

# Social Value Impact Report 2014/2015

# Welcome to North Star's first Social Value Report

At North Star we do all we can to provide good quality, safe and secure homes to customers. We also aim to do a lot more than this by working with people and communities to improve the quality of their lives more broadly. This might be funding for community projects, free advice about how to reduce energy bills, working with contractors to offer apprenticeships to local people and providing free access to advice and support for those wanting to improve their chances of getting a job.

We do this because a home is only one of the things that makes for a good life. All of us also need neighbourhoods that work well, open spaces and greenery, places where we can meet other people and opportunities for jobs and training if we need them.

This is what we mean by Social Value; the value to our customers and communities of what we do alongside a good quality, safe and secure home.



**Sally Thomas**  
Head of Community Investment

Our Leading and Growing to 2018 Strategy emphasises the importance of measuring what we do:

*"We measure our performance in order to identify the value of what we do."*

*"We measure it in relationship to the impact on People, Places and Profit"*

# Social Value at North Star

## Why do we measure Social Value?

We need to know that we are focusing and targeting our resources where they are needed most and we want to show our customers, communities and partners that we are doing so.

To do this is not easy or an exact science. The value of a community garden to a customer or of a breakfast club at their child's school cannot be fully captured in words or numbers. The impact on someone's life of a new home, or better insulation goes way beyond the financial cost.

Helping someone reduce their debts can significantly lower levels of stress, which is difficult to pin down in a figure. For the first time, we have tried to capture all the ways in which we provide Social Value to our customers and communities through a mix of facts, figures, stories and case studies. We aim to do so much more than simply provide a home and we hope this report demonstrates that.



## Adding Value: Measuring Success

**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. It is important to note that not all outcomes are available as part of the SVB so not all will have a monetary value, although new ones are being added regularly. 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
- In some cases, projects may not communicate their project analysis as well as they should, so the information is not as complete or robust as we would have hoped
- Projects that are funded towards the end of the financial year may not be complete or even started when we do the impact measurement analysis and report for the previous year so cannot be included

We aim to apply the Social Return on Investment (SROI) process to one large-scale project once a year. It is time consuming and resource intensive and this is realistic in terms of our size and scale. We are currently exploring the options for external validation of our social value reporting.

# Our customers

Customers are at the heart of everything we do at North Star. This year, we have offered a number of services to support customers, including the support of a Welfare Benefits Officer, a Customer Hardship Fund, and opportunities to work alongside staff to ensure the services we buy are value for money.

## The Hardship Fund

North Star allocated £10,000 into a Hardship Fund in 2014/15. The Hardship Fund is there for staff to help households in crisis by providing financial support that can be used in a one off emergency situation. Some examples of how we have supported customers include food shopping, topping up gas and electric meters, buying cookers, wheelie bins and access to transport.

## How the Hardship Fund helped Ms C

Ms C was in need of money for fuel for her car to get to a job interview. If she didn't attend the interview, her Job Seeker's Allowance would have been sanctioned for up to 3 months for failing to meet her work search commitments. Her Housing Officer gave her money from the Hardship Fund to help avoid potential major financial hardship from the knock on effect of being unable to attend the interview.



## Welfare Benefits 2014/2015

Increased customers income by

**£306,978.76**

## Case Study: Miss M

Miss M is currently on maternity leave. A routine benefit check identified that she had not added her youngest child to her Tax Credits claim and was missing out on Child Tax Credit at **£62.89 per week**.

Total gain for her household was **£3,542.80** (including backdating the claim).

## Between 2011 and 2015

## Our Welfare Benefits Officer has:

Increased customer's incomes by

**£842,249.35**

Visited

**1,300 customers**

Made

**1,315 referrals**

to other agencies

# Our customers

North Star engages consistently, continuously and meaningfully with customers, providing opportunities to shape services to reflect local priorities. Customers have the ability to scrutinise the performance of services and hold us to account, provide healthy challenge as necessary, identify areas for improvement and influence future service provision.

## There are many ways customers can get involved:

### Tenants Voice Scrutiny Panel

North Star customers who review our services and make recommendations for improvement.

### 4U

A group of customers who arrange local events and day trips for over 55s and disabled people.

### Tenant Advisors

Customers who test out our services and make recommendations for improvement. They take part in activities including mystery shopping, surveys, visits, work shadowing and interviews with staff and customers.

### North Star LINK

North Star customers who meet with staff monthly. The Panel represents the views of, and promotes the interests of, all customers by influencing our services.

*"We work hard at being a great landlord by involving people and working hard together. **We listen, learn and do better.** We place people and communities at the centre of all we do."*



### Estate Walkabouts

Customers are invited to join Housing and Maintenance Officers to take part in an estate walkabout to see what needs doing (such as untidy gardens).



### Customer events

This is a great way for customers to meet staff and find out about the services North Star provide. Customers can also give us feedback on ways we can improve.



### Questionnaires, feedback forms and surveys

We want to give everyone the opportunity to have their say so throughout the year we contact customers with questionnaires, feedback forms and surveys.



### Tenant Magazine

We produce two magazines a year (summer and winter) to share news and information with our customers.



## Our customers



### Tenant Advisors and Procurement

Tenant Advisors have worked alongside staff in the assessment of tenders, interviewing contractors and monitoring their work.

### They have been involved in our:

External Decoration contract

Electrical Servicing Contract

Damp Proof Contract

**The total savings in these procurement processes is £246,000**

**Involved customers directly influence North Star's services in a number of ways:**

- Shaping our Welfare Reform customer communications
- Ensuring customers with Service Charges are getting what they pay for
- Improving the Tenant Magazine; making sure it is interesting and includes information customers will want to read
- Organising a customer event, bringing around 140 customers together. Last year, the event gave information and advice to customers about TADEA UK, our Welfare Benefits Officer, banking from Barclays Bank, our new contractors, Esh and Burridge, and different ways to get involved with North Star
- Influencing our Anti-Social Behaviour policies
- Ensuring our complaints process is customer friendly and North Star is learning from complaints and taking action to make improvements
- Influencing satisfaction surveys and making sure they are quick and easy complete
- Shaping our Digital Inclusion Strategy

### North Star LINK and Tenants Voice Scrutiny Panel (TVSP)

Volunteered

**7,172 hours**

of their time in 2014/15

If TVSP and LINK members were paid, their total wages would be

**£85,418.52\***

**14** customers attended meetings regularly

North Star invest **£20,000**

per year in LINK and TVSP, and achieve a Social Return of

**£55,223\*\***

For every £1 spent, **£2.76** is socially returned

\* Applying Volunteer England figures of an average hourly wage of £11.91 per hour

\*\* Using SVB values



# Our communities

## Community Investment at North Star

Community Investment is about helping to create, support and develop self-reliant communities which have a positive and equal relationship with local service providers and have a measure of control over their own neighbourhoods.

Community Investment is a priority for North Star Housing Group and we want it to be embedded across the organisation. We measure it to identify its value and impact in relationship to people, the places they live and our performance as a business.

## Community-Led Investment

The approach is to support the grass-roots development and delivery of projects that will contribute to strengthening the community. We follow a process that begins in the neighbourhood, making sure that projects come from the ground up and are not imposed. The aim is to focus as much on the opportunities in, and potential of, an area as the needs and concerns; creating autonomy, rather than dependency, greater community capacity, rather than more services, and sustainability, rather than short-term solutions.



## Priority Neighbourhoods

In recognition of the fact that we cannot do everything, everywhere, Community Investment takes a targeted approach, based on the outcomes of rigorous research and a balance of need and opportunity. We do most in the neighbourhoods where it matters most. These are our Priority Neighbourhoods.

# Our communities

Between 2012 and 2015, the overall impact of Community Investment has been:

Total North Star funding - **£181,683.34**

Total other funding, attracted on the back of NSHG funding - **£355,612.01**

For every £1.00 we put in, **£1.95** was levered from other sources

The total number of beneficiaries - **18,721**

We funded **116 projects overall**

## Community Investments Projects 2014/15

Objective	No of Projects	Amount NSHG Invested	Other Funding	% of NSHG Budget	No of people benefiting
Employment & Skills	3	£4,230	£1,346	7%	69
Financial Inclusion	4	£10,250	£7,000	16%	705
Children and Young People	9	£17,604	£8,000	28%	194
Community Strengthening	11	£13,305	£47,000	21%	1,384
Health and Wellbeing	11	£18,145	£25,280	28%	1,850
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>£63,534</b>	<b>£88,626</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>4,202</b>

For every £1 North Star invested in 2014/15, the projects levered in a further **£1.39**

## Case Study: Family Support Worker Project

We supported a project to employ a local tenant and provide them with professional training and qualifications to become a support/youth worker, working with residents and families in Evenwood to encourage voluntary activities and community action.

The outcomes are:

- Completion of a level 3 Community Development qualification and level 2 Youth Work qualification  
– **SVB value of £1,155**
- 10 children regularly attend the youth film club  
– **SVB value of £19,961**
- The involvement of four regular volunteers  
– **SVB value of £7,473**
- Within the area of the project there is a high level of unemployment. This project has recruited a local person, given her the skills and education to develop, and therefore kept the income local to the area  
– **SVB value of £1,671**

Project Input = **£15,250**, Social Return = **£30,260**

Every £1 spent generated **£1.98** as a social return

## Case Study: Community Help Hubs

Community Help Hubs support tenants in Cockerton, Darlington with severe debt problems, assisting them to resolve urgent issues, helping them to remain in their homes, improving their physical and mental wellbeing and the restoration of sustainable financial stability.

- Maximising tenant's income by checking that they have claimed all Benefits – generated a total of £26,670 from unclaimed Benefits
- Provided financial stability by teaching and supporting tenants to set and follow a household budget
- Negotiate sustainable repayment plans with priority creditors (rent and council tax arrears) and refer tenants to main Bureau for non-priority debt
- £1,500 worth of debt was rescheduled or written off for tenant's accessing the service

Project Input = **£3,750**, Social Return = **£28,170**

Every £1 spent generated **£7.51** as a social return



# Our homes

We work in partnership with local developers, councils and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to create high quality affordable new homes for our communities.

We also continue to invest in our existing housing, ensuring we provide high quality homes for our customers



This year we have carried out a number of home improvements. Our properties have benefited from a range of investments and improvements including:

## Property Improvements

### 98 Heating Upgrades to "A" Rated Boilers:

Potential saving of **£340\*** per property every year on energy bills replacing 'G' rated boilers with 'A' rated boilers (semi-detached property). **Potential total savings up to £33,320.**

### 28 Properties fitted with External Wall Insulation:

Potential savings of £175 (mid-terrace), or £260 (semi-detached) on fuel bills per year. **Potential total savings up to £4,900 (mid-terrace) or £7,280 (semi-detached)**

### 15 Air Source Pumps fitted:

Potential savings of £715—£1,295 per property in fuel bills upgrading from old electric storage heaters. **Potential total savings up to £15,075**

\*Savings based on figures from the Energy Savings Trust

## North Star's New Developments

### 121 high quality new homes built in 2014/15

For every £1 of spending on construction a further **£2.60** in gross output will be generated across the economy as a whole\*

North Star invested £13m on the **121** new developments in 2014/15, generating **£33.8m** in the wider economy

\*Figures from the Institute for Public Policy Research, 2014

# Our homes

**North Star Housing Group develops and supports a range of community-led housing projects, totalling 371 units (the equivalent of around 10% of our stock). They include housing co-operatives, community-based Housing Associations, a Community Land Trust and social enterprises.**

**They are community led solutions to local housing need, which provide homes, capital assets for communities and produce spin-offs in terms of stronger communities, training and jobs and neighbourhood sustainability.**

## Norton Grange Housing Co-operative, Stockton

Norton Grange Housing Co-operative is based on the Norton Grange estate to the North West of Stockton Town Centre. It consists of approximately 50 properties, all owned by North Star Housing Group. The co-operative has been active for 18 years.

Tenants are involved in the allocations process and welcoming new tenants into the community. The co-operative has its own budget to support their activities and strengthen the community. The Board of the Co-operative has arranged social trips for the tenants, funded local community projects, and lobbies for better transport in the area to benefit all residents.

## Community Land Trust (CLT), Gresham, Middlesbrough

The CLT now owns and leases from the council 9 homes in Gresham and is run on a voluntary basis providing homes for local people at an affordable rent. The capital assets can be used to borrow money for further development, bringing economic and additional housing benefit to the area. The project has generated significant added value in the form of voluntary effort, local jobs and spend being retained in the local economy.



## Community-Led Housing Projects

### Housing Co-operatives

Langridge and Norton Grange – 92 units: we provide development, management and repairs services.

### Community-based housing

Darlington Housing Association and the Quaker Society - 265 units: we provide management and repairs services

### Community-owned housing

Middlesbrough CLT – 9 units: we provide management and repairs services

### Empty Homes Programme

Five Lamps – 4 units: we provide management and repairs services



# Our Contractors

## Social Value in Procurement

As part of their successful submissions all of our contractors commit to contributing to North Star's Community Investment activity, adding Social Value to their delivery.

We are committed to capturing social value in procurement in the form of apprenticeships, work placements, community labour or cash donations from all of our procurement activities where possible.

So far, North Star's contractors have:

- Committed £23k to North Star Community Investment activity in 2014/15
- Completed £11,000 worth of social value work in our Priority Neighbourhoods
- Taken 2 trainees on; completed 4 work placements; employed 9 apprentices on contracts
- Donated £1,000 to charity; completed 2 community labour days

## A Community Labour Day

**Esh Property Service Ltd completely renovated the Community Garden on the Wellgarth Estate in Evenwood, County Durham.**

The work was carried out by a team of over 20 people from Esh's Accounts Department and finished off by Esh's landscaping company, Deerness.

The Community Garden has been transformed with new play equipment and raised beds for community growing.

### Esh completed the following work on the site:

- Removed a number of large bushes and dead trees
- Painted benches
- Removed litter
- Repaired broken fences
- Repaired a broken gate
- Installed a new fence
- Dug out and concreted a path through the middle of the site
- Installed raised beds for growing flowers and vegetables and provided the compost

Before



During



After





# Our partners

## North Star's Partnerships

North Star prides itself on building partnerships with a wide range of organisations which are active at a grass roots level in our communities.

We also seek to develop key strategic partnerships with organisations which can provide high quality services to our tenants.

TADEA and the YMCA are just two examples of strong partners we have worked with directly.

### Teesdale YMCA

**We work closely with the YMCA to deliver youth work in two of our isolated communities in County Durham.**



#### In 2014/2015 the YMCA project:

- Engaged with 40 young people in weekly positive activities
- Provided 20 young people with information, advice and guidance on drugs and alcohol
- Supported 10 young people into volunteering opportunities
- Reduced levels of anti-social behaviour in the area
- Enhanced community cohesion

**Every £1 spent generated £12.45 as a social return**



**Delivering a home energy advice service to help customers maintain warm, energy efficient homes and manage affordable energy bills with confidence.**



**TADEA** has provided home visits to **361** North Star households and made collective savings for tenants of **£43,958**.

The average saving per household is **£122**.

### TADEA Case Study

During the visit to Mrs T, the Energy Advisor identified that there was a cheaper tariff available which could save £75.90 per year and obtain the Warm Homes Discount of £140 (she wasn't eligible through the current supplier). It was also identified that she was in debt to the value of £529 on her electricity meter. An application was successfully made to the Energy Trust Fund for a Charis Grant to get the debt cleared on health grounds. The application was successful and the total annual saving for Mrs T was around £744.

**We developed relationships with 17 new community partners in 2014/15; making 37 partners in total that we work with on a regular basis.**

# Our People

## Our People at North Star

North Star believes that the wellbeing of staff is important to us all. We have adult to adult relationships that strengthen our commitment to fairness, honesty, transparency and personal responsibility.

## North Star staff volunteering in Nepal

Lisa Jarvis, a support worker from North Star's Redcar office was invited to take part in a challenge to help build homes for some of Nepal's most disadvantaged slum families with the charity Reall.

*"My tasks included helping to build new homes for local families, ensuring access to basic amenities such as clean water and sanitation, which are things we all take for granted in the UK. It was backbreaking work with hand tools as there are no mechanical diggers or drills. And all in 30 degrees of heat. I wore two pairs of gloves out. My hands were bruised and blistered and my body ached everywhere. The local workers do all this every day, without breaks, for just £1 per day."*

- Lisa Jarvis, Support Worker



## Staff volunteering

- **32 members of staff** have given up their time under the staff volunteering policy
- Staff have contributed **185 hours or 26.5 working days** in voluntary activity
- North Star has **invested £2,963** worth of working hours into local communities worth of working hours.

Staff have volunteered in a variety of different activities. Examples include volunteering at food banks, being involved in the Princes Trust employability programme for young people, helping out at school breakfast clubs and reading groups, and working at the local Dogs Trust.



# Our People

## Apprenticeships and Graduates

North Star has employed **7 Apprentices** in 2014/15 - SVB value of **£12,292**

North Star has employed **2 Graduates**

- SVB value for a graduate on a Government Training Scheme, **£12,083**
- SVB value for general job training, **£2,507**

**Total Social Value of £26,882**

## Work Placements

North Star has welcomed a variety of work placements across different departments.

Ms E shadowed the Community Investment Department for a week, as part of her Year 10 work placement.

*"I specifically enjoyed visiting the different areas and projects the company works with. Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to work with you, I you, I hope that other pupils will be able to repeat my experience."*



## A Day in the life of a North Star Apprentice

**We spoke to Grace Patterson,  
Community Investment Apprentice:**

**What is your favourite part of  
your job?**

Seeing the positive impact the different aspects of the company have on the tenants and the communities we work in.

**What tasks do you complete on a  
typical day in the office?**

Completing admin tasks for the Community Investment team, impact measurement of the community

projects and resident involvement tasks, assisting with facilitating meetings, attending meetings and taking minutes. I also cover reception and do admin for the Housing Officers.

**Where do you see yourself in 5 years?**

I am hoping to continue working in a sector that helps improve communities and the people in them. Preferably doing activities with people to gain confidence and boost their skills, helping them find employment.

**What has been the most interesting  
thing you have been involved in  
to date?**

Having the opportunity to travel down to London with three other colleagues for the Homes For Britain Rally. Listening to politicians, public speakers and journalists give their opinions on the upcoming changes to the housing sector and meeting people from other housing associations.

**How does it compare to life  
at school?**

School attempts to prepare you for work life, but nothing can compare to the experience you gain from being an apprentice. I have received opportunities and experience from being in the work environment that you could never get from being in school. All whilst being treated like an adult as well!

*"I am hoping to continue working in a sector that helps improve communities and the people in them."*



# Our People

## Staff Training

North Star's culture is what makes us different. Our shared leadership approach ensures more people are involved in the business, making decisions, being accountable, influencing and contributing to improvement.

- North Star has invested **£205k in staff training** and development in 2014/15
- This equates to **1.3%** of the overall organisational spend
- On average, North Star has invested **£1,952 per person**



## Staff Fundraising Activity

**£1,365** raised through staff events and fundraising initiatives for our chosen charity of the year, Macmillan and for Breast Cancer Awareness month.

We have had a coffee morning, a pub quiz, dress down days, raffles, cake sales and a 'bake off' style cooking competition.

## What Next?

**This is the first year we have captured the variety of ways we provide social value to our customers and communities. We aim to expand the activities we measure each year, using North Star's bespoke impact measurement approach. We will learn from new, innovative measurement tools, from other organisations and from our own experience.**

### **Priorities for 2015/2016**

- Expand the measurement of Social Value to further services and activities
- Increase customer involvement and influence in strategic planning to increase social value customers
- Explore external auditing of our Social Value reporting
- Increase customer involvement in identifying, developing and measuring our social value

### **Contact Details**

**If you would like any further information on our approach to Social Value at North Star, please contact:**

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