

NORTH STAR



**THE TENANTS'
VOICE UPDATE**
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**KEEPING
HOMES SAFE**

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SUPPORT FOR YOU
PAGE 14

Creating homes, building futures



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HELLO

As we head into the festive period, I hope you're looking forward to spending time with loved ones or taking some time for yourself.

There is plenty going on across North Star. We were excited to launch our new customer app, North Star Online, in October, which we developed with Your Voice customers. It is great to see hundreds of customers already using it. This means less time on hold and more time for our Customer Services team to support with more complex queries or speak to those who prefer to call. If you haven't signed up yet, you can find more information on our website.

At North Star, we're always looking for ways to improve. Your feedback has made it clear that there are some ongoing issues with our repairs services.

We have been working hard with Ian Williams to improve performance. I also met with Ian Williams' Chief Executive in November to set out the level of service we expect for our customers and make sure he understood the importance of providing a consistent and high quality repairs service for you. We'll continue working together, and keeping a close eye on your feedback, to make sure that this important service improves for all customers.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter and find it useful.

Happy Christmas if you're celebrating, and all the best for the New year.

James Walder
Chief executive



MANAGE YOUR TENANCY IN MINUTES.



CHRISTMAS OPENING HOURS

Our Customer Service Team

phone lines will close at 5pm on the 23rd December and reopen at 12 noon on Friday 2nd January.

If you need to report an emergency repair during this time, call **03000 11 00 11** or email emergencyrepairs@orbisprotect.com.

Visit pages 16 - 17 for advice on keeping your home safe and warm over winter.



Please contact us if you require this information in another language or format.

Jeśli potrzebujesz tych informacji w innym języku lub formacie, skontaktuj się z nami.

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অনুগ্রহ করতে আমাদরে সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন যদি আপনাকে এই তথ্য অন্য কন ভাষা বা ফরম্যাটে প্রয়জন হয়।

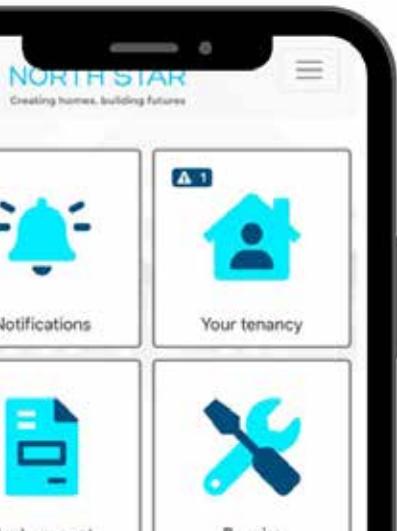
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ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਮੀ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਜਾਂ ਫਾਰਮੈਟ ਵੱਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

کےس مہ مرک مارب وت یہاں جیم ٹیہرا ف ای نابز روایس ک تامولعی وک پا رگا
بیرک مطبار

Report repairs, check your rent, give feedback and more - all in one place.

Download **North Star Online** on your smartphone, sign up with your tenancy reference number, and access everything you need, anytime, anywhere. Visit www.northstarhg.co.uk/north-star-online/ for more info.



Scan to register



AN UPDATE FROM THE TENANTS' VOICE (TTV)

TTV sits at the heart of Your Voice, North Star's network of customers who help to shape and improve services.

We work alongside North Star staff and the Board of Directors to make sure the customer voice isn't just heard, but really listened to and acted upon.

It's been a brilliant first year for us. We've had training, built a strong and supportive team, and found our feet as a group. One of our big highlights was creating a Complaints Task and Finish Group that is helping to make the complaints process clearer and fairer for everyone. We also launched Housing Perks, and attended an event with all North Star staff to begin creating North Star's next five-year strategy.

Looking ahead, we've agreed a full calendar of meetings for the next year and have some exciting plans in place. Each TTV member will be involved in different customer and Board meetings, as well as smaller subgroups where we can really get into the detail. We've decided that our time together should focus on asking questions and providing challenge, making sure we use our voices where it matters most.

It's been a busy and rewarding year, and we're only just getting started!



We'd love to see more customers join TTV to help make sure the group represents all voices across North Star's communities.

If that sounds like something you'd enjoy, scan the QR code below or visit <https://forms.office.com/e/qbAgqW7gnS> to fill out a short application form.



YOU SAID WE DID



Repairs were not being completed first time

We added more specialist contractors for complex jobs like damp work and locksmith services. Our contractors have also reviewed and improved their van stock levels

Our communication was poor about planned works and timescales

We introduced new ways to keep customers informed about upcoming works and start dates

There were delays with repairs being carried out

We brought in new sub-contractors to help reduce backlogs

There was a lack of communication with customers about major works and follow-on works

We introduced follow on works and major works cards to be given during appointments

Release sections of North Star Online as they are ready

The app is ready to use and we've got more features rolling out in Spring 2026 including more intuitive repairs reporting and in-app home advice

Making a complaint

You can make a complaint in any way that suits you - phone, email, letter, online, or in person. Our contact details are on the back cover. We use a simple two-stage complaints process:

Stage 1

We'll confirm we've got your complaint within 2 working days. A manager will look into it and reply within 10 working days.

Stage 2

If you're not happy with the first response, a senior manager will review it. If you still feel it isn't resolved, you can contact the Housing Ombudsman for independent help.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR PROPERTY TEAM

Hello, I'm Adam, Head of Property and Compliance.

My team is here to keep your home safe and in good condition. Here's how we can work together to make that happen.

Access to Your Home

We know waiting in for appointments isn't always easy. If you ever feel unsure about letting someone in, just tell us. We're happy to explain what will happen and help you feel comfortable.

We need to get into your home for safety checks, surveys and repairs. These visits help us spot problems early before they become bigger.

When we can't get in, it means more visits, delays and extra costs.

If you need to change an appointment, let us know as soon as you can and we'll find a time that works for you.

Rechargeable Repairs and Clearances

Most repairs are our responsibility. Sometimes we need to charge for a repair or clearance, for example if:

- Damage is caused by an accident or misuse.
- We can't get in after you report an emergency.
- No repair is needed when we arrive.
- Two appointments are missed.
- We must force entry for safety checks.
- Changes have been made in the home that we need to fix.
- Keys are lost and we help you get in.
- Items or rubbish are left behind when you move out.

We'll always tell you if a charge applies.

If you're moving out, please leave your home clean and empty - including gardens, sheds, and lofts - to avoid charges.

Thank you for helping us keep every North Star home safe and in good condition!



AWAAB'S LAW: KEEPING HOMES SAFE AND HEALTHY

On 27th October 2025, new rules called Awaab's Law came into force. These laws set strict timeframes for how quickly landlords like North Star must investigate and fix serious hazards in homes starting with damp and mould.

At North Star, we fully support these changes. We've strengthened our systems, training, and monitoring so we can keep every customer safe.

How we deal with:

Emergency hazards

These will cause serious harm to your health or home if not sorted immediately, for example a major leak that cannot be contained. **We'll fix or make safe within 24 hours.**

Significant hazards

We'll inspect the problem within 10 working days. You'll get a written report within 3 working days explaining what we found and what's next. **We'll start repairs within 5 working days of the inspection or within 12 weeks if we have any issues such as not being able to access your home.**

If work can't be completed quickly, we'll make sure temporary safety measures are in place and, if needed, provide temporary accommodation.



What have we done

- Trained all frontline staff on Awaab's Law.
- Updated Every Visit Counts training to help staff spot issues during visits of any kind.
- Introduced new systems to track every report.
- Set up regular reviews by our senior team and Board.

How you can help

Report any damp, mould, or hazards as soon as you spot them. The sooner you let us know, the sooner we can fix the problem before it gets any worse.

For tips for preventing damp and mould, visit our website or get in touch - we're happy to help!

**Scan for advice
and to report
damp and mould:**



CUSTOMER ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

Find out how we performed in the 2024/25 financial year including the improvements we made to our homes, the complaints we handled, and more.

We currently manage **4,023** homes across the region:

Type of home	Amount
General needs	3,350
Supported Housing	596
Managed on behalf of others	35
Leaseholders	14
Shared ownership	28
Total	4,023

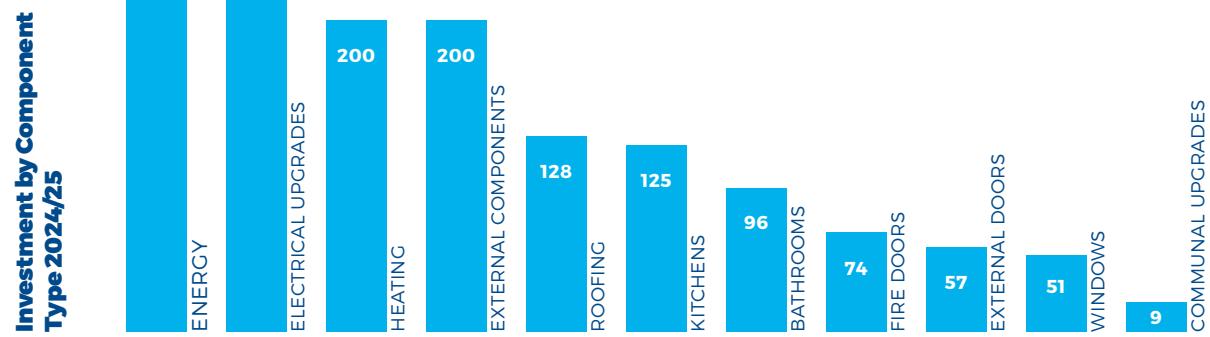


Improving Homes

Planned Maintenance

Between April 2024 and March 2025, we spent over £5 million improving customers' homes through our Planned Investment Programme.

We carried out improvements to 1,033 homes, focusing on energy efficiency, new heating systems, and electrical upgrades.



*Some properties have had more than one type of work.



Making Homes Warmer and Greener

Our goal is for every home to reach Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Level C by 2028. An EPC shows how energy-efficient a home is - A means very efficient, G means not efficient. Reaching Level C means your home will be well insulated, easier to heat and cheaper to run.

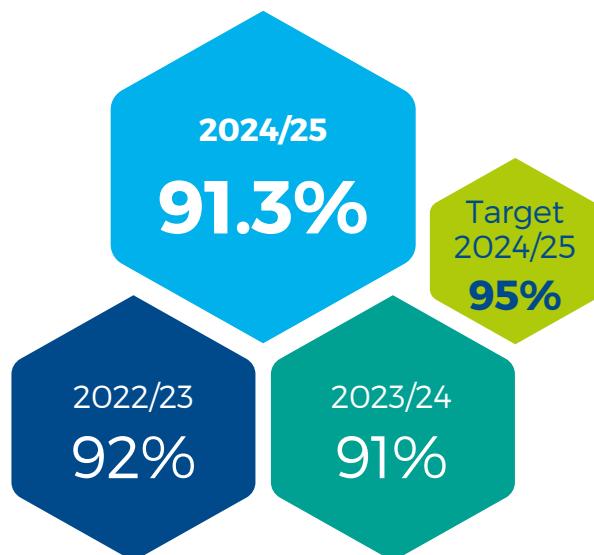
This year we invested **£680,000** to make homes greener. We added wall and loft insulation, new windows and doors, air source heat pumps, and solar panels to

many homes. We also secured **£930,000** of government funding from the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund.

This will help pay for a three-year project to make 85 homes more energy-efficient, with **365 separate improvements** planned. If your home is part of this work, thank you for your patience while we carry it out. We will do our best to minimise any disruption. The changes will make your home more comfortable and can help lower your bills.

89.3%
of tenants are satisfied that we provide a safe home

Percentage satisfied with planned investment work



100%
of asbestos management surveys completed

100%
of asbestos surveys or re-inspections completed

94.7%
of emergency repairs completed on time

Our Repairs Service

How We're Doing on Repairs:

We completed **16,871** repairs in 2024/25. This is slightly fewer than last year (17,016). The average cost of each repair was £135, and there were about 4.3 repairs per home.

Maintenance	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Target 2024/25	How we compare to others
Percentage satisfied with the repairs service	85.6%	83.8%	86.5%	88%	On par
Percentage of appointments kept	95.8%	96.8%	94.4%	98%	↓
Percentage of properties with a valid gas safety certificate at year end	99.74%	99.94%	100%	100%	↑
Percentage of fire safety checks completed	100%	100%	100%	100%	↑

Helping with Money and Benefits



Our Welfare Benefits Team helped 742 households increase their income by more than £1 million last year. This was mainly through unclaimed or backdated benefits.

If you need support, please contact our team through Customer Services on 03000 11 00 11 or email Welfare.benefits@northstarhg.co.uk.



New Homes and New Tenants

We let 284 homes this year, and 93.2% of new tenants said they were happy with their new home.

Empty homes stats	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Target 2024/25
Percentage of rent lost through homes being empty	0.94%	0.79%	0.79%	0.78%
Average number of days taken to let a home	24.5 days	23 days	23.5 days	20 days

What We're Doing to Improve

We perform better than average at managing empty homes compared to similar organisations, but we're still working to improve so we can meet our targets. We're running a pilot to test a new way of managing empty homes. We're also working closely with our contractors to speed up repairs and make sure they're completed to a high standard, so homes are ready to move into as soon as possible.

Your neighbourhoods

Keeping Communities Safe

We recorded 75 anti-social behaviour (ASB) cases and 73 incidents last year, similar to 2023/24. The most common issues were inconsiderate behaviour (like noise, parking disputes or bin issues) and nuisance neighbours.

Improving How We Handle ASB

Over the past year, we improved how we record and manage ASB by:

- Using a better case management system.
- Training staff on our updated policy.
- Tracking trends and outcomes more clearly.

Customer satisfaction with how we handled ASB complaints rose to 78.8%, which is higher than the national average of 64.8%. We work closely with the police, local councils, and support agencies to keep communities safe. Let us know if you experience ASB so we can help.





Complaints at a glance

We are members of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme. Each year, we check that our complaints service meets the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. You can read our latest report and complaints policy on our website. We also share what we learn from complaints in our website blog each month.

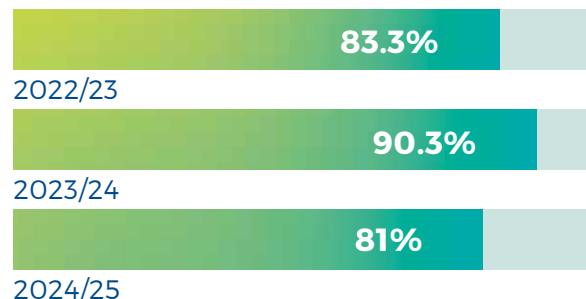
86.4%

of customers said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall services provided by North Star.

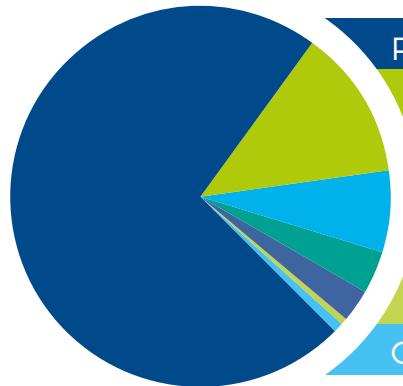
Stage One Complaints by service area	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Property Maintenance	135	105	125
Asset Management	19	12	22
Property Compliance	9	10	12
Housing	11	6	7
Supported Housing	2	2	5
Customer Services	6	4	2
Development	4	4	0
Total	186	143	173

Percentage of complaints upheld

Upheld complaints are complaints that we agree were valid after we looked into them.



Formal complaints



Repairs service	125
Planned maintenance works	22
Property compliance work	12
Housing services	6
Supported housing	5
Customer services	1
Out of hours service	1

It is your feedback that helps us to improve. Thank you if you took the time to leave a compliment, complaint or feedback and please don't hesitate to contact us in the future.

Sharing the Positives

We also received 37 compliments, including:

10 for Repairs and Contractors

18 for Housing and Supported Housing

8 for Customer Services

1 for Development

FIRE Safety Tips

Candles, lights, and decorations make our homes cosy in winter but these also bring extra fire risks.

Here's how to stay safe:

Don't overload extension leads

Only plug in what your extension lead can handle. Never plug one lead into another. Use surge-protected leads if you can.

Be careful with candles

Use safe holders and keep candles away from paper, decorations, children, and pets. Never leave them burning when you go out or go to bed.

Test your smoke alarm

Press the test button once a week. If it doesn't beep, change the batteries. If it still doesn't work, let us know.

Check your appliances

Look for the British Standard Kitemark or CE mark. Turn items off when not in use, and buy only from trusted shops.



Reporting a fire or safety concern

- Call 999 if a fire starts.
- For non-urgent concerns, contact us.
- Your local fire service can also give advice or a free home fire safety check.



Stay safe with batteries

- Don't charge batteries overnight or when you're out.
- Only use the charger that came with the device.
- Don't charge on beds, sofas, or carpets.
- Keep e-scooters, bikes, or toys with big batteries out of shared hallways.
- Check batteries for swelling, heat, or strange smells.
- Let batteries cool before charging again.
- Damaged batteries? Take them to a recycling centre.

HELPING YOU MOVE FORWARD

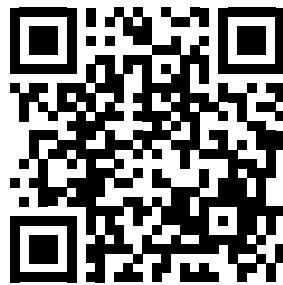
Hello, my name is Christiana and I am a Community Engagement Officer.

I work for North Star but you might have seen me out and about with Thirteen Group and Beyond Housing, too.

I'm here to help people access training, wellbeing and employability support, and much more through a great project called Tees Valley Move Forward.

Through this, you can access free personalised coaching, training sessions, or job placement support completely tailored to your needs and goals.

If you live in the Tees Valley, you're facing barriers to work, and you would like to build your skills and confidence, pop me an email at Christiana.chukwu@northstarhg.co.uk or scan the QR code to sign up:



Tenants Can Get Discounts

With Over 100 Brands
With A New Free Discount App

Search Housing Perks on your app store and enter your tenancy reference



 NORTH STAR

 HOUSING PERKS



SUPPORT FOR YOU



Extra Help with Living Costs

You may be entitled to financial support to help with day-to-day costs such as:

Pension Credit - Boosts income for people over State Pension age and can unlock other help such as housing support or a free TV licence (if you're over 75).

Warm Home Discount - £150 off your electricity bill if you meet certain criteria. This is automatically applied so if you receive messages asking you to apply, DO NOT give away your information.

Help with NHS Health Costs - Free or reduced prescriptions, dental treatment, and travel to appointments if you're on a low income.

Visit **gov.uk** for full details.

Be alert to scams.

The Government or Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) will never ask for your bank details by text or email. Forward suspicious messages to 7726 to report them.



Energy Support

Our partners at HEAT offer free, independent advice to help you manage energy costs if you're in debt or struggling to pay.

Support can include:

- Help contacting your energy supplier.
- Access to energy debt relief.
- Tailored advice to reduce your bills.
- Links to local crisis help.

We can refer you directly, or you can contact HEAT yourself:

0800 092 9002

www.heat-thewisegroup.co.uk

Whether it's access to energy or food support, understanding the benefits system, or help with budgeting, our Welfare Benefits team is here to help.

You can email them at:

welfare.benefits@northstarhg.co.uk
or call Customer Services and ask for the team.

Domestic Abuse Support

No one should live in fear of abuse and we're here to help if you need it. If you report abuse to us, a member of our team will contact you within 24 hours. We'll listen, help you look at your options, and support you in the way that feels right for you. We can:

- Help you contact the police or specialist services.
- Make your home safer with extra security.
- Help you move if you can't safely stay where you are.

All meetings are private, and your safety is always our priority.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Your mental health matters. Whether you're feeling anxious, isolated, or finding things hard to cope with, you don't have to face it alone.

Support services:

Mind - National charity offering advice and links to local support.

0300 123 3393 | mind.org.uk

Shout - FREE support via text

Text SHOUT to 85258

CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably) -

Support for men who are struggling.

0800 58 58 58 | thecalmzone.net

If you're in crisis or think you might harm yourself or someone else, call 999 or go to your nearest A&E.

You can also call your local NHS Mental Health Crisis Line - find your local number at nhs.uk/urgentmentalhealth

Contact the police in confidence on
101

If you're in immediate danger, call
999

Where to get support directly:

National Domestic Abuse Helpline

0808 2000 247

nationaldahelpline.org.uk

Harbour

Support for men and women, including both victims and perpetrators.

03000 20 25 25

myharbour.org.uk

My Sisters Place

Support for women experiencing domestic abuse.

01642 241864

mysistersplace.org.uk

HALO Project

Specialists in honour-based abuse, forced marriage, and FGM.

01642 683045

haloproject.org.uk

THE 12 DAYS OF WINTER (HOME EDITION!)

Top tips for keeping your home safe and warm in the cold weather.

1. FIND YOUR STOP TAP!

Your stop tap turns your water off in an emergency, such as a burst pipe. It's often under the kitchen sink or in a cupboard. Try turning it once so you know how it works.



2. CATCH SMALL LEAKS QUICKLY.

A bowl or bucket under a drip can stop damage while you wait for help.



3. DON'T SKIP INSURANCE.

It helps cover the cost of replacing your belongings after a flood, fire or burglary. Use comparison sites to find the right cover for you.

4. KEEP HEAT PUMPS CONSISTENT.

If you have an air source heat pump, it's best to leave it on all the time, day and night. If you're going away, use the "holiday" or frost-protection mode, not off.

5. CHECK YOUR RADIATORS.

If they're warm at the bottom but cold at the top, they may need bleeding. You can do this yourself with a radiator key. Search 'How to bleed a radiator' online or get in touch with us and we can help.





EDF has some very useful tips for using heat pumps on their website!



6. HAVE A QUICK LOOK AT THE BOILER.

If pressure is low, your heating may not work well. You can top it up yourself, or ask us for advice.

9. LET YOUR HOME BREATHE.

Keep vents, trickle vents and extractor fans open or turned on to help stop damp and mould forming.



8. WRAP UP YOUR OUTDOOR TAP.

A cloth or cheap tap cover helps stop it freezing.

7. IF THE ELECTRICS TRIP, TAKE IT STEP BY STEP.

Unplug everything, then plug each item back in one at a time to find the problem. Once you find the faulty appliance, flip the switch on the fuse box to turn the power back on. Your fuse box is usually near the front door.

10. GIVE RADIATORS SOME SPACE.

Move big furniture away from radiators so heat can spread around the room.



11. CHECK OUTSIDE IF YOU CAN.

Leaves in gutters or drains can cause water to build up. If you can't clear them safely yourself, let us know.

12. TELL SOMEONE EARLY.

If something looks or feels wrong, report it as soon as you can. Small problems are much easier to fix in winter.



A WARMING WINTER RECIPE



CARROT & CORIANDER SOUP

Two of the residents at our supported accommodation scheme in Middlesbrough made this delicious soup for their neighbours and wanted to share it with you. It's quick, easy and you can make a big batch and freeze it so you'll always have a healthy lunch to hand.

Method

Heat the oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the onions (and garlic, if using) and sauté for 3-4 minutes until softened.

If using dried coriander, stir it in now and fry for 1 minute.

Add the chopped carrots and potato, stir, then pour in the vegetable stock.

Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for about 20 minutes, or until the vegetables are soft.

Add the fresh coriander (if using). Blend the soup until smooth using a hand blender, or blend in batches in a regular blender - don't overfill the blender or the lid might come off!

Taste and season with salt and pepper. Reheat gently before serving and garnish with extra coriander if you like.

Storage: Keep in the fridge for 2-3 days. Once cooled, you can freeze lunch sized portions in freezer safe containers for up to 3 months.

Ingredients (3-4 servings)

800 g carrots, washed and sliced (no need to peel if well washed)

1-2 medium onions, chopped

2 cloves garlic, crushed (optional)

1 medium potato, peeled and diced

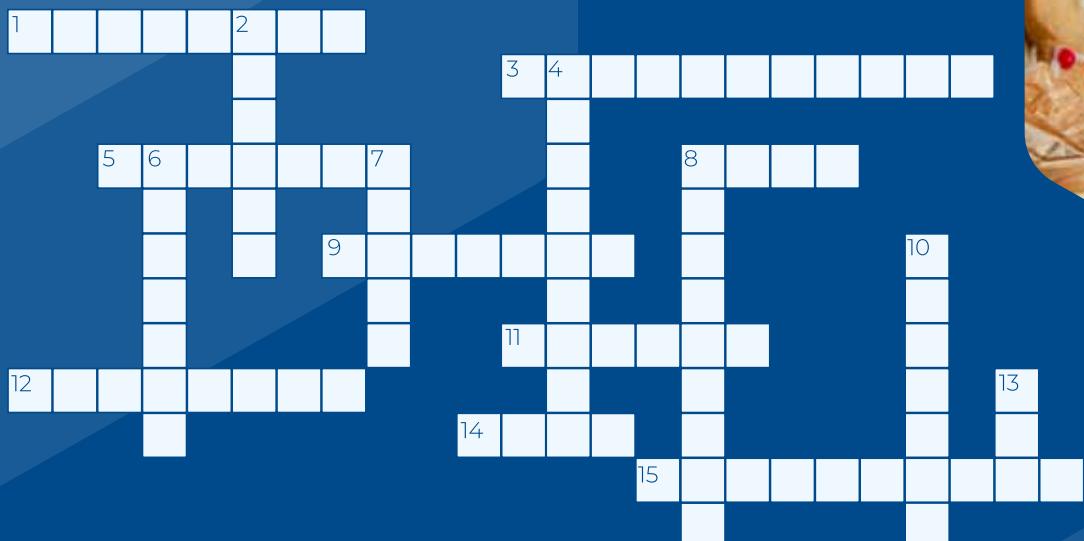
1 litre vegetable stock (stock cubes are fine)

1 tsp dried coriander or 1 small bunch fresh coriander, chopped (plus extra to garnish)

1 tbsp olive oil or vegetable oil

Salt and pepper, to taste

PUZZLE TIME!



Across

1. Severe snowstorm
3. It tells how cold is outside
5. These keeps your hands warm
8. The ground is covered by this every Winter
9. Winter month
11. A garment for the upper body
12. Month that winter starts
14. For coasting down snow-covered hills
15. A feathery ice crystal that falls from the sky

Down

2. Regions around the North Pole
4. Spending the winter in a dormant state
6. Hanging ice formed by dripping water
7. Keeps your neck warm
8. Shake from being in the cold
10. Has a carrot for a nose
13. Covers ponds and lakes

Answers

December
Shiver
Blizzard
Gloves

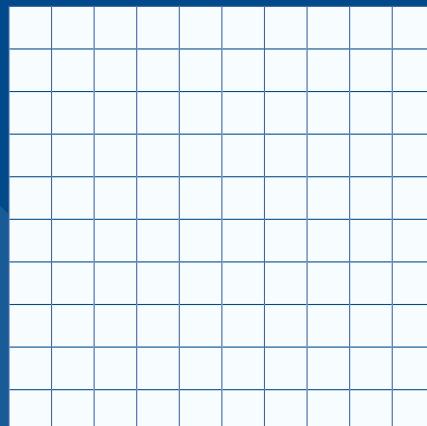
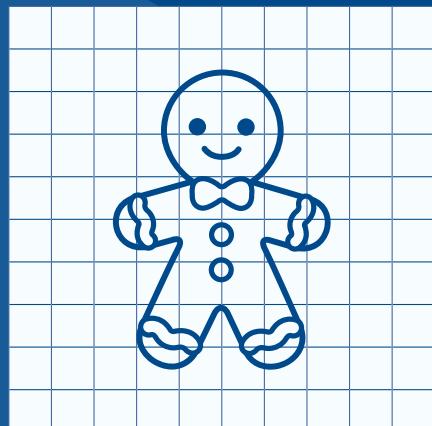
Snow
January
Snowflakes
Arctic

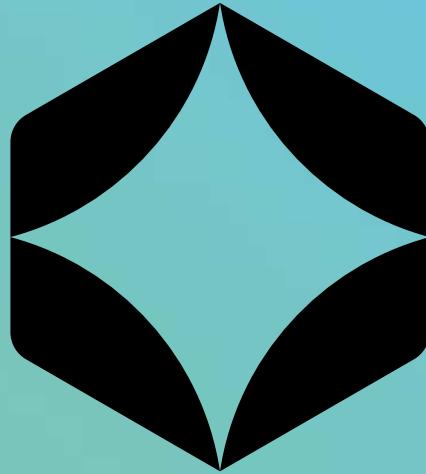
Hibernate
Icicles
Scarf
Thermometer

Sled
Snowman
Ice
Jacket

Gingerbread man drawing challenge

Can you copy the drawing of the gingerbread man in the empty grid?





North Star

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

□ Download North Star Online from the App Store or Google Play
🌐 www.northstarhg.co.uk

f@northstarhg

📞 03000 11 00 11

✉️ customer.services@northstarhg.co.uk

Write:

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

Enterprise House, Barnard Castle,
County Durham, DL12 8XT

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