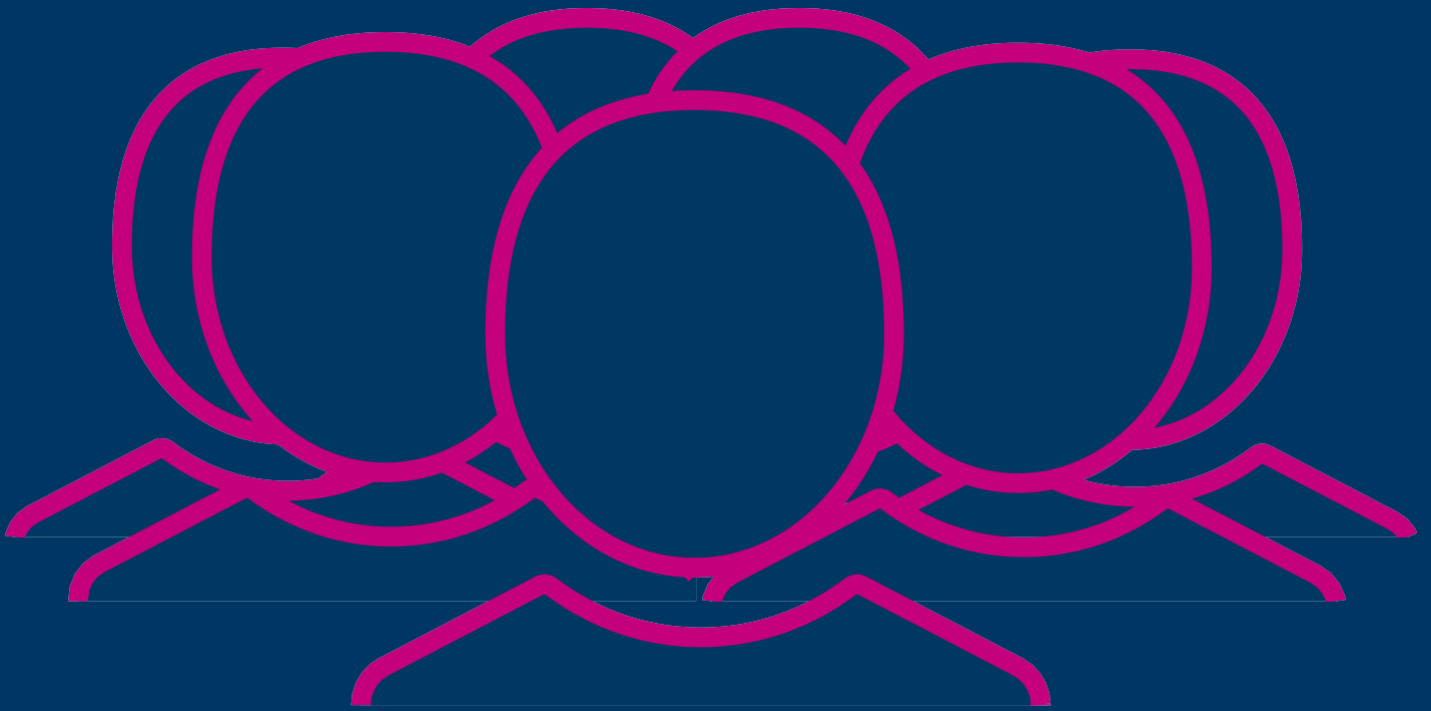


INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™

We invest in people



Feedback

North Star Housing Group

Project number: NOR-20-00649

Practitioner: Graeme Mills

Date: 17 September 2020

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You did it!



You're at the Platinum level of our We invest in people accreditation.

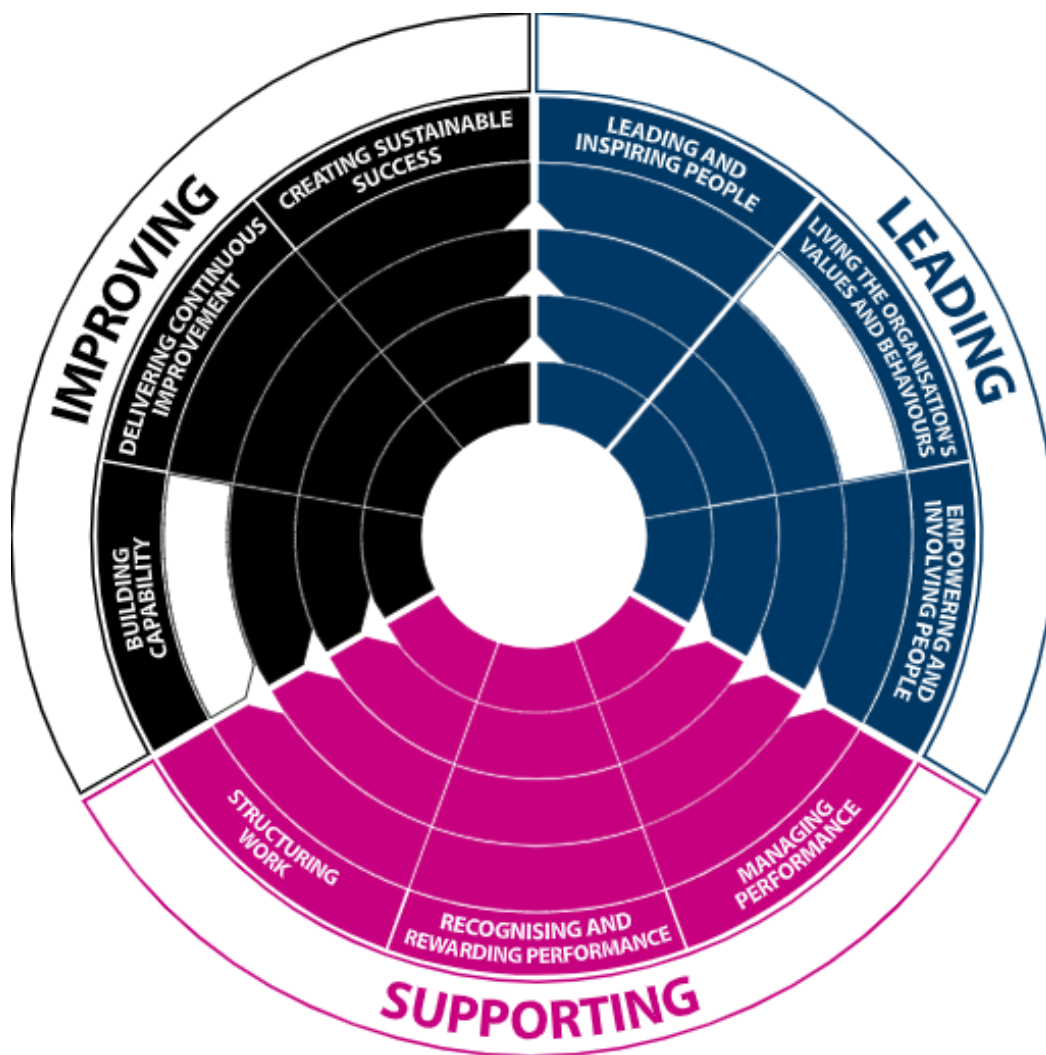
Detailed feedback and recommendations inside...

- What to be proud of
- What to work on
- Our recommendations
- What's next

Key dates

Accreditation date	12-month meeting	24-month meeting	Accreditation expiry
17/09/2020	03/05/2021	03/05/2022	03/05/2023

At a glance



You have met 7 of the 9 Indicators at the High Performing level and 2 Indicators at the Advanced level. Of the 27 Themes within the Standard you met 25 of them at the High Performing level.

In order to meet the Platinum award there needs to be 7 of the 9 Indicators at High Performing.

What to be proud of

- Your people described high levels of trust in the leadership of the organisation.
- They also felt that they were trusted by the organisation's leaders.
- Your leadership team role modelled values and behaviours that were important to your people and the organisation's success.
- The approach to involving and collaborating with your people had strengthened trust and provided momentum behind developments as well as gain support for change.
- The launch of your Continuous conversations was viewed positively by all of those involved in the IIP meetings.
- A culture of respect and appreciation appears to be embedded across the whole of North Star
- Collaboration between teams was seen as an area of improvement.
- You were delivering development programmes that were tailored to the specific performance and cultural needs of your organisation.
- You took an active, and ultimately successful, approach to tackling areas of inconsistency identified in the 24-month review.
- Your strategies carefully consider future impacts on the role of all stakeholders in achieving your ambitions.

What to work on

- Consider defining the skills, knowledge and behaviours you require from all managers to help deliver your performance and cultural ambitions.
- Further define your values by expanding on the behaviours that will clarify how values are applied within North Star.
- Bring together the various tactical elements of succession planning into an overall succession and talent management strategy

Congratulations on achieving Platinum

You care about your people, and we know you're ambitious to do even more for them.

Our feedback focuses on what you need to do to keep improving.

Our recommendations

We've considered **who you are** and **where you're at** as an organisation. Our recommendations are designed to get you **where you want to be**.

- **Consider defining the skills, knowledge and behaviours you require from all managers to help deliver your performance and cultural ambitions.**

Managers are at the forefront of delivering the organisation's performance and sustaining its preferred culture. An individual's experience of working at North Star and their performance will be significantly influenced by their manager.

Furthermore, the future may bring more demands on managers, for example in the area of digital skills.

It was clear that you had considered these needs by the management programs you had developed. The approach to shared leadership and the facilitative leadership program clearly demonstrated you considered current and future capabilities.

This recommendation is to more formally define those areas of skills, knowledge and behaviours that will help to move North Star forward. Once defined you can use this framework to help shape your development of managers, inform succession planning, help identify high potential employees and support the recruitment of managers.

There should also be an alignment between the defined management behaviours and the values of the organisation (see recommendation below).

- **Further define your values by expanding on the behaviours that will clarify the how values are applied within North Star.**

One of the advantages of your values were that they were succinct and easily recalled. This helped your people to be conscious of the values when making decisions as well as influencing their day-to-day behaviours.

You had developed an explanation of the values that indicated behaviours that were aligned to them. Furthermore, you had defined your social purpose and culture, that contributed to the understanding of what the values actually meant in action.

The challenge was the behaviours linked to the values were spread across 2 or 3 documents/strategic statements.

People generally were able to describe how they applied the values but there was a risk of inconsistency e.g. one person's understanding of creativity may be different to another.

The recommendation is to simply provide more details on the behaviours that would be expected from your people that align to each of the values. For example, what sort of behaviours would show that North Star's Directors were being *Courageous*? How would we expect those in admin roles to demonstrate their *Creativity*?

Providing greater definition of values and behaviours may help ultimately strengthen and sustain them.

- **Bring together the various tactical elements of succession planning into an overall succession and talent management strategy**

The review found that you were utilising a number of tactics to support the future talent pool within North Star. This included supporting those aspiring to be in management roles as well as provide reviews to those nearing retirement to ensure knowledge was not lost.

The recommendation is to simply consider developing a more strategic approach that encompassed many elements that you already doing but potentially identify other actions that can be implemented to support succession planning.

What's next?

When you've had a chance to read this report, we'll explain your results in our **feedback meeting**.

WHO?

The meeting will include: Graeme Mills, Carole Richardson, Director of People and Culture, Katherine McGough, Head of People Services

WHEN?

The feedback meeting is scheduled for a date to be agreed

WHERE?

We'll meet via a video call

WHAT?

Together, we'll...

- **discuss your result** and our recommendations in detail.
- brainstorm how to turn our recommendations into **tangible activities**.
- develop an **action plan**, which we'll be able to review one and two years on.

To keep your accreditation, you need to:

- keep meeting (or exceed!) the **requirements** of your award.
- meet us **12 and 24 months** down the line. We won't be assessing you again, but it'll give us the chance to **chat through your progress** against your action plan.
- be **reassessed** no more than three years later.

Don't forget to celebrate!

Let your people know who how you did. **Reward them** for their hard work and **include them** in the journey you're on.

Assessment results

Your results by indicator

The assessment results showed once again that you had attained the Platinum Award, with evidence of 7 of the 9 Indicators meeting the High Performing level. In fact, there are only 2 Themes that were not found to be at that level, which is a further improvement on the previous assessment review in 2017.

INDICATOR	THEME	DEVELOPED	ESTABLISHED	ADVANCED	HIGH PERFORMING
LEADING AND INSPIRING PEOPLE	Creating transparency and trust				✓
	Motivating people to deliver the organisations objectives				✓
	Developing leadership capability				✓
LIVING THE ORGANISATION'S VALUES AND BEHAVIOURS	Operating in line with the values				✓
	Adopting the values				✓
	Living the values			✓	
EMPOWERING AND INVOLVING PEOPLE	Empowering people				✓
	Participating and collaborating				✓
	Making decisions				✓
MANAGING PERFORMANCE	Setting objectives				✓
	Encouraging high performance				✓
	Measuring and assessing performance				✓
RECOGNISING AND REWARDING HIGH PERFORMANCE	Designing an approach to recognition and reward				✓
	Adopting a culture of recognition				✓
	Recognising and rewarding people				✓
STRUCTURING WORK	Designing roles				✓
	Creating autonomy in roles				✓
	Enabling collaborative working				✓
BUILDING CAPABILITY	Understanding peoples' potential				✓
	Supporting learning and development				✓
	Deploying the right people at the right time			✓	
DELIVERING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	Improving through internal and external sources				✓
	Creating a culture of continuous improvements				✓
	Encouraging innovation				✓
CREATING SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS	Focusing on the future				✓
	Embracing change				✓
	Understanding the external context				✓

Survey highlights

Your survey results were above the IIP average (and industry average) for every Indicator and every Theme. You had also improved on your 2017, 2018 and 2019 IIP survey results in all of the Indicators.

Your highest scores

- Your highest absolute score was in relation to Indicator 9, *Creating Sustainable Success*, which was 6.7 out of a maximum of 7.0
- Indicators 4, *Managing Performance* and 6, *Structuring Work* achieved a score of 6.6 which also showed significant improvement on the previous survey results.
- Your highest relative score (relative to the IIP benchmark) was in fact Indicator 5, *Recognising and Rewarding High Performance* which was 1.1 above the IIP average

...and your lowest

- Although the highest relative score your lowest absolute score was also Indicator 5, *Recognising and Rewarding High Performance*, which was 6.2
- Your next lowest score was Indicator 7, *Building Capability*, with 6.4 out of a maximum of 7.0.

You had a response rate to the survey of 93% which is even higher than the previous assessment in 2017.

The results of the survey were very positive. In many areas there were no disagreements with any statements and in Indicator 9 we saw the number of people strongly agreeing with the statements to be over 75%.

The survey results also demonstrate improvement not only in comparison to the previous assessment in 2017 but improvements from the IIP surveys conducted in 2018 and 2019. This provided a clear pattern of improvement in all areas of the Investors in People standard.

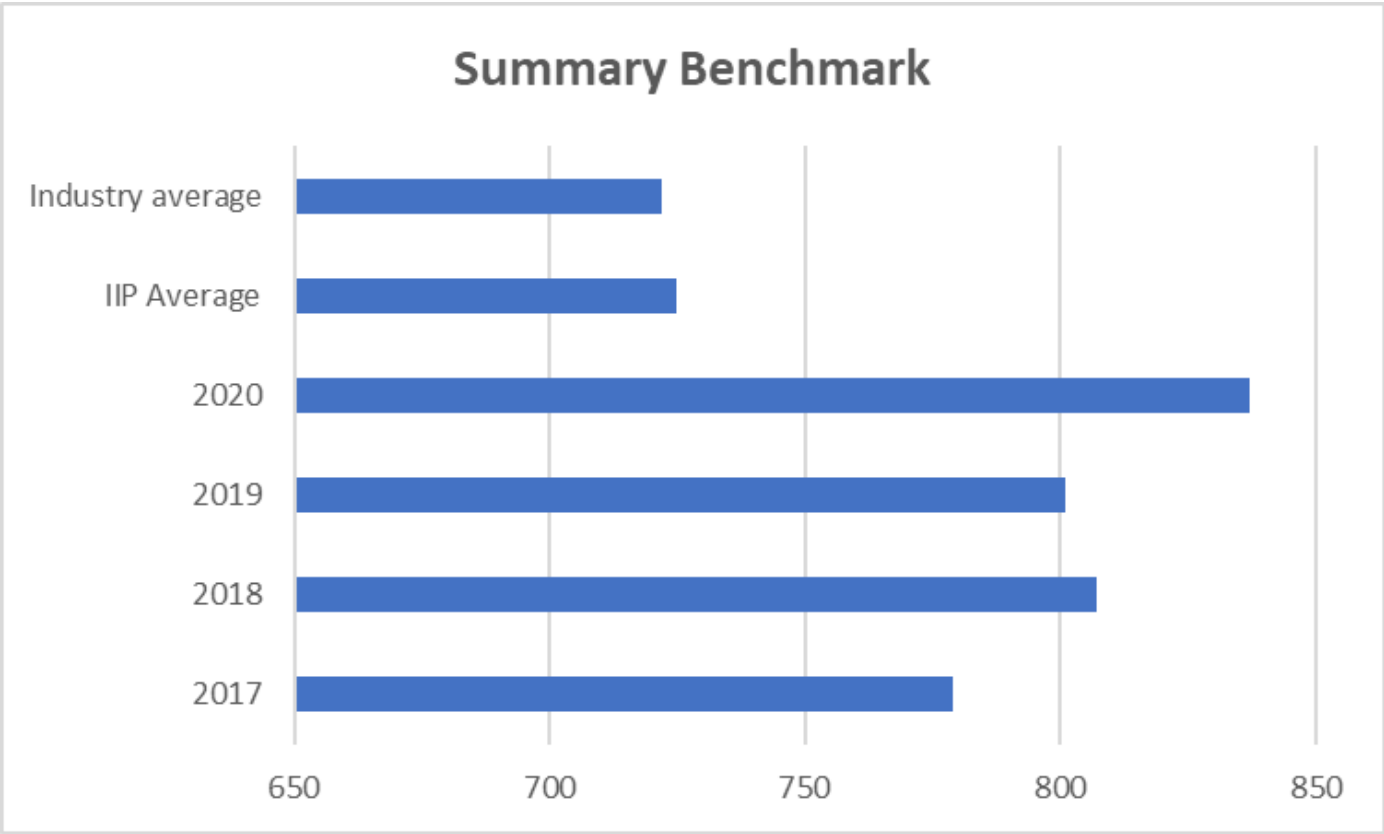
Your overall survey score

Benchmark



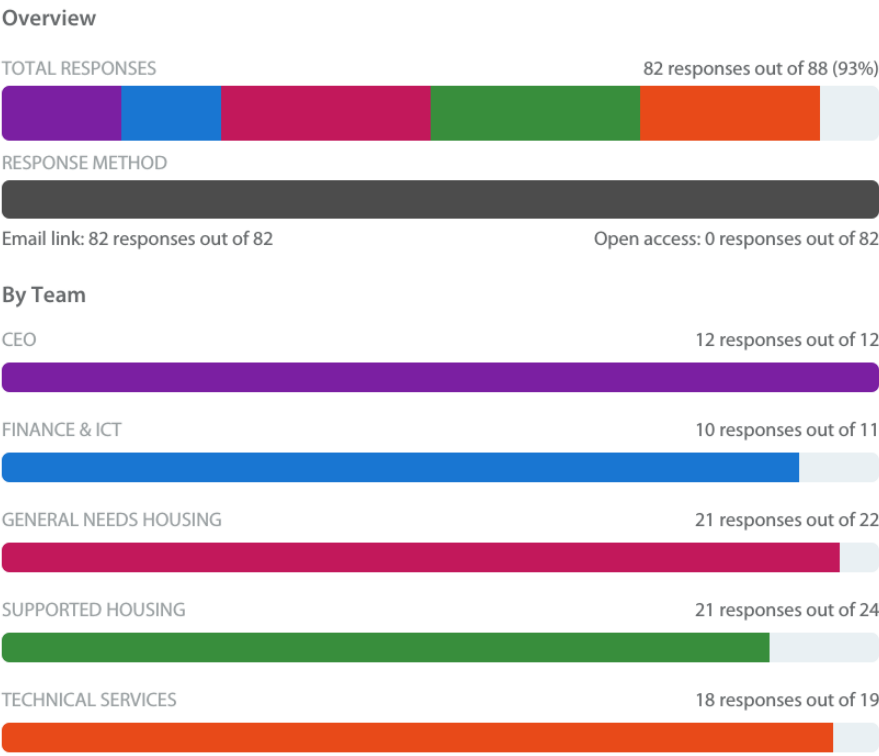
- YOUR BENCHMARK
 - **837**
 - AVERAGE IIP BENCHMARK *
 - **725**
 - AVERAGE INDUSTRY BENCHMARK
 - **722**
- Showing results for Housing Association Real Estate

* This reveals the average IIP Benchmark for all organisations who have undertaken the survey.



Who took the survey?

Survey Response Rate



Your survey results by indicator

Your survey results were above both the Investors in People and Industry averages for every Indicator and Theme. Your best scoring Indicator was Indicator 9 at 6.7 (out of a maximum of 7) and 1.0 above the IIP average. Your lowest scoring Indicator was Indicator 5, but this was also the highest above the IIP average (+1.1).

Indicator summary

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Average Indicator Score	Difference from IIP Average
INDICATOR 1 Leading and inspiring people	64.0%	27.7%	4.3%	2.4%	0.3%	0.0%	1.2%	6.5	+0.9
INDICATOR 2 Living the organisation's values and behaviours	66.3%	25.9%	5.6%	2.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	6.6	+0.7
INDICATOR 3 Empowering and involving people	61.0%	32.0%	6.4%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.5	+0.7
INDICATOR 4 Managing performance	68.9%	25.0%	4.6%	1.2%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	6.6	+0.9
INDICATOR 5 Recognising and rewarding high performance	45.7%	39.3%	8.8%	5.8%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	6.2	+1.1
INDICATOR 6 Structuring work	64.6%	29.0%	5.5%	0.6%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	6.6	+0.7
INDICATOR 7 Building capability	55.1%	34.9%	6.3%	3.4%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	6.4	+0.9
INDICATOR 8 Delivering continuous improvement	59.1%	31.4%	7.9%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.5	+0.8
INDICATOR 9 Creating sustainable success	77.7%	19.2%	2.7%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7	+1.0

Your survey results by theme

Each Indicator has 3 Themes and the table below shows your highest scoring Themes and the lowest scoring Themes. However, all the lowest scoring Themes are still considerably above the IIP benchmark.

Themes (Highs and lows)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Average Score	Difference from IIP Average
Highs									
Understanding the external context <small>INDICATOR 9: Creating sustainable success</small>	79.3%	18.3%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.8	+0.9
Focusing on the future <small>INDICATOR 9: Creating sustainable success</small>	77.4%	20.1%	1.8%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7	+0.9
Embracing change <small>INDICATOR 9: Creating sustainable success</small>	76.8%	18.3%	4.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7	+1.1
Measuring and assessing performance <small>INDICATOR 4: Managing performance</small>	76.8%	20.7%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%	6.7	+1.0
Adopting the values <small>INDICATOR 2: Living the organisation's values and behaviours</small>	74.4%	22.6%	1.8%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7	+0.7
Lows									
Understanding peoples' potential <small>INDICATOR 7: Building capability</small>	54.9%	33.5%	7.9%	3.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.4	+0.9
Deploying the right people at the right time <small>INDICATOR 7: Building capability</small>	45.1%	43.9%	6.1%	3.7%	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%	6.3	+1.0
Developing leadership capability <small>INDICATOR 1: Leading and inspiring people</small>	48.8%	39.0%	3.7%	6.1%	1.2%	0.0%	1.2%	6.2	+1.0
Recognising and rewarding people <small>INDICATOR 5: Recognising and rewarding high performance</small>	43.3%	40.9%	11.0%	4.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.2	+1.2
Designing an approach to recognition and reward <small>INDICATOR 5: Recognising and rewarding high performance</small>	39.0%	40.2%	8.5%	11.0%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	6.1	+1.1

What your people told us

Leading

LEADING AND INSPIRING PEOPLE

Why is this Indicator important?

In the context of IIP, leaders are required to set a clear direction and inspire people to meet objectives that move the whole business towards achieving its ambitions.

There are various cultural and process conditions that enable leadership effectiveness.

One of the key conditions is a culture of trust. In Patrick Lencioni's book "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team", a lack of trust is the fundamental condition that will create dysfunction in any team. Lencioni highlights the need for leaders to be open and honest, being comfortable to admit to their own failings or weaknesses (or "vulnerabilities") as the keys for building a culture of trust.

How did your people respond to the survey questions relating to this Indicator?

Indicator 1: Leading and inspiring people

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Base Questions							
I trust the leaders of my organisation	70.7%	22.0%	4.9%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%
Management communicates the organisation's ambition	75.6%	20.7%	1.2%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%
My manager motivates me to achieve my best	61.0%	29.3%	7.3%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%
My organisation develops great leaders	48.8%	39.0%	3.7%	6.1%	1.2%	0.0%	1.2%

The survey shows a strong indication of confidence and trust in leadership. With over 92% either strongly agreeing or agreeing, that they *trust the leaders of the organisation*. There is an even stronger endorsement of the communication of ambitions. There is a less emphatic response to the statement *My organisation develops great leaders* but in comparison to the IIP average this is in fact above that benchmark by the highest margin.

What did your people say about leadership?

“Throughout the years I think the trust in senior managers has increased because there’s been trust shown in us.”

“We have to role model trust and constantly check that our behaviours are building trust through involvement, being clear and being honest.”

High performing leadership requires and creates high levels of trust. People will only be inspired by the leaders if they trust and believe in them.

Your people referred to trust frequently. They described confidence in leaders that was based on a trusting relationship that had been built up over several years. Openness in communication and the engagement of staff in business planning, had built up their confidence and belief in North Star’s leaders.

The experience of the pandemic seems only to have strengthened trust and confidence in leadership. People described the effectiveness of the response to the lockdown, the genuine care for employees during this period and the frequency and openness of communication, as strengthening the trust and relationship between your people and your leaders.

One of your people described a “contract of trust” between employees and senior managers. This referred to trusting in the leadership and feeling the leadership trusted them. This was a commonly expressed sentiment and is also referred to under Indicator 3.

“Throughout the years I think the trust in senior managers has increased because there’s been trust shown in us.”

Your leaders also recognised their responsibilities for building trust. Some described this as becoming an ‘authentic leader’ - being open about your own vulnerabilities and create genuine relationship between leaders and followers.

One of your leaders stated, “We have to role model trust and constantly check that our behaviours are building trust through involvement, being clear and being honest”.

Inspirational leaders also provide people with focus and motivation. Within organisations this is achieved by providing people with clear objectives and the encouragement to achieve them.

Your people described how they were set objectives during their Continuous conversations and how managers would provide encouragement and often practical help to help them achieve their objectives. One person described how their manager had intervened when they were struggling to hit one of their tenant-related objectives. The manager used coaching techniques to help the individual reflect on problems and identify solutions. As a result, their progress was put back on track.

Inspirational leaders also inspire people to achieve results above and beyond what is expected of them. Your people provided many examples of how their manager and leaders have motivated them to “go that extra mile”. This included individuals taking special care

of vulnerable tenants or making sure support workers were given additional resources during the pandemic lockdown. There were many examples of “discretionary effort” and people described how these were highlighted and recognised within North Star.

It was clear from the review that you understood that inspirational leadership and great management were capabilities that need to be nurtured and developed. You had invested time and resources to develop the specific capabilities required from leaders and managers within North Star. This was seen in your Facilitative Leadership program, your investment in coaching and defining your “shared leadership” approach.

Your people were clear as to what to expect from any manager at North Star. They explained key behavioural traits such as honesty, approachability, caring and trusting.

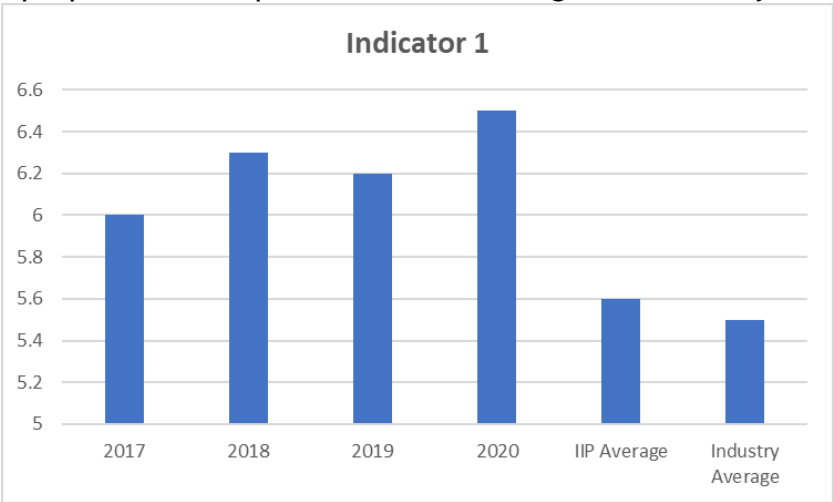
Your management and leadership development also included aspiring and future managers, so you are building future leadership capabilities.

It is recommended that these management and leadership capabilities are so critical to your performance and culture, that you formally define them and communicate them to all of your people. The very process of defining these capabilities can strengthen and safeguard them.

What evidence is there of continuous improvement?

The graph below shows the IIP survey results over the previous 3 years and includes those from this assessment review. For purposes of comparison the IIP average and Industry average are also shown.

The results provide evidence of continuous improvement in terms of people development and management over an extended period. This also indicates that the approach to developing leadership is at a high-performing level and is embedded within North Star.



A further indication of continuous improvement and impact is the headline financial results from the organisation for the preceding 3 years. It is important to put this in the context of the current market, where smaller social housing providers have struggled financially and eventually merged into a larger provider. North Star has become the exception to this trend with strong and improving financial results, indicated in its revenue growth seen below:

£'000	2018*	2019**	2020
	Actual	Actual	Unaudited
Revenue	19,717	19,861	20,381

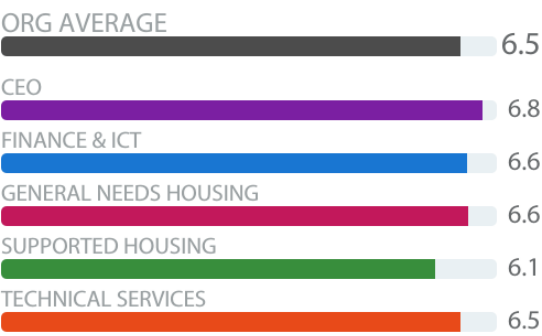
What was the evidence that practices were embedded in North Star?

The previous section demonstrated how practices were embedded over a period of time and consistently above the IIP and industry benchmark by a good margin.

However, we can also see that excellent practice is embedded across the organisation by looking at the survey results for each of the teams within North Star.

Across all of the teams the results are above the IIP and Industry averages. Supported housing is marginally below the scores for other areas. However, to put this in context, the results for supported housing are above average for the whole Indicator and there is just a single disagreement with the statements in the survey from supported housing.

Indicator 1: Leading and inspiring people



Indicator Award Level

The conclusion of the review is that there was sufficient evidence to show that all the criteria for this Indicator were met and there was evidence of high performance being embedded and continually improving. Therefore, this Indicator has been met at the **High Performing** level.

LIVING THE ORGANISATION'S VALUES AND BEHAVIOURS

Why is this Indicator important?

In Simon Sinek's book "Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone To Take Action", he describes how great organisations go beyond what they do or how they do it, to a position of understanding why they do it.

"By 'why' I don't mean your financial results, I mean what's your cause, purpose, what are your beliefs"

Sinek's proposition is that to become a great organisation, everyone needs to understand this "why" and be truly committed to it.

Within Investors in People, this "why" is the same as core values. The proposition is the same though, when people understand and share the organisation's values then they will become influential in decision-making and behaviours in all circumstances within an organisation.

How did your people respond to the survey questions relating to this Indicator?

Indicator 2: Living the organisation's values and behaviours

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Base Questions							
The values at my organisation guide the way we work	64.6%	28.0%	4.9%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
My organisation has clear values	76.8%	20.7%	1.2%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I share my organisation's values	72.0%	24.4%	2.4%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I challenge behaviours which don't match the organisation's values	42.7%	34.1%	18.3%	3.7%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%
My behaviour reflects the organisation's values	75.6%	22.0%	1.2%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

The table above shows strong responses from your people. There is only 1 disagreement across all 5 questions. The lowest scoring question (although still considerably above the IIP average) is *I challenge behaviours which don't match the organisation's values* and this was looked at during interviews with some explaining that it may be because people felt there were not many occasions when it was necessary to challenge those behaviours and this explanation does seem consistent with the other responses in the survey.

What did your people say about values?

“The rewards from working at North Star don’t just come in your pay packet. They come from understanding that you are contributing to the greater good - making a real difference to people’s lives.”

“I think if someone worked here and didn’t get our values, I don’t think they would ‘get’ us”

All of your previous assessments and reviews have emphasised the importance of values within North Star. Values are what drive both individual, team and organisational performance. They provide meaning and motivation to the work that you do.

“The rewards from working at North Star don’t just come in your pay packet. They come from understanding that you are contributing to the greater good - making a real difference to people’s lives.”

Since your previous assessment, you have revised your values and they are now based around 3 criteria: Creative, Connected, Courageous. In addition, you created a Social Purpose statement, that also described the principles and behaviours that were important to North Star. You also reviewed and defined your organisational culture, which concluded a list of behavioural ambitions.

High performance is not determined by the defining of values but on their influence on decision-making and behaviours.

To be influential, people at least need to be aware of the values and it was evident that awareness and understanding of your values and social purpose was high amongst your people despite the values being relatively new. This was, in part, explained by the fact that you would involve your people in defining those values, but they were also used within company presentations, within the Continuous conversations and displayed within the workplace.

Your people were able to describe how the values had been applied within North Star. This included how Courage was a fundamental to encouraging staff to challenge and have adult-2-adult conversations; how Connected was seen in how they used a range of methods to communicate with tenants; and how Creativity was expressed designing digital guides to support your tenants.

Your leaders also described how they would use values as a way of “sanity checking” plans and strategic decision-making.

There were high levels of discretionary effort described by people in every role during the review. There were examples of people supporting your tenants on their own time or supporting the family of tenants. Leaders would directly help your people in providing services that went “above and beyond”. These behaviours were optional and required effort beyond what people were expected to do, but they were in line and driven by values.

Your people expressed confidence that they would challenge behaviours that weren’t in line with the principles and values of North Star. This included challenging managers.

The confidence for staff to challenge behaviours inconsistent with values, was in part shaped by your promotion of adult-to-adult conversations and the general positive relationship between your people and their managers.

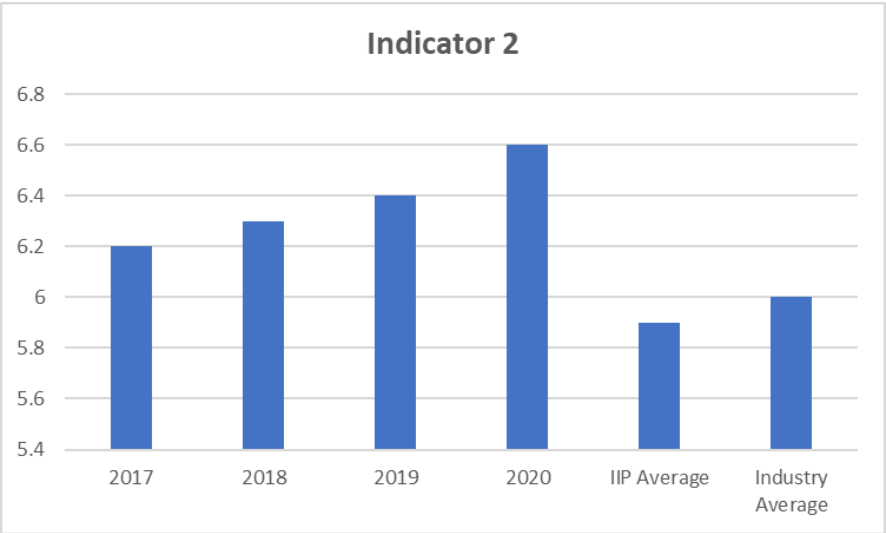
People did struggle to provide examples of how they had challenged behaviours but were firm in their conviction that they would do so if necessary. One of your people commented that one reason for this was that those who did not share the same values and principles as everyone else at North Star, would feel they did not fit in and may not remain with the organisation: it is suggested that given the importance of the values were not so consider further definition beers underpinning’s values so the wrong edition indicator one

“I think if someone worked here and didn’t get our values, I don’t think they would ‘get’ us”

It is suggested, given the importance of the values within North Star, that you should consider further definition of the behaviours that underpin each of the values. Similar to the recommendation in Indicator 1, this is essentially about sustaining and safeguarding values within North Star.

What evidence is there of continuous improvement?

You undertook the IIP online surveys on an annual basis and this provided evidence of continued improvement of practice in the area of people management and development. This is illustrated in the graph below:



You were also able to provide evidence of a sustained impact on the business through your metrics relating to customer service. At the heart of your values and social purpose is your tenants and their experience of working with you and this was felt to be key business metric to demonstrate the impact of the values on your organisation:

2018	2019	2020	Compared to benchmark group (similar sized Housing Associations)
88.9%	87.5%	92.3%	Upper Quartile performance

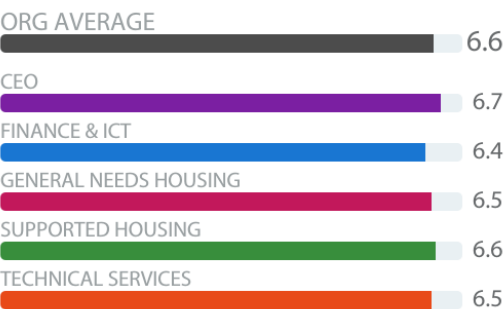
The above table also shows how you are benchmarked against other similar housing associations nationally.

What was the evidence that practices were embedded in North Star?

Evidence that your values were embedded within the organisation could also be seen through the analysis of team results as shown in the graph opposite. This shows not only high scores but a high level of consistency between all of the teams.

The differential between the highest scoring team and the lower scoring team is only 0.3, which is one of the lowest differentials within the survey overall.

Indicator 2: Living the organisation's values and behaviours



Indicator Award Level

The review was able to do identify evidence that demonstrated that this Indicator had been met at a high level. There was evidence of continuous improvement and sustained impact as a result of its practices in promoting and embedding organisational values. However, it was felt that there was potential to improve the further understanding of behaviours that sat beneath the values and this would ultimately further improve their impact on decision-making.

Considering all the evidence provided it was concluded that this Indicator had been met at the **Advanced** level.

EMPOWERING AND INVOLVING PEOPLE

Why is this Indicator important?

One of Steve Jobs most famous quotes is: "It doesn't make sense to hire smart people and tell them what to do; we hire smart people so they can tell us what to do." This view is backed up by several studies that have showed organisations that involve people in decision-making usually make better decisions which are more likely to be implemented. Collaborating with people on decisions, means they have a shared sense of ownership and responsibility for those decisions.

How did your people respond to the survey questions relating to this Indicator?

Indicator 3: Empowering and involving people

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Base Questions							
I have all the information I need to do my job well	47.6%	40.2%	11.0%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I am encouraged to use initiative in my role	73.2%	25.6%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I have a say in decisions that affect my role	58.5%	28.0%	12.2%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I am trusted to make decisions in my role	64.6%	34.1%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

None of the 82 people who responded to the questions relating to Indicator 3, disagreed with any of the statements. There was a neutral response in 2 out of the 4 questions. Particularly high are responses to the statement *I am encouraged to use initiative in my role* with almost 99% either strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement. The survey results indicate empowerment and involvement in decision making are a strong feature of North Star.

What did your people say about involvement and empowerment?

“You couldn’t get a better example of people being empowered than the fact that everyone at every level was actively involved in deciding our strategy for the next 3 years.”

Collaboration and empowerment have long been a central theme of your management approach. It was demonstrated in your “Mission Possible” strategy several years ago and in your most recent strategic planning sessions. It is also clearly linked to the principle of trust, which is also discussed under Indicator 1.

The pandemic lockdown seems to have emphasised how staff are empowered within North Star. Your people described how they felt trusted and empowered whilst working from home and encouraged to make their own decisions on how they managed their time and workload.

But empowerment was evidently an established feature of working at North Star. People at every level described how they had been empowered to make decisions. This included individuals making their own decisions about expenditure and others feeling they could take a lead on decisions within project groups, such as the Inclusion Group, and in relation to the business strategy. In the last strategy development session, you had appointed “discoverers” and “visioneers” who were empowered to identify, explore and develop key areas of the business strategy. One person summarised the approach as follows:

“You couldn’t get a better example of people being empowered than the fact that everyone at every level was actively involved in deciding our strategy for the next 3 years.”

High performing leaders also understand the value of collaborating and enabling people to participate in decision-making. This was also evident within North Star.

As well as the involvement of your people in the design of the business strategy, you also created cross functional groups that were focused on key areas of importance to North Star. These included the Digital Engagement Squad, the Inclusion Team and the Green Team. Those participating in these groups described how they had real decision-making capabilities.

During the review, the assessor was able to observe a session of the Digital Engagement Squad, as they defined their own key areas of focus and guiding principles.

Your people described collaboration on a whole range of areas including defining the organisation’s values and the refurbishment of your offices. An important group within this area was the Stronger Together group that promoted collaboration and teamwork throughout the organisation.

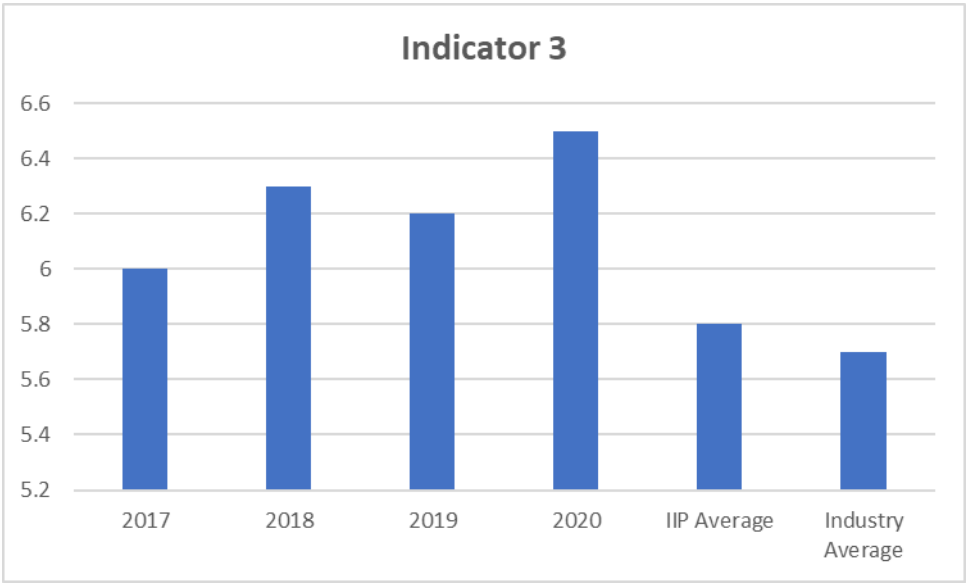
Your leaders talked about the importance of open and honest communication to support decision-making. They described the importance of communicating success as well as where things had not gone to plan. This was connected to their belief in an authentic leadership style.

Your people also commented on this openness and that they felt information, whether it was positive or negative, would be shared and this would help them in their own decision-making.

“The communication is definitely not sugar coated - just straightforward information and not a sales pitch.”

What evidence is there of continuous improvement?

Evidence of continuous improvement in the empowerment and involvement of your people can be seen in the IIP surveys that have been conducted over the previous 3 years. These are illustrated below. The graph shows a slight decline in results from 2018 to 2019 but an overall trend of improvement over the period. During your annual review in 2019 we explored these figures further and identified issues relating to a specific area of the business that had recently undergone a management change. The evidence would suggest that you have tackled this and not only returned to levels in 2018 but actually improved on these considerably.



There is also evidence of improvement in your business metrics that are linked to your approach to empowering and involving people. The table below illustrates how the number of days required to relet home has continued to decrease over a three-year period. This was partly due to a strategy of empowering people to make decisions in relation to reletting.

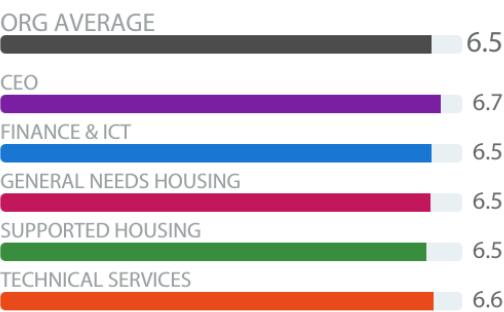
	2018	2019	2020
Average number of days taken to relet a home	25.5	24	20

What was the evidence that practices were embedded in North Star?

Evidence that the approach to empowering and involving people is embedded across the organisation can be seen in the scores attained for each of the groups participating in the IIP survey (see opposite).

There is a small differential between the high scoring group and the low scoring group (0.2) which also is a feature of embedded and sustained practice.

Indicator 3: Empowering and involving people



Indicator Award Level

The evidence suggests that involving and empowering people within North Star is a central cultural feature of the organisation. There was evidence of this being attained at a high level and it had become sustained and embedded within the organisation.

As a consequence, the conclusion was that there was sufficient evidence to confirm that this Indicator had been met at the **High Performing** level.

Supporting

MANAGING PERFORMANCE

Why is this Indicator important?

This Indicator makes no reference to an appraisal of performance management review process. It does require organisations to demonstrate that they provide people with supportive feedback and that managers work with their people to define clear objectives that support individual, team and business performance.

Although the standard does not require individuals to write down their objectives a study at the Dominican University in California , concluded that the very act of writing down objectives and making them public (and consequently making people accountable) meant that those goals were significantly more likely to be achieved.

How did your people respond to the survey questions relating to this Indicator?

Indicator 4: Managing performance

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Base Questions							
I have agreed my objectives with my line manager within the last 12 months	64.6%	29.3%	3.7%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I feel encouraged to perform to the best of my abilities	73.2%	20.7%	6.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
My manager helps me improve my performance	61.0%	29.3%	7.3%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I have discussed my performance with my manager in the last 6 months	76.8%	20.7%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%

The percentage of those either agreeing or strongly agreeing with statements are all above 90%. Those in the *somewhat agree* responses may have been newer staff who have not been through the full objective setting cycle but there was nothing in the interviews that suggested people had not been set objectives or encouraged to improve by their manager.

What did your people say about managing performance?

“The big difference is it’s my conversation and the managers are there to support but not control it.”

High performing organisations provide their people with clear focus and priorities. They also provide them with encouragement for them to perform at their best and provide meaningful feedback to help them improve.

Your people described how they received focus through objective setting within their Continuous conversations. They described how some objectives would be expressed as KPIs which were directly linked to their team’s (and consequently organisation’s) KPIs.

The guiding principles used by managers in their Continuous conversations, help to ensure that there was alignment of individual objectives to North Star’s strategic objectives or values.

Your people also described how the emphasis of the Continuous conversations was to put the responsibility for objective setting (and in fact the whole Continuous conversation process) in the hands of the team member and not their manager. As one person said:

“The big difference is it’s my conversation and the managers are there to support but not control it.”

The review found many examples where your managers had supported people to perform at their best and address underperformance. For example, one person described how they were struggling to meet some of their objectives and their manager used a “Learning circle” approach to help the individual review causes and identify solutions. Managers also described how they approached errors or underperformance in a nonthreatening way and used coaching to help people identify and implement their own solutions.

The coaching approach and the use of Continuous conversations was also described by your managers as providing ongoing encouragement for your people to continually improve.

Your leaders provided evidence through business metrics of how this approach was developing high-performance in individuals and consequently the high-performance of North Star itself.

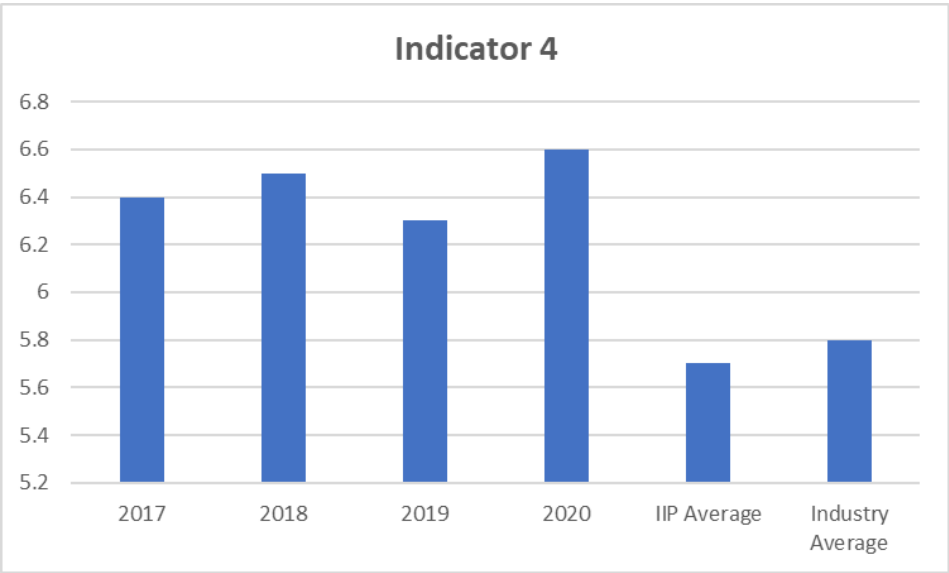
However, high-performance is not just a product of attaining performance objectives but also links to performing in line with the organisation’s values and behaviours. It was therefore encouraging to see how the Continuous conversations included reviews not only of performance data but also alignment to the values.

As indicated in its name, Continuous conversations, were intended to provide ongoing regular and sometimes informal feedback to individuals. Your people described how this was also achieved in other ways, such as the informal and ad hoc feedback from managers or feedback given within meetings to individuals or teams.

“The Continuous conversations is a process but it’s also a principal - highlighting we need to keep dialogue open about our own and others performance.”

What evidence is there of continuous improvement?

There was evidence of continuous improvement from the annual IIP surveys undertaken by North Star. This is illustrated in the graph below. It shows how North Star has continually achieved above the IIP industry average for this Indicator and its latest survey results shows a score of 6.6 which is an improvement on all of the previous years.



You also provided evidence of continued improvement and impact on your business performance. Specifically, how a key area of performance management related to the loss of rent due to empty homes and how this figure has improved over the three-year period:

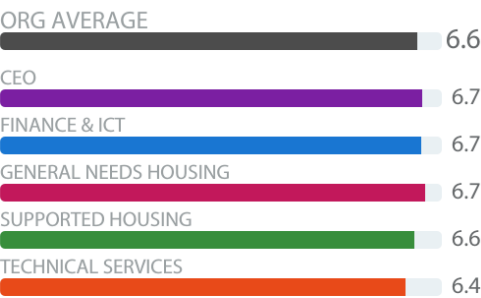
	2018	2019	2020
% rent loss due to empty homes	1.28%	1.2%	0.85%

What was the evidence that practices were embedded in North Star?

In addition to the survey results over the previous 3 years, there was also evidence of practices being embedded across all areas of North Star. This was seen in the responses for each of the teams in the survey.

The results for each team show a considerable degree of consistency, with there only being 0.3 between the lowest and highest scoring teams.

Indicator 4: Managing performance



Indicator Award Level

The review was able to find evidence against all elements of this Indicator and that practices were both improving and embedded. Consequently, this Indicator was met at the **High Performing** level.

RECOGNISING AND REWARDING HIGH PERFORMANCE

Why is this Indicator important?

Indicator 5 explores how people are motivated to perform at their best. It recognises that to be effective, recognition and reward practices need to be clear and linked to the outcomes and behaviours that lead to high performance. It also looks to recognition and appreciation being part of the organisational culture.

An experiment conducted by Dukes University's Professor Dan Ariely showed that when three groups were given the same task but only one group was thanked for their work, this group would continue to work even when their fees for doing the task were reduced. On average they would work for half of the fees of the other group. This was an endorsement of the value of recognition in the workplace.

How did your people respond to the survey questions relating to this Indicator?

Indicator 5: Recognising and rewarding high performance

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Base Questions							
I am consistently recognised when I exceed expectations	42.7%	40.2%	13.4%	3.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I get appropriate recognition for the work I do	43.9%	41.5%	8.5%	6.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I feel appreciated for the work I do	57.3%	35.4%	4.9%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I am rewarded in ways that match my motivations	39.0%	40.2%	8.5%	11.0%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%

The overall survey score for this Indicator is the lowest of the 9 Indicators. However, it is also the Indicator with the highest margin above the IIP and Industry average - so in this perspective it is the best performing Indicator in the survey. *I am rewarded in ways that match my motivation* is the lowest scoring question and although 1.1 above the average, there is scope to improve the strength of response in this area perhaps by exploring wider range of reward tactics.

What did your people say about reward and recognition?

“In our team meetings, you’re just as likely to get a compliment or praise from another member of the team as you are from the manager”

“It is definitely about feeling you’re making a difference. Things like bonuses wouldn’t work here at all - in fact I think they’d work against us”

To sustain high performance within an organisation, there is a need to provide an incentive for people to commit to perform at their best. Those incentives can be tangible or intangible - based around reward and recognition.

It was evident from your review that your leaders had carefully considered reward and recognition. You had, typically, involved your people in reviewing and providing feedback on reward and recognition. That feedback was included in the IIP and other staff surveys, as well as the involvement of the Stronger Together group.

You had developed a range of strategies that appealed to a wide range of individual motivations. For example, some of your leaders described how career progression was an important reward to many staff but for others recognising the difference they had made to the lives of your customers, was a more important motivator. Your people described how recognition was a feature within Continuous conversations, would be provided during team meetings and celebrated at the annual Staff Awards. They also described rewards in the form of long service awards, flexible working and opportunities for regrading.

It was evident, from the discussions held, that the main focus of your reward and recognition strategy was built on a culture of appreciation and recognition. Your people described how they would receive praise and recognition from peers, managers and senior managers. They described how senior leaders were role models in this respect - always willing to recognise and encourage high performance.

“In our team meetings, you’re just as likely to get a compliment or praise from another member of the team as you are from the manager”

The pandemic seems to have only highlighted people’s feeling of being appreciated. Many of your people commented on the small gifts and thank you note from the senior leaders at North Star, that was delivered to their home during the pandemic. They described how this provided them with a “real boost” and reminded them that they are still part of the team at North Star.

The use of gestures to support feelings of recognition and appreciation appear to be widespread - with managers as well as leaders providing small gestures of appreciation to help boost morale.

Others described how recognition would be delivered through “email shout outs”, the staff newsletter and the internal intranet page. They also described how compliments from tenants would be acknowledged and recorded - and this was also used to inform improvements and different ways of working.

During the review, there were several discussions about the implications of someone performing highly within North Star and how you motivate people to perform at their best? Most of your people referred to the recognition they received from the organisation or, possibly more impactful, from tenants. This recognition was felt to be sufficient to motivate them to be their best at work.

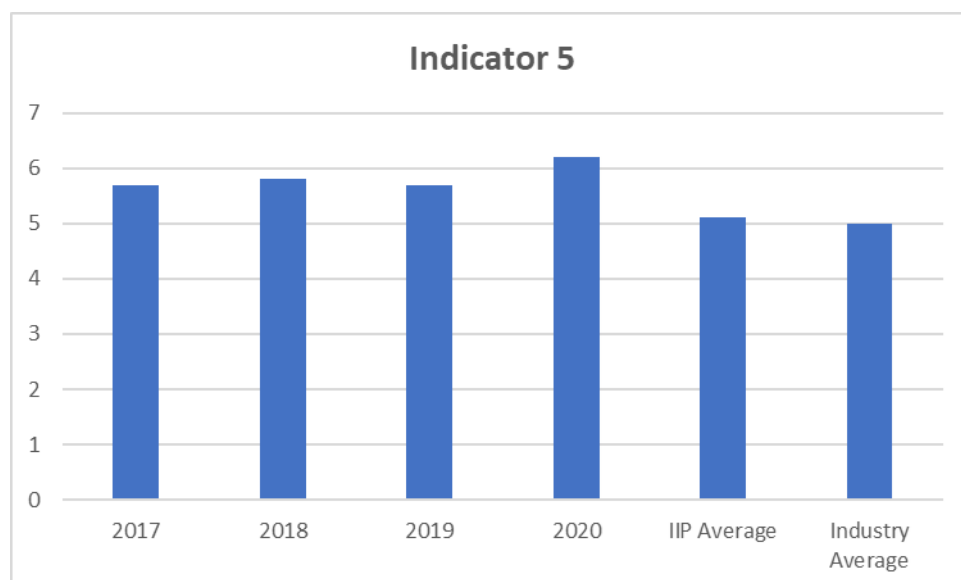
“It is definitely about feeling you’re making a difference. Things like bonuses wouldn’t work here at all - in fact I think they’d work against us”

Leaders also described how high performing individuals will also gain an advantage when applying for other roles within North Star such as promotions. Through this process high performing people were more likely to be promoted and therefore strengthen the culture where high performance was role modelled by managers.

This would seem to be consistent with a culture, described under Indicator 4, where KPIs and objectives are indicators of performance rather than an absolute measure of performance and where alignment to values and social purpose is actually more important.

What evidence is there of continuous improvement?

The survey results show that there is a significant positive difference between North Star’s score for this Indicator and the IIP/industry average. The graph below also illustrates that the survey results for 2020 have improved since the 2017, 2018 and 2019 surveys. This illustrates both practices being embedded and an improving over the three-year period.



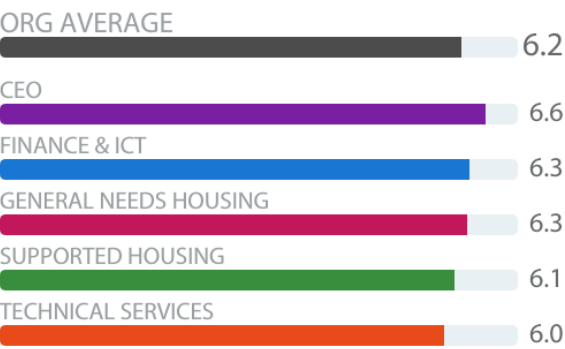
You are also able to provide evidence of sustained impact over a three-year period by highlighting a key business metrics that indicated individuals were motivated to improve personal and organisational performance:

	2018	2019	2020
£ tenant income increased	£362k	£438k	£746k
£ reduction in arrears	£107k	£102k	£142k

What was the evidence that practices were embedded in North Star?

In addition to the evidence above, which shows how good practice has been sustained over a period of time, there was also evidence that this was also embedded across all teams in the organisation. This was seen in the responses within the discussions held with your people from across all aspects of your operation and within the survey data for the selected groups. This shows that all groups are above the IIP average and that of the Industry by a considerable margin (see graph opposite).

Indicator 5: Recognising and rewarding high performance



Indicator Award Level

Having considered the evidence from the survey, metrics and the discussions held with your people the conclusion was that all elements of this Indicator had been met and there was evidence of practices being embedded and continually improved. This means that Indicator 5 has been met at the **High Performing** level.

STRUCTURING WORK

Why is this Indicator important?

Indicator 6 recognises that there are organisational structures that can influence people's ability to perform at their best. If roles are ineffectively designed or process and procedures get in the way of people being their best or stop people collaborating; then these will be significant barriers to high performing work. The themes of this Indicator reflect these areas: designing roles, creating autonomy in roles and enabling collaborative working.

How did your people respond to the survey questions relating to this Indicator?

Indicator 6: Structuring work

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Base Questions							
I am able to develop the skills I need to progress	62.2%	25.6%	9.8%	1.2%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%
I have the right level of responsibility to do my job effectively	65.9%	30.5%	3.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
My role enables me to work well with others	67.1%	28.0%	4.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
My work is interesting	63.4%	31.7%	3.7%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

We see high scores to questions related to this Indicator. There is only 1 *somewhat disagree* across all four statements. Three of the four statements had agree or strongly agree levels of over 90%. *I am able to develop the skills I need to progress* has the lowest agreement levels but by a small margin and there is still almost 88% strongly agree or agree.

What did your people say about structuring work?

“One of our key advantages is that we can move really quickly if we need to. So, we’ll constantly look at policy and procedures to make sure they are still relevant.”

“There definitely seems to be a better appreciation of what everyone does with us all acting as one team.”

High performing organisations ensure that their organisational structures support high performing work rather than work against it. This means there is clarity in terms of roles and responsibilities, there is appropriate autonomy in roles and any barriers to collaboration across the organisation are eliminated.

Your people were able to confidently describe their role and where they fitted in to the organisation. They were clear as to their areas of responsibility and overall felt the organisation and reporting lines were clear and effectively structured.

Those at every level and every department described how they enjoyed their role and found their work interesting. This included people working directly with tenants as well as those in ‘business support’ areas. This finding is also reflected in the survey question in Indicator 9, relating to North Star being a great place to work.

Your people also described how roles had evolved and they had been supported to develop in response to those changes. A good example of role development was the increased emphasis on supporting tenants more broadly in their welfare needs. Roles have been developed in response to this challenge and people provided with guidance and advice on how they can support tenants. This also reflected the changing needs of the local community and specifically tenants served by North Star.

The review also found that your people were comfortable and complimentary about the approach to procedures and processes, which was seen as supportive and part of a range of resources available to them. The point was also made that policy and procedures needed to be constantly reviewed to accommodate change and this was a key advantage of being a smaller social housing provider:

“One of our key advantages is that we can move really quickly if we need to. So, we’ll constantly look at policy and procedures to make sure they are still relevant”.

Others described using procedures as part of the learning activity; for example, a new member staff described how an important part of their learning was the procedures stored on the shared drive.

There was also evidence of restructuring activities that your people viewed as having a positive impact on organisational performance. This included splitting a management role between 2 new senior roles, that people felt was working better and provided them with more specific tailored support.

This indicator is also concerned with how organisational structures and process encourage collaboration across teams. There were many examples provided that indicated that cooperation and collaboration was actively encouraged by North Star:

- At induction, people were introduced to every department, to give an overview of all of the functions within North Star

- Breakaway days, where individuals from across different parts of the organisation came together to share good ideas and practice.
- Examples from the recent pandemic and homeworking, where teams had worked well together.

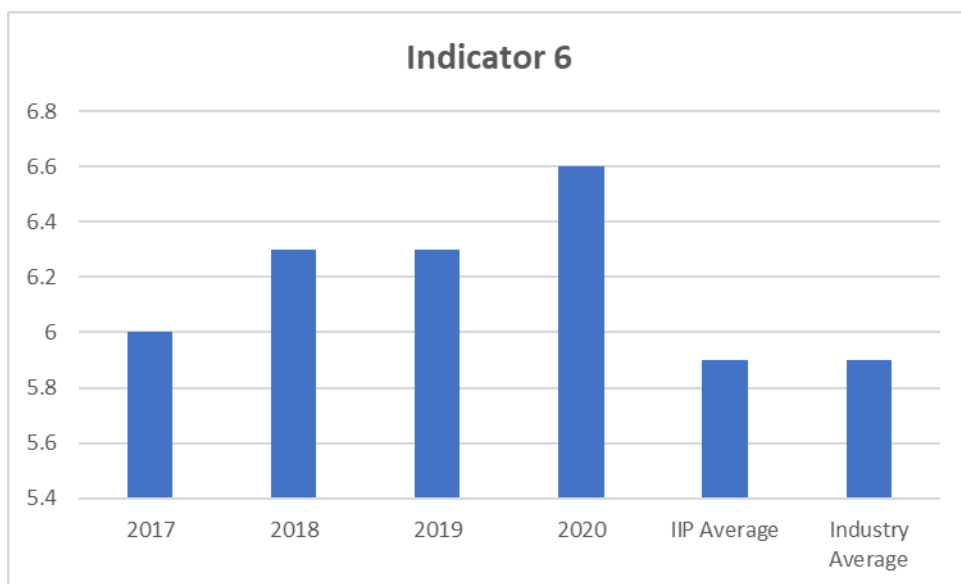
Some of your people highlighted this as an improving feature of North Star:

“There definitely seems to be a better appreciation of what everyone does with us all acting as one team.”

There were examples of informal networks within the organisation which were described as supportive. A good example of this were WhatsApp groups that had been established for both staff and to keep tenants informed. There were also informal groups based around the Breakaway days and management training activities, which were also described as supportive.

What evidence is there of continuous improvement?

The graph below shows continuous improvement since the 2017 IIP survey. The results are considerably higher than the IIP and industry average, with 2020 leading to an overall score of 6.6 out of a maximum of 7. This indicates both improvement and the practices are embedded.

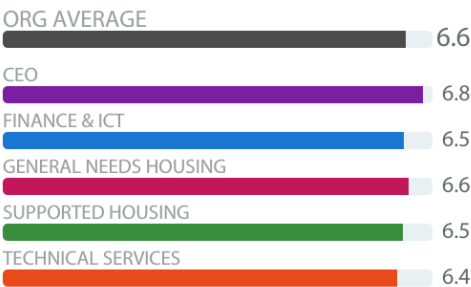


Additionally, you provided evidence of the approach of having a structured workflow and collaborative processes had contributed to the achievement of an important business metric related to rent collection. This is illustrated in the table below:

	2018	2019	2020
Rent collected as a % of rent owed	100.6%	99.1%	102.0%

What was the evidence that practices were embedded in North Star?

Indicator 6: Structuring work



Both the survey results and the discussions held with a wide range of people within your organisation, indicated that good practice was widespread and embedded. This was highlighted in the survey results which showed in all areas that North Star were above the IIP and industry average by a considerable margin (as seen in the graph opposite).

This shows that the difference between the highest and lowest scoring group was only 0.4.

Indicator Award Level

To achieve a high performing level, you need to demonstrate that you meet all of the criteria of the Indicator and that this has been sustained over a period of time and throughout the organisation. You also need to demonstrate that this has had an impact on your people and your business (as seen through your business metrics). Having reviewed the evidence the conclusion was that North Star has met this Indicator at the **High Performing** level.

Improving

BUILDING CAPABILITY

Why is this Indicator important?

This Indicator looks at how skills are being identified and developed that will help the business performance now and in the future. It looks for the organisation to be clear on the skills that need to be developed and how it engages with individuals to build individual and consequently company capabilities.

The benefits of this approach are multiple. It enables the business to respond more quickly to future challenges or opportunities and can often be an important source of motivation and satisfaction for employees. This is emphasised in the LinkedIn's 2019 Workforce Learning Report, which showed 94 percent of employees said that they would stay at a company longer if it simply invested in helping them learn.

How did your people respond to the survey questions relating to this Indicator?

Indicator 7: Building capability

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Base Questions							
I know how my organisation invests in learning and development	62.2%	31.7%	4.9%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I have opportunities to learn at work	61.0%	29.3%	8.5%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I make use of my organisation's learning and development opportunities	48.8%	37.8%	7.3%	6.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
My manager thinks it is important that I develop my skills	58.5%	31.7%	4.9%	4.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
People are selected for roles based on their skills and abilities	45.1%	43.9%	6.1%	3.7%	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%

The highest scoring statement in this area of the survey is *I have opportunities to learn at work* but the lowest scoring statement being *I make use of my organisation's learning and development opportunities* in other words for a small number of your people they feel there

are opportunities to develop but they don't always take advantage of them. There are various explanations for this - potentially they may be at a stage in their career where they feel development is less necessary or they may feel the opportunities presented don't always meet their needs. However, we need to put this in perspective as these are small differentials and overall we see very low levels of disagreement and neutral responses.

What did your people say about building capability?

“I think generally we look carefully at what's going to work for the individual and not necessarily go for off-the-shelf training packages. So, we'll be looking at the best sources of information and the way the individual prefers to learn.”

High performing organisations develop the capabilities needed to achieve performance objectives and meet cultural ambitions. Capability requirements of the organisation and the individual are completely aligned with people development in all its guises, being a central part of the culture rather than simply a series of programmes.

Your review found many examples of people who had developed from junior roles into management roles and those who had changed from one area the business to another. For example, someone working in finance had moved into a housing role after being given the opportunity to experience working within housing. Your people described not only how North Star helped them achieve their potential but also to find their potential.

The review also found that there were creative approaches used in developing your people. Your preference was to develop bespoke solutions rather than rely on off-the-shelf training programs - this was particularly evident in your approach to management development. Your people also described coaching, work shadowing, secondments as well as external training. One manager summarised the approach as follows:

“I think generally we look carefully at what's going to work for the individual and not necessarily go for off-the-shelf training packages. So, we'll be looking at the best sources of information and the way the individual prefers to learn.”

A key principle of Continuous conversations was to encourage individuals to take responsibility for their objectives and their learning. Discussions with your people would suggest this has been achieved. Consequently, it was evident that your people took ownership of their development - both in terms of personal and career development.

It was also evident that learning and development was occurring at every level including at the very top the organisation which suggested it was part of the organisational culture. Senior leaders, for example also received coaching.

The continuous conversations also provided a forum to evaluate the impact of development activities and how they supported performance and career development.

Those who were relatively new to North Star described an efficient and effective approach to recruitment and support during the early stages of their employment with North Star. There was also evidence of resource planning around organisational change; seen, for example, in the development of IT and digital resources.

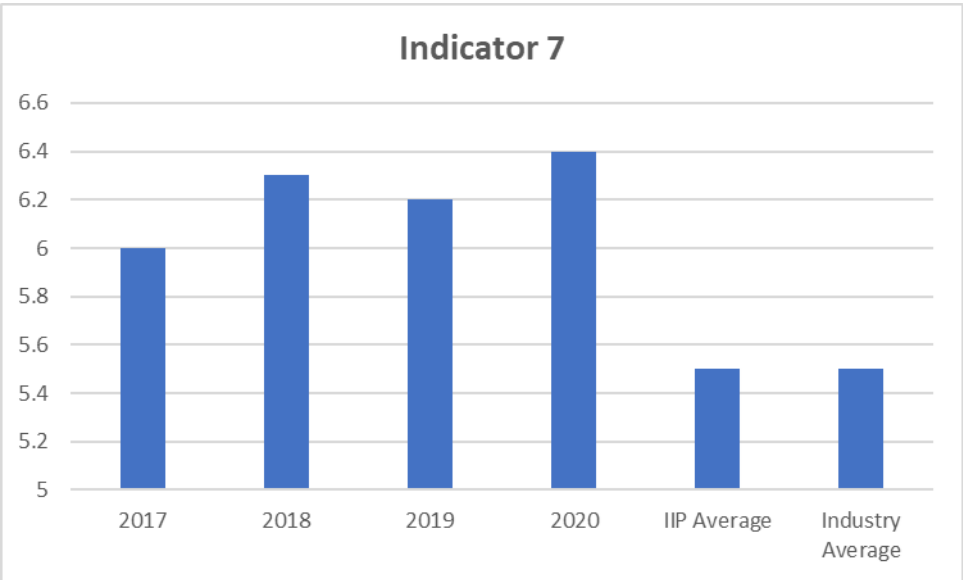
As part of the review the assessor observed a culture induction programme that introduced new staff to the values and the key elements of North Star's culture.

There was evidence of the organisation considering succession. There are organisation-wide strategies such as management development, and individual support for those demonstrating potential. There was also support for those at every stage of their employment with North Star including review sessions for those who were nearing the end of their career.

It is suggested that succession planning could be developed further to pull together all these activities into succession and talent management strategy.

What evidence is there of continuous improvement?

Similar to other Indicators, we also see evidence of continuous improvement from the survey data provided as part of this review. There is a marked improvement in survey responses from the survey conducted in 2017 and the survey conducted as part of this review is the highest score over the previous 3 years. It is a above both the IIP and industry average for this Indicator.



You were also able to provide evidence of sustained impact on the business as a result of your efforts in building capability. You described how a key strategy of developing capability internally to deliver training and development programmes yourself, had led to a reduction in cost whilst maintaining an equal volume of development days.

This is illustrated in the following table:

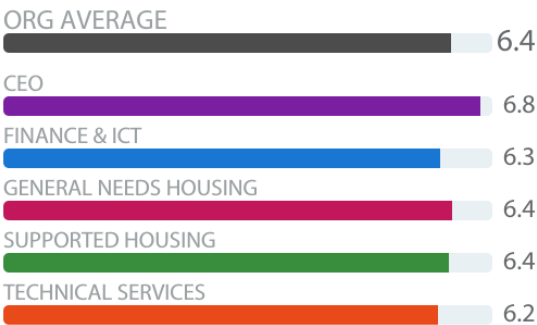
	2018	2019	2020
£ spent - Training and Development	£177k	£212k	£154k
% of organisational spend	0.8%	1.1%	0.9%
Spend per head	£1,947	£2,255	£1,622

What was the evidence that practices were embedded in North Star?

Sustaining such a high level of performance within this Indicator over periods of time suggests that practices are embedded. There was also evidence from how good practice was embedded across the organisation from the survey in respect of the responses from each individual team.

This is shown in the table opposite, where there is a large degree consistency between each of the teams in response to statements regarding building capability.

Indicator 7: Building capability



Indicator Award Level

There is evidence of continuous improvement and practices being embedded within the organisation. The review also found that 2 of the Themes demonstrated High Performing practice. For the 3rd theme *Deploying the right people at the right time* there was evidence of Advanced practice but with a recommendation that a more robust approach to succession planning by developing a plan of capabilities people need to deliver success, would be beneficial. This means that this Indicator has been met at the **Advanced** level.

DELIVERING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Why is this Indicator important?

This Indicator is looking for a culture that is passionate about innovation, encourages challenge and is not afraid of new thinking. It also recognises that organisations need to look beyond the confines of its own business and even its own sector to find ideas that will give it a performance advantage.

This should be a continual process where even the most successful organisations are looking for improvements - even if they are marginal gains.

“Innovation has nothing to do with how many R & D dollars you have. When Apple came up with the Mac, IBM was spending at least 100 times more on R & D. It is not about money. It's about the people you have, how you're led, and how much you get it” Steve Jobs.

How did your people respond to the survey questions relating to this Indicator?

Indicator 8: Delivering continuous improvement

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Base Questions							
I look for improvement ideas from my colleagues	63.4%	28.0%	6.1%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I am responsible for improving the way we do things	51.2%	36.6%	11.0%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I am encouraged to improve the way I do things	58.5%	32.9%	7.3%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I am trusted to try new approaches in the way I work	63.4%	28.0%	7.3%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Responses to this Indicator are among the highest in the survey. There are no disagreements with any statements and neutral responses from 1 or 2 people only. The questions in this area of the survey address individual responsibility and motivation to improve. Agreement levels (from strongly to somewhat agree) are over 98%. The lowest response is to the statement *I am responsible for improving the way we do things* with around 9 people somewhat agreeing and 1 person neither agreeing nor disagreeing. This is still 0.9 above the IIP benchmark.

What did your people say about continuous improvement?

“The attitude is the best way to avoid making mistakes is to learn from them. So, we’ll have learning circles rather than inquisitions.”

“I think at every team meeting, the manager will ask us for any ideas or suggestions when we’re looking at challenges or opportunities.”

High performance is not an isolated or one-off activity but part of an embedded approach that actively seeks improvements. Continuous improvement as a process and behaviour, is central to achieving a high performing culture within an organisation.

It was evident that you evaluated your investment in people and explored ways in which this could be improved. On an individual basis, your people described how Continuous conversations would be used to review their training and from an organisational perspective, your senior leaders described how reviewing the learning and development strategy and the results of the annual IIP surveys, provided them with feedback and a focus for improvement.

A good example of this was the results from the 2019 IIP survey that highlighted a dip in responses from those in the IT function, which you addressed and the most recent survey showed a marked improvement within this team.

Further examples included the development of your management programs both in terms of developing the content and the manner in which they were delivered (a move to more in-house delivery).

You sought inspiration for improvement from both within North Star and in other organisations (both within and outside the housing sector). For example, you described how you’d worked with Stonewall and other organisations to promote diversity and with Groundwork on environmental community projects.

You also used a range of housing and non-housing benchmarks to measure performance and identify improvements.

Your people described a culture where there was a focus on learning from errors or underperformance. For example, your people described how if there was mistake made, this would prompt a Learning Circle and Timeline review, to identify learning points from the error (rather than seeking blame).

“The attitude is the best way to avoid making mistakes is to learn from them. So, we’ll have learning circles rather than inquisitions.”

Your people also made reference to the promotion of “adult - 2 - adult” conversations, that encouraged respectful challenge and enable people to feel safe in questioning existing practices.

You had established a range of staff groups such as Stronger Together, Digital Engagement Squad and the Inclusion Team to generate ideas and innovative solutions. These groups had the ability to both generate ideas and implement them.

Managers were also described as playing a pivotal role in encouraging the team to come up with ideas. People described how this would happen within team meetings, Continuous conversations and on a daily basis.

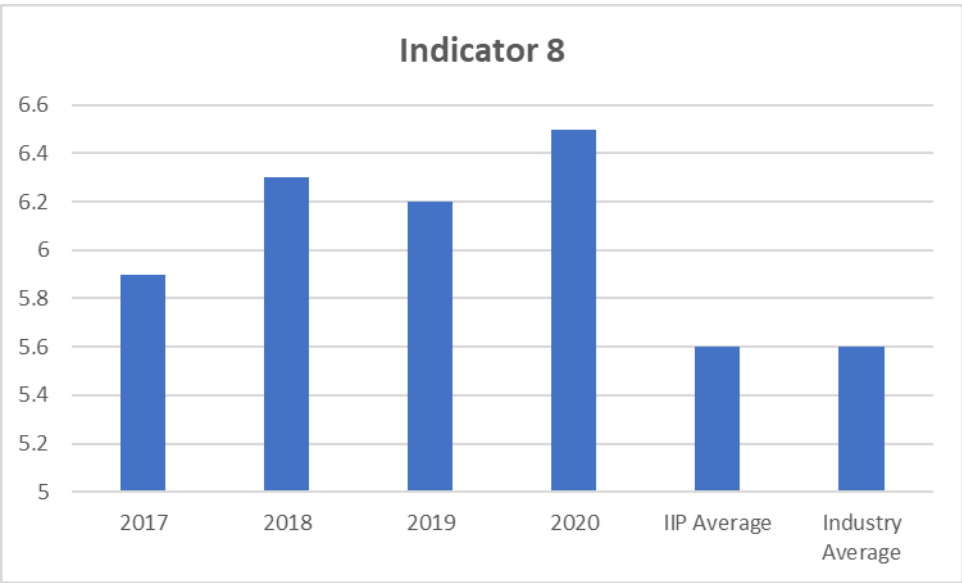
“I think at every team meeting, the manager will ask us for any ideas or suggestions when we’re looking at challenges or opportunities.”

People linked the encouragement of innovation and ideas, to the consultative approach detailed in Indicator 3. For example, when asked about idea generation many referred back to the involvement of staff in the strategic plans and the identification of discoverers and visioneers to develop new ideas based around the organisation’s strategy.

It was evident from the discussions held with your people that continuous improvement was an embedded part of the culture and a result of an ambition to be better and a learning approach in reacting to underperformance or mistakes.

What evidence is there of continuous improvement?

The survey results for 2020 showed a considerable improvement on the results 2017 and steady progress during this time. The 4 surveys undertaken all provided results that were considerably above the IIP and industry average. This established a convincing case that North Star had continually improved its practice in relation to this Indicator.



Furthermore, you are able to provide evidence of continuous improvement in business metrics that were linked to the development of innovation and ideas to improve performance. This is seen in the business metric below relating to the development of digital services which relied heavily on individuals and teams to come up with new ideas and innovation. As a consequence, there’s been a significant rise in the number of customers accessing online services.

	2018	2019	2020
Customers accessing on line services	6%	21%	47%

The most recent figures may have been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic but there was

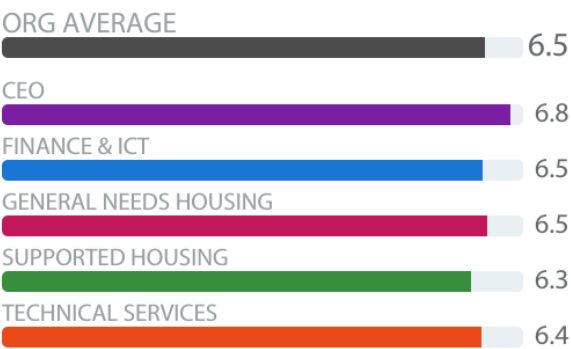
a general upward trend and the increase in services available online will have inevitably increased the number of customers engaging with the website.

What was the evidence that practices were embedded in North Star?

There was evidence that practices were embedded across the whole of North Star. This was gained through the interviews held with a cross-section of your people and from the online survey which showed all of the teams to be above the IIP and industry benchmark.

The graph also shows a considerable degree of consistency in responses the variation between the high score and the lower scoring of only 0.5.

Indicator 8: Delivering continuous improvement



Indicator Award Level

The conclusion of the review was that North Star had demonstrated high performance practice and this was embedded within the culture and sustained over a three-year period. This equates to a performance level of **High performing** for this Indicator.

CREATING SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

Why is this Indicator important?

This final Indicator looks at how the organisation considers the future, how managers change and how it understands its place in society. A future facing businesses that understands the breadth of its responsibilities has been found to be more sustainable.

This Indicator also looks at important features of forward-thinking organisations, such as how they manage change and look at future external influences.

How did your people respond to the survey questions relating to this Indicator?

Indicator 9: Creating sustainable success

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Base Questions							
My organisation is a great place to work	74.4%	22.0%	2.4%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
My organisation has a plan for the future	80.5%	18.3%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
My organisation embraces change	76.8%	18.3%	4.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
My organisation has a positive impact on society	79.3%	18.3%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Responses to question sin this area of the survey are the highest in the survey. They are exceptional with no disagreements only 1 neutral response and responses to all statements have over 95% of responses either strongly agreeing or agreeing. All but 1 person believes North Star is a great place to work with over 96% either agreeing or strongly agreeing with that statement. Almost 99% believe North Star has a plan for the future and 100% agree to some extent that the *organisation has a positive impact on society*. A remarkable response to these statements.

What did your people say about creating sustainable success?

“You get the biggest buzz from seeing the difference you can make to individual lives and sometimes whole communities”

The impressive survey results were mirrored in the discussions held with your people during the review.

You had actively involved your people in defining and planning for the future through your strategic engagement activities. Leaders had also taken an active role in considering future challenges - looking at environmental, government, legislative and social changes that may affect the future development of North Star.

Echoing the comments made in the survey, those involved in the IIP meetings also stated they believed North Star was a great place to work - all of those who were asked confirmed they would recommend it as a place to work to a member of their family or a friend.

“I have no hesitation in recommending North Star is a place to work - but only providing that the person recommended has the same principles as the rest of us.”

People believed they were (and would be) involved in changes that affected their role. They provide examples of service developments, the introduction of new process and software, and the development of training programs as examples where they were involved in change.

People also commented on the openness and honesty of communication and stated that leaders would communicate both successes and failures - although many struggled to provide examples of failures. People did comment on the openness of communication around the pandemic and highlighted when leaders admitted things that they didn't know and this honesty actually built confidence rather than detract from it.

There were change teams developed around things such as the digital strategy and green agenda and people with a passion and interest in these areas were encouraged to join these groups. One leader described this as seeking out the “opinion leaders” to help drive forward changes.

Overall, and this was reflected in the IIP survey also, your people had coped with the rapid and significant changes brought about because of the pandemic very well. They had described challenges and anxieties but also commented on the fact that the North Star operated in a market environment where change was frequent and the organisation itself had faced several challenges in the near past.

The social impact of North Star was a source of pride and motivation to your people. It provided the most significant reward and appropriately celebrated within teams and the organisation as a whole. It was also an area that North Star focused on and measured through its social purpose metrics. These enabled it to quantify its positive impact on the communities it served.

“You get the biggest buzz from seeing the difference you can make to individual lives and sometimes whole communities.”

You had also worked hard in the areas of diversity - understanding the benefits of a diverse workforce and the social responsibility to promote diversity. There was a long list of positive metrics that showed your workforce was actually more diverse in many metrics

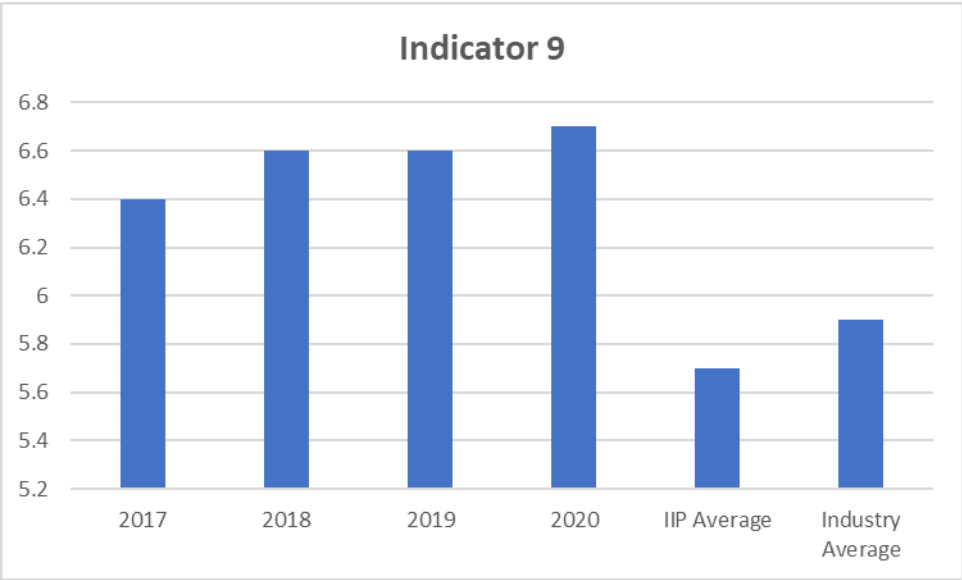
than the local community. It also took positive steps to recruit from communities that were underrepresented, such as a strategy to recruit apprentices from the BAME community.

You also worked proactively with groups promoting LGBT rights and supporting the victims of domestic abuse.

What evidence is there of continuous improvement?

The graph below shows a consistently high score within this Indicator from the IIP surveys. There is an improvement from 2017 to 2020. The results are considerably higher than the IIP and Industry average. The score in 2020 was 6.7 out of a maximum of 7.0 - to attain 7.0 every respondent would have to *Strongly Agree* to all of the statements in this part of the survey.

It is difficult to see how this can be further improved and task should be to maintain the score around these figures.



You were also able to provide metrics that demonstrated this approach was having an impact. You provided the measurement of your social value delivered, that was calculated using approved Treasury methodology. In 2019, this was £3 million. This was an improvement on 2017's figures but the decline from 2018 was due to a particular project ending in that year.

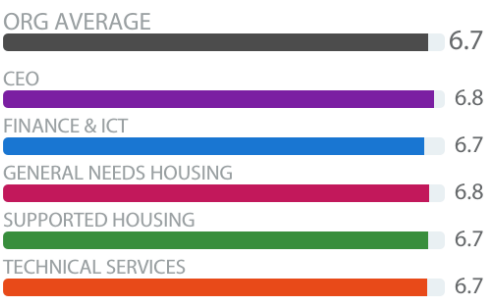
	2017	2018	2019
Social Value Delivered	£2.7m	£3.3m	£3m

What was the evidence that practices were embedded in North Star?

It is indicative of the strength of North Star within this Indicator, that we see the greatest degree of consistency in responses between all of the groups involved in the survey. The table opposite shows the variance between the lowest and the highest scoring group to be 0.1. All groups are considerably higher than the IIP benchmark.

This was also reflected within the meetings held with your people where there was a strong indication of positive and effective practices in building sustainable success.

Indicator 9: Creating sustainable success



Indicator Award Level

This was the strongest area for North Star within the Investors in People Standard. There was evidence that you had met the high performing criteria within this Indicator and that practices had been sustained over at least a three-year period. There was also evidence of improvement over this period. The IIP meetings with a wide range of your people and the results of the survey in relation to groups, also provided evidence that practices were embedded. It was therefore concluded that this Indicator had been met at the **High Performing** level.

Your demographics

Our key insights

- There were no significant differences between the responses in different age groups - all age groups scored the organisation above 6 for all indicators
- Neither were there any significant difference in responses of males and females. Responses from males were generally very marginally above that of females but that may have been influenced by the numbers of male and females responding to the survey (there were 14 males and 60 females)
- There was no real significant difference between the responses of those with different length of service - although newer staff tended to be very marginally more positive (again this may have been a statistical factor as the numbers in each group were relatively low)



Want to get in touch?

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