect your home and privacy**
- **Not smoke in or around your home**
- **Follow safe working practices**
- **Complete repairs to a high standard**

5.9 Your Repair Responsibilities

You are responsible for keeping your home clean, safe, and in good condition, and for insuring your belongings. You are also responsible for:

- **Appliances and fittings you own or have installed, including TV aerials, washing machines, tumble dryers, dishwashers, cookers, integrated kitchen appliances, cooker hood filters, and batteries for hard-wired devices**

- **Decoration of your home**
- **Gardens or yards, including sheds or tool stores if provided**
- **Floor coverings**
- **Replacing keys or locks if lost or locked out**
- **Clearing blockages you cause in sinks, basins, or drains**
- **Taking precautions to prevent damage from fire, frost, burst pipes, or blocked drains**
- **Pest control**
- **Wheelie bins and recycling containers**
- **Clothes posts**
- **Repairs caused by neglect, accidental or deliberate damage, or forced entry if you get locked out**
- **Items that were gifted to you**

Some responsibilities may be different in supported housing. For advice, speak to your Supported Housing Officer or Support Worker.

For full details, including examples and guidance, see the Repairs Handbook.

5.10 Improvements and Alterations

You may carry out improvements or changes to your home, but you must get written permission first. Provide details of your plans, drawings, or what you want to do so we can make sure the work won't damage your home or affect neighbours.

While you are the tenant, you are responsible for maintaining and repairing any improvements.

If permission is not granted, we will explain why in writing. Continuing work without permission breaches your tenancy agreement, and you will be responsible for the cost of returning the property to its original condition.

5.11 Adaptations for Your Home

If you have difficulty moving around or using your home, we can adapt it to suit your needs. Examples include:

- **Handrails**
- **Special taps**
- **Over-bath showers**
- **Level-access showers**

We work with social services, who may provide grants for adaptations.

An occupational therapist will visit to recommend the best changes. In some cases, moving to more suitable accommodation may be the better option. We will discuss this with you if needed.

5.12 Damp, Mould and Condensation

North Star's priority is to make sure your home is safe, warm, and healthy. We take reports of damp and mould very seriously.

Awaab's Law

From 27 October 2025, new legal rules called Awaab's Law set strict timescales for landlords to investigate and fix serious hazards, starting with damp and mould.

When you report emergency hazards (like major leaks), we will investigate and act within 24 hours, as always.

For significant hazards covered by Awaab's Law, we will:

- **Investigate within 10 working days of your report**
- **Send you a written report within 3 working days of the investigation, explaining findings and next steps**
- **Start repairs or safety work within 5 working days of the investigation. If we cannot access your home, work must start within 12 weeks**

If the work cannot be fully completed in time, we will put in temporary safety measures and, if needed, arrange temporary accommodation.

What you can do

Report hazards like damp to us as soon as you notice them. You can also take simple steps to help. Visit the Damp, Mould & Condensation page on our website for more information.

5.13 Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors

All North Star properties are fitted with smoke and heat detectors. Some are battery operated, while others are hard-wired into the mains electricity supply.

Make sure you regularly check alarms by pressing the test button - you should hear a sound. Replace batteries in battery-

operated alarms as needed. Alarms will beep when batteries are low, but we recommend changing them once a year.

Properties with a gas supply also have a carbon monoxide detector. All smoke, heat, and carbon monoxide detectors are checked once a year during your annual gas service.

5.14 Electrical Safety

Electricity is a major cause of accidental fires in UK homes. North Star conducts a full electrical inspection every 5 years to ensure your home is safe.

If you want to carry out electrical work (e.g. changing sockets or light switches), you must get written permission from North Star. All work must be carried out by a qualified electrician and we must be provided with an electrical certificate.

5.15 Legionella

Legionella bacteria can grow in hot and cold water systems and can cause Legionnaires' disease, a rare form of pneumonia. The risk of infection in your home is very low.

What you can do to reduce risk:

- **Flush taps and showers that are not used regularly.**
- **If you are away for a week or longer, run taps and showers for several minutes when you return.**
- **Keep shower heads clean and disinfect every 6 months.**
- **Report any water or plumbing issues to North Star immediately.**

5.16 Gas Servicing

To keep your heating system working safely and efficiently, we carry out a gas service every year. It's your responsibility to let our qualified gas engineers into your home to complete this check.

If you don't allow access, we may need to take legal action to gain entry, and you could be charged for any costs this causes.

If you smell gas or fumes, call the National Gas Emergency Service (TRANSCO) immediately on 0800 111 999.

5.17 Asbestos

We understand that asbestos can sound worrying, but please be reassured that North Star has a strong policy in place to manage any materials that may contain asbestos.

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a natural material that was once used in building products to make them stronger and fire-resistant. It can sometimes be found in:

- **Garage or shed roofs**
- **Wall or ceiling linings**
- **Flue pipes (the pipes that carry fumes from boilers or fires)**
- **Roof edges or eaves (where the roof meets the walls)**

- **Gutters and rainwater pipes**
- **Textured coatings such as Artex**

Asbestos is safe if it's undamaged or sealed, for example with paint. However, do not sand, drill, break, or remove any materials that could contain asbestos. If you think something might be damaged, contact us straight away.

What we're doing

We arrange surveys in homes that might contain asbestos. If asbestos is found, we'll let you know.

If any repair or improvement work might disturb asbestos, we'll only use licensed contractors to deal with it safely.

If you think you've found asbestos:

- **Don't touch or disturb it**
- **Don't sand, drill, or saw it**
- **Contact us for advice**

5.18 Repairs You Need To Pay For

These are sometimes called rechargeable repairs.

We want to be clear and consistent about which repairs North Star is responsible for, and which ones you are responsible for.

Our repairs and maintenance service is funded by rent paid by all customers. To be fair to everyone, we will charge customers who cause damage or neglect their home.

You may be charged if:

- **We carry out work that is your responsibility (for example, replacing lost keys).**
- **We complete extra work at your request that isn't our responsibility (for example, fitting additional fencing).**
- **Damage has been caused by accident, neglect, or deliberate action.**
- **We are unable to access your home to carry out a repair on the agreed day.**

We will always tell you if there will be a charge before the work is carried out and, where possible, give you an estimate of the cost.

For emergency repairs, you'll receive the bill after the work has been completed.

For other types of work, we may ask for payment before we start.

5.19 Responsibility for Floor Coverings

When you sign for your home, there may be floor coverings already in place that have been "gifted" to you. This means you've accepted responsibility for them.

When we carry out repairs or planned maintenance, we may need to lift floor coverings to access pipework or wiring.

Our contractors will, where possible, take up or protect and re-lay your floor coverings, except for laminate flooring. Laminate flooring must be removed and re-laid by you. If it cannot be lifted, we cannot accept responsibility for any damage.

Before fitting laminate flooring, please contact us. We will check if any major work is planned in your home that might affect the flooring.

If flooring needs to be lifted for repair work, it is your responsibility to arrange and pay for this. If you're unable to do it yourself, we may be able to help, but there will be a charge for this service.



Your Neighbourhood

6.1 Gardens and Yards

6.2 Rubbish and Recycling

6.3 Abandoned Vehicles

6.4 Dogs and Pets

6.5 Rats, Mice, Wasps, Bees and Other Pests

6.6 Estate and Property Inspections

6.7 Graffiti Removal

6.8 Community Investment

6.1 Gardens and Yards

You are responsible for keeping your garden or yard tidy and free from rubbish. Overgrown or untidy gardens can spoil the look of your estate.

We regularly inspect our estates and will contact customers whose gardens need attention. If no action is taken, we may carry out the work and charge you for it.

If you live in sheltered accommodation, we will look after any shared or open-plan garden areas.

6.2 Rubbish and Recycling

Your local council collects household waste and recycling. Every council has its own collection arrangements. For details of your area's collection days and recycling rules, please contact your local council.

6.3 Abandoned Vehicles

If a vehicle is abandoned on or near your estate, please report it to your local

council. They are responsible for removing abandoned vehicles.

6.4 Dogs and Pets

You are responsible for keeping your pets under control and for making sure they do not cause a nuisance or roam freely. Action may be taken if pets are not properly controlled.

Local councils often have dog warden services that can collect stray dogs. For more information, contact your local council.

6.5 Rats, Mice, Wasps, Bees and Other Pests

If you notice pests in your home or nearby area, please contact our customer services team. They can offer advice or arrange treatment if needed.

6.6 Estate and Property Inspections

We carry out regular estate inspections to make sure homes and shared areas are

well maintained. These inspections help us keep your neighbourhood clean, safe, and pleasant for everyone.

6.7 Graffiti Removal

If you see any graffiti on your home or in your area, please let us know.

We will arrange for it to be removed as soon as possible.

6.8 Community Investment

North Star is committed to supporting and strengthening the communities we operate in.

We fund and deliver a range of projects from breakfast clubs and after-school groups to sports, training, and employment programmes.

We also provide grants to help local charities and community groups deliver projects that make a difference. Our aim is to help communities thrive, unlock potential, and create a real sense of belonging.

If you have an idea, are part of a local group seeking funding, or would like to learn more, please contact our Communities Team by calling **03000 11 00 11** or emailing communities@northstarhg.co.uk.



Resident Involvement

7.1 Get Involved with Your Voice

7.2 Tenant Events

7.3 Questionnaires, Feedback Forms and Surveys

7.4 Tenant Magazine

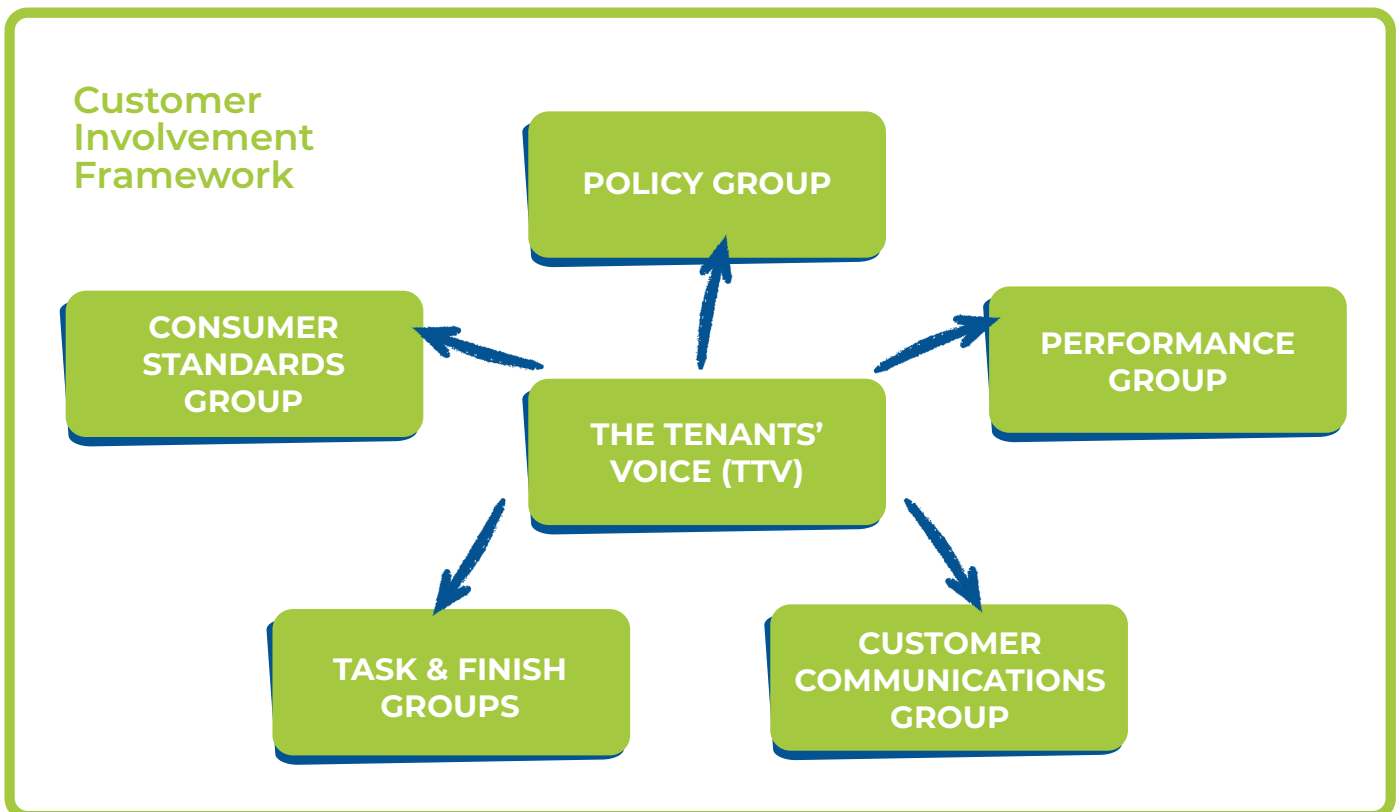
7.5 How to Get Involved?



7.1 Get Involved with Your Voice

Our involvement network is called Your Voice, and any North Star customer can join. Once you join, we will contact you with opportunities to have your say.

Your Voice is made up of smaller groups that focus on different areas of our work. Through Your Voice, you can help shape decisions, test new ideas, and share what matters most to you.



You can take part online or in person, as little or as often as you like. We want everyone to have the chance to get involved, so you'll be paid for attending meetings, and we can cover travel and childcare costs if needed.

Getting involved gives you the chance to make a real difference for you and other North Star customers.

By joining Your Voice, you can:

- **Help make your area a better place to live**
- **Influence how we deliver housing services**
- **Give us a clearer understanding of what customers need**
- **Share your views and ideas directly with us**
- **Support continuous improvement across North Star**

7.2 Tenant Events

Keep an eye out for invitations to events. We might send these by email, text, or post.

Events are a great way to meet our staff, learn more about our services, and share your feedback on how we can improve.

7.3 Questionnaires, Feedback Forms and Surveys

We want to give everyone the chance to have their say.

Throughout the year, we'll contact you with questionnaires, feedback forms, and surveys. Sometimes, a trusted third party may get in touch on our behalf.

7.4 Tenant Magazine

We produce two magazines a year - summer and winter - to keep you up to date with how we're doing and share news, events, and useful information.

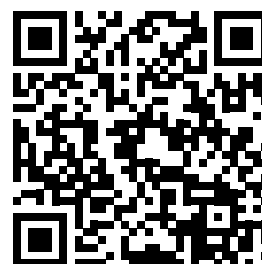
7.5 How to Get Involved

To find out more about how you can get involved in a way that suits you, contact our Communities Team:

Email: communities@northstarhg.co.uk

Visit: <https://www.northstarhg.co.uk/customer-voice/your-voice/>

Scan the QR code to sign up for Your Voice and be contacted about ways to get involved:



Moving On



8.1 Transfers **8.2 Mutual Exchanges** **8.3 Ending Your Tenancy**

Sometimes your circumstances might change, and you may want or need to move home. This section explains the different ways you can move, how to end your tenancy, and what to do before you leave your property.

8.1 Transfers

You can apply for a transfer through your local Choice Based Lettings scheme or council, depending on where you live.

Tees Valley area

Tees Valley Homefinder
teesvalleyhomefinder.housingjigsaw.co.uk

Hartlepool

Hartlepool Home Search
www.hartlepoolhomesearch.co.uk

Darlington

Darlington Home Search
darlingtonhomesearch.housingjigsaw.co.uk

County Durham area

Durham Key Options
www.durhamkeyoptions.co.uk

North Yorkshire

North Yorkshire Home Choice
www.northyorkshirehomechoice.org.uk

Sunderland

Sunderland City Council
www.sunderland.gov.uk

You'll need to complete an online application to be included in the scheme. Once registered, you can bid (express an interest) for available properties.

Before you can be offered a transfer, you must:

- **Be up to date with your rent**
- **Keep your home in good condition**
- **Have no breaches of your tenancy agreement**

Priority is given to tenants who need to move because:

- **Their home is too small or too large**
- **They have medical needs**
- **They need to give or receive support**
- **There are other special circumstances**

Ask your Housing Officer if you need advice or help with the process.

8.2 Mutual Exchanges

A mutual exchange lets you swap your home with another tenant, either within North Star or with tenants from other landlords or councils. This can be a quicker way to move than a transfer.

How to arrange a mutual exchange:

- Search for a suitable property on a mutual exchange website such as HomeSwapper (free for North Star customers): <https://www.homeswapper.co.uk/>
- If you don't have internet access, your Housing Officer can help you register and provide details.
- Once you find a property, contact your Housing Officer to start the application.
- We will let you know whether your application is approved or refused within 42 days.

Other things to note:

- You must have an up-to-date rent account and no outstanding charges.
- The property you want to move into must be suitable for the needs of and number of people living there.
- Permission from all landlords involved is required.
- If accepted, we will check the property's safety, including Gas Safe and Electrical tests.
- It is your responsibility to ensure the property is in good condition when you move in.
- You cannot exchange if there are court orders or notices of possession against you.

For full details, visit our website or speak to your Housing Officer.

8.3 Ending Your Tenancy

If you need to end your tenancy, you must:

- **Contact us to request an end-of-tenancy form or request to end your tenancy via North Star Online**
- **Give 28 days' notice – tenancies must end on a Sunday**
- **Provide your new address and contact number**
- **Provide any alarm codes for your property**
- **Inform your gas, electricity, and water suppliers and give final meter readings**
- **Tell the Council Tax and Housing Benefit departments you are moving**
- **Redirect your mail**
- **Settle any rent or repair charges**
- **Complete any work or decoration you've started**

You must leave your home, garden, or yard in a clean and tidy condition, removing all belongings.

If we need to remove items, clean, or carry out repairs that were your responsibility, we will charge you.

Please return your keys by 12 noon on the Monday after your tenancy ends (or the next working day if there's a bank holiday). Your rent must be paid up to this date. If you don't return the keys, rent will continue to be charged until we receive them or change the locks and you'll be charged for that, too.

For help or advice about ending your tenancy, please contact your Housing Officer.

Complaints and Data Protection Act

9.1 Complaints

9.2 Data Protection

We want every North Star customer to feel listened to and respected. This section explains how to make a complaint if you are unhappy with our service, as well as how we handle and protect your personal information.

9.1 Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received, we want to know. Your feedback helps us understand how we are performing and where we can improve.

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about our service, actions, or lack of action, whether from North Star staff or contractors acting on our behalf, affecting you or a group of customers.

You can make a complaint:

- In person
- Via North Star Online
- In writing
- By phone: 03000 11 00 11
- By email: complaints@northstarhg.co.uk
- Via our website
- Through another person such as an advocate, support worker, or solicitor
- Via social media

Our Complaints Process

We have a simple two-stage process:

Stage One – a manager will investigate your complaint, contact you to discuss how to fix it, and aim to give a full written response within 10 working days. If we need longer, we'll explain why and give a new deadline of no more than 10 extra days.

Stage Two – if you are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage One, a senior manager or director will review your complaint. We aim to respond within 10 working days. If it takes longer, we'll tell you the expected timescale.

We will close a complaint once we have written to you explaining what we have done or plan to do, why we made our decision, any action we're offering, and how to contact the Housing Ombudsman if you are still unhappy.

Service Requests

If something can be fixed quickly without using the full complaints process, we treat it as a Service Request. These are usually resolved within three working days.

If you're not happy with the outcome, you can make a formal complaint.

Complaints that may not be accepted

We will usually accept a complaint unless:

- **The issue happened more than 12 months ago (unless it's about safety or safeguarding)**
- **The same complaint has already been resolved**
- **Legal action is already underway**
- **It concerns a tenancy breach, unless it is about how we handled it**
- **It's about a service we do not provide**

If we do not accept your complaint, we will explain why. You can still contact the Housing Ombudsman.

Housing Ombudsman Service

This is a free, independent service that can provide advice or help resolve a complaint at any stage. Visit www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk.

9.2 Data Protection

We handle your personal information in line with the UK Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR. Access is restricted to authorised staff on a "need-to-know" basis. We will:

- **Process information for limited purposes**
- **Keep it accurate and up to date**
- **Not keep it longer than necessary**
- **Keep it secure**

We may ask security questions to confirm your identity when you contact us or when we contact you. Information will only be shared with third parties when necessary, for example, with contractors to carry out repairs.

As a customer, you have rights under the Data Protection Act, including the right to see the information we hold about you (a "Data Subject Access Request"). For more details, read our Privacy Statement: www.northstarhg.co.uk/privacy-statement

Requests for personal data can be made via email to DPO@northstarhg.co.uk or by contacting our main office (see Section 1.3).



A series of horizontal lines for writing, consisting of 25 evenly spaced lines across the page.





North Star is a housing association providing homes and investing in communities across the North East.

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

North Star Online

Free app - search **North Star Online**
on the App Store or Google Play
or visit: www.northstarhg.co.uk/north-star-online

Phone

03000 11 00 11 – Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm
(excluding bank holidays)
Emergency repairs outside office hours:
03000 11 00 11

Email

customer.services@northstarhg.co.uk
emergencyrepairs@orbisprotect.com
(for out-of-hours emergencies if you can't call)

Facebook Messenger

facebook.com/NorthStarHG

Write or Visit

(by appointment only)

Head office: Endeavour House, St Mark's Court, Thornaby,
Stockton-on-Tees, TS17 6QN

Teesdale office: Enterprise House, Harmire Enterprise Park,
Barnard Castle, DL12 8XT

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