

IN THIS ISSUE...

Welcome to the team! Focus On... Aimee Woodcock **NEW FOR YOU** You Said We Did... Your Feedback is Important to us Aspen Gardens Recipe Ideas from Sprouts CiC **NEWS** Meet your New **GET INVOLVED** Tenants Voice Help us to Improve Money Matters **OUR SERVICES** Anti-Social Behaviour & Compliments Process





elcome to the newest edition of our magazine. For this issue we have worked with tenants to improve the focus of the content and as a result we have included some new information and updates.

The purpose of the magazine is to keep you updated, involved and to seek feedback on the services we provide. You will notice we have included more information on our staff so you know who to contact should you have any issues. Also included is a short description of our extra care scheme for older people in Stockton. You will note that we have been busy building new affordable rented housing, developing "real time" feedback on services, and introducing improved services.

We have signed up to the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Code and reviewed our approach to complaints. We are committed to providing a high-quality service

and if we fall down, we want to hear from you, as all feedback is an opportunity to improve.

The offices will be open for all staff in early September and we anticipate everyone will spend a minimum of two days in the office every week, with the rest of the time home working where they are able. This hybrid approach to working has been agreed with staff and is set to continue in the medium term. This will not affect services at all.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your patience during Covid when services were affected and pared back. We have worked hard to get back on track, but if you have any issues do let us know.

Thanks for reading this.

Best wishes

Angela Lockwood, **Chief Executive**

Focus On... Aimee Woodcock People Services Assistant

What's your job role and in brief, what does this entail?

I am a People Services Assistant. The overall purpose of my role is to support the People Services department through the provision of effective and efficient administrative support. This includes for example; preparing reports, partaking in project work, recruitment and onboarding of new staff, collaborative team working, organising and coordinating training and many more things. No one day is the same which makes my job really enjoyable!

Where did you work before North Star?

I was the Senior Administrator at Crime Reduction Initiatives (CRI, now known as CGL), an organisation working to help people with drug and alcohol addiction into recovery.

What are your hobbies/interests?

In my spare time I like to read, draw and sometimes even write stories for my son! I'm also really family orientated and love spending time with my husband and son whether it be strolling in a park or something more adventurous, however my overwhelming fear of heights stopped me conquering Roseberry Topping!

What is your favourite:

Film? The Lion King **Book?** To Kill a Mockingbird Holiday destination? Disneyworld - only been once but was the holiday of a lifetime! Food? Italian - Pizza, lasagne and bolognese!

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself

I am a twin but we are the definition of chalk and cheese!



YOU SAID:

We recently asked a group of our involved tenants what they would like see in the tenant magazine. Here's what they said and what's in this issue as a direct result:

Tenants said they would like to see more features on staff so they can get to know who is working in their area and the faces behind the voices they hear on the telephone. In this issue look out for articles on new starters (pg.7), a staff profile article (pg.2), an article on the customers services team and on the carrier sheet details of our customer services team as well as the Housing Officer and working in your area if applicable.

- Tenants said they would like more information about the various supported housing schemes we operate. In this issue look out for the feature on Aspen Gardens (pg.4)
- Tenants asked for recipes and cooking tips, particularly for those on a tight budget and those living alone. In this issue we have included a recipe idea from local food charity Sprouts CiC on page 6.

We are always seeking to improve the content of our magazine and if there are things you would like to see, please let us know by emailing tenantmagazine@ northstarhg.co.uk or giving us a call on **03000 11 00 11**.



HOW'S OUR WRITING?

We want to ensure our communications are as clear, understandable and effective as possible. If you have any comments on the writing style in this magazine or any other North Star communications, please let us know by emailing: plainenglish@northstarhg.co.uk or giving us a call on **03000 11 00 11**

Your Feedback is Important to us

We're delighted to announce that we've launched a new way for our customers to tell us what they think about the services we provide.

Your opinion really matters, and it is vital in helping us shape and improve the services we deliver to you.

That's why, we have recently begun working with a company called Rant and Rave to find out how we are doing by introducing a new text and email messaging service to give you the chance to provide us with instant feedback.

After you've received a service from us, you may receive a text message or email asking for your satisfaction with your repair or the way your call was handled by one of our customer services team.

You will be asked to rate our service on a scale of 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied) and why you gave that score.

As well as the score you give, we'll use your comments to help ensure we provide the best service for our customers.

Text messages will be sent by the following number 07860 010826.

This number is for surveys only. Should you wish to speak to North Star, contact our Customer Services Team on 03000 11 00 11.

By using this new way of collecting feedback, we will be able to respond quickly to any negative feedback, it will

support us make improvements in the services we provide and to celebrate where we see positive feedback.

If you would like to know more about Rant and Rave please contact Katherine Allen -

katherine.allen@northstarhq. co.uk or visit https://www. northstarhg.co.uk/contact-us/ comments-compliments-andcomplaints/





Featured Scheme:

ASPEN SARDENS

Aspen Gardens is an Extra Care scheme located in the Hardwick area of Stockton, there are local shops, a doctors surgery and pharmacy on the door step.

North Tees Hospital is also just across the road. There are local bus links to the town centre which has an array of shops, restaurants and services.

We have a range of accommodation within the scheme. Our 50, 2 bedroom properties consist of 20 bungalows and 30 apartments with communal facilities accessible by tenants which include:

 Communal Bistro serving breakfast, lunch and dinner.
 One meal per day is included within the accommodation charge. The bistro is also open daily to family, friends and the general public with highly competitive prices.

 Communal lounges with an array of activities including coffee mornings, bingo, crafting and games

 A memory room for residents to use to relax with music and games

A hair dressing salon.

The communal garden hosts various activities, including a weekly Garden club. The residents take such pride in their garden and we have some avid green fingered individuals. We are soon to be working in partnership with Hen Pals Equal Arts who will deliver art and craft classes to the residents, using Hens to encourage and support individuals to attend, The Hens come as part of the Hen Pals Project as we know from research that hens can be therapeutic, particularly to those with a learning difficulty, dementia and those who feel socially isolated.

In 2019 Aspen Gardens won a Gold Award at the Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC) Awards. Allison Alderton, Team Manager of Older Persons Services at North Star. said:

"We really care about the people and the communities that we serve, and we work in collaboration with others to create stable, secure, trusting and supportive environments where people feel they belong. We are very proud of all the hard work that goes into keeping these schemes running and the awards we have won are a great recognition of that."

For more information on Aspen Gardens please visit our website: https://www.northstarhg.co.uk/apply-for-a-home/properties-to-let/aspen-gardens/ or call our customer services team on: 03000 11 00 11.





Creating homes, building futures 5



Recipe Sprouts Ideas From Sprouts

Tenants have asked that we include cooking tips and ideas in our magazine, particularly for people on a tight budget and those living alone. We work regularly with Stockton based community food charity Sprouts, an award-winning charity dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of our community. They have extensive experience of providing healthy meals on a budget.

Over the next few editions of this magazine they will sharing their recipes with you. The first is a simple, but delicious curry sauce that can be made fresh and cheaply.

If you have any requests, please let us know using the email tenantmagazine@northstarhg.co.uk

BASIC CURRY SAUCE

2 tbsp oil

3 garlic cloves, peeled and finely grated

20g (1 inch) fresh root ginger, peeled (rub the back of the spoon on the skin and it will flake off easily) and finely grated

2 tsp curry powder (any kind)

1/4-1/2 tsp dried chilli flakes or 1 finely sliced fresh chilli

1½ tbsp tomato purée

1 can chopped tomatoes

METHOD

- 1. Heat the oil in a non-stick frying pan and very gently fry the garlic and ginger for about a minute, stirring constantly. Don't allow them to brown.
- 2. Stir in the curry powder, chilli and tomato purée and cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly until the tomato purée looks glossy.
- 3. Stir in 150ml water, bring to a simmer and cook for 2-3 minutes. stirring constantly. Set aside.

OPTIONS

Creamy add 100ml double cream

Spicy add more fresh chilli

Meet your New Housing Officer

Hayley joined North Star in January having worked in housing for 17 years.

Hayley's patch covers our properties in the Teesdale area including Barnard Castle and the surrounding villages.

In her role as a housing officer, Hayley is on hand to help with all aspects of your tenancy and neighbourhood including:

 Providing advice and information about your rent

- Showing prospective tenants round their new home and setting up tenancies
- Dealing with anti-social behaviour and neighbour problems
- Offering advice for tenants wanting to move home
- Ensuring tenants know how they can have their say about North Star.

If you need to contact Hayley or a member of our housing team, contact customer services on 03000 11 00 11



NEWS

Strawberry Tea

In aid of Dementia Action Week, the Housing Team arranged a super afternoon 'Strawberry Tea' for residents. Strawberries and cream, and cream scones were kindly donated by the bistro staff at Aspen Gardens and some memorabilia from days gone by was kindly provided by Stockton Library from their

Residents enjoyed being together after what has been a long and at times challenging 14 months. The noise and chatter was contagious. As you can see from some of the lovey pictures, everyone who attended really enjoyed it and they are already looking forward to finding out what the next event will be

Both Residents and Staff took part and we raised £74.00 for Teesside Dementia Link who provide invaluable support services for People living with Dementia and their carers.







GET

Tenants Voice Scrutiny Panel

The Tenants Voice Scrutiny Panel (TVSP) has taken a new approach to scrutiny which will create a structure that allows for feedback and information to flow between board. TVSP. North Star staff and customers. It will enable the board to discuss issues directly with



TVSP members and commission work that supports strategic decision making as well as TVSP working directly with customers to understand current issues that they wish to be reviewed.

They will be using the three **Customer Commitments to** engage with customers and generate feedback on issues that are most important to them. TVSP will collate this feedback and present their findings directly to board independently with the aim to make improvements to services for all tenants.

www.northstarhg.co.uk/getinvolved/customer-promises Members of the TVSP have said:

- This is a total new way of working for us and we are getting some tutoring to show us the way forward.
- Moving forward this will be great for people who can't be at meetings.
- We are just starting a new report on the first customer promise from North Star.
- We want as many tenants as possible to be involved.

If you are interested in becoming an involved tenant please contact communities@northstarhg.co.uk

Policy Review

North Star has taken a new approach to reviewing policies. In May, an email was circulated to our involved tenants inviting them to take part in reviewing the Access to Housing Policy prior to its organisational review due in August. Five involved tenants put themselves forward to do this and met to review the Policy on 10th May. They made comments for change and set a series of questions to be circulated to all involved tenants for comment, to ensure they took as many opinions as possible into consideration, before putting their recommendations forward.

With the support of North Star's Tenant Connector they analysed responses and forwarded their recommendations to the Head of Customers.

The Head of Customers responded and thanked the group for their input and assured them that the majority of their recommendations will be incorporated into the revised policy and gave explanations of why other recommendations could not be incorporated. The group was happy with the response they received and are confident that their recommendations will be incorporated into the revised Access to Housing Policy.

As this was the first time we have reviewed a policy this way we

asked members of the group for their comments:

- I think it's a brilliant way of reviewing the policy.
- I found the policy review process relatively easy to cope with.
- I really enjoyed it and I felt that it was productive.
- I would happily do this again with other policies.
- I think it's great that the tenants are given a voice.

If you would like to take part in the policy review process please contact **communities**@ northstarhg.co.uk

Help us to Improve our Services

We think it is essential to involve our tenants and communities in the work we do. We want you to help shape and improve our services and by getting involved you have the chance to really make a difference.

So, you may only have a couple of hours a week to spare or, you may have lots of time you would like to fill with interesting, positive activities. Our involvement activities have something for everyone depending on your interest and the time you have available.

The Tenants Voice Scrutiny Panel is a dedicated group of involved tenants that identifies areas for scrutiny. They carry out research, talk to staff, consult with other tenants, examine documents and report their findings to the board. The Performance Group is also a dedicated group which meets to look at quarterly satisfaction figures and considers what we can to do to help make improvements.

The Consumer Standards are regulatory standards that all registered social housing providers must comply with. They set out specific expectations and outcomes that North Star is expected to achieve and you can help us to check that we are achieving these standards by joining a temporary group. As a member of the group you will help to decide activities, such as mystery shopping, website checks, telephone calls and talking to staff members and other tenants, which will help us to provide assurance to the regulator that we meet these standards. The Policy Review group is another temporary group which looks at company policies when they are due for review, to let us know if they are written in plain English and are clear for tenants to understand. Each time we start a Consumer Standards check or a policy review we will ask our involved tenants to put themselves forward to help us.

Occasionally we may need tenants to review subjects at short notice and will invite you to take part in a Task and Finish group and the time commitment for each Task and Finish review will vary depending on the subject. You can take part in as many or as few task and finish projects as you choose and Tenant Advisors will help to carry out the practical work such as mystery shopping, void inspections and estate walk abouts to support the work of this group and the other groups mentioned above.

Involved tenants who form the temporary groups, and carry out the work needed to review the subject, will be offered a financial reward for participating and all tenants taking part in consultation will be entered into a draw for the opportunity to win High Street Vouchers.

If you are interested in any of the involvement activities above please contact Jenny Brereton, email **jennifer.brereton**@ **northstarhg.co.uk**



Moneywise Begin Year of Celebrations



Moneywise, the largest credit union in the Northeast of England, is celebrating its 30th year in 2021 with new outreach initiatives and events in its network of branches.

Helping the Community **Since 1991**

Credit unions like Moneywise are financial institutions similar to banks - the difference being that a credit union is a member-owned, not-for-profit organisation aimed at helping the local community rather than seeking to earn a profit for shareholders.

From humble beginnings in 1991, the Moneywise we know now grew from the Newcastle City Council Credit Union. Originally only permanent employees of the City Council were eligible to join. but today Moneywise offer savings accounts, affordable ethical loans and payroll savings schemes to over 11,000 members from as far afield as Northumberland to the Redcar & Cleveland area, and partner with nearly 50 local and regional employers including Newcastle, Stockton, Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland Councils. Thirteen Housing Group and Beyond Housing.

Also operating under trading names of Tees Credit Union in Stockton and South Tees Community Bank in Middlesbrough and Redcar, from the very beginning Moneywise have been keen to be seen as part of the community it works with and has always had a commitment to outreach and improving the financial wellbeing of its community. As an extension of this and as part of its 30th-year celebrations, it is launching a new "financial health" initiative; driven by its community partnership team, each branch will be working with community, faith and voluntary organisations to promote financial education and improve the financial health

of the North East. As well as the financial health project, Moneywise are promoting savings through offering incentives and opportunities to win shopping vouchers, including a draw for all new members who join between July and September! For your chance to win, all you need to do to become a member is visit one of our websites at www.moneywise.org.uk, www. teescreditunion.co.uk or www. southteescommunitybank.org.uk

Phil Goad. Chairperson of Moneywise, said: "We're extremely proud of our beginnings from an employee credit union to being able to expand out to offer valuable credit union services to the Newcastle and Teesside communities and beyond. We can see in the last ten years alone; the growth has been tremendous and there are many more members of our communities to reach yet. We are excited for what the next 30 years will bring".

History of Moneywise

Newcastle City Council Employees Credit Union

Newcastle City Council
Employees Credit Union was
founded by Barbara Hann, who
acted as CEO for many years
and who went on to receive
a CBE in recognition of her
prominent role in promoting
Credit Unions.

The Newcastle City Council Employees Credit Union started up in 1990 and was registered on 13 June 1991. Its common bond (those eligible to join) included only those working for the City Council until 1999 when an application to the Registry of Friendly Societies resulted in a change to its common bond to open it up to other groups, including associated bodies such as the Tyne Tunnel, the Theatre Royal, and trade union staff.

In August 2003, the Newcastle City Council Employees Credit Union further extended its common bond from a workplace credit union to being open to people living or working in Newcastle and Longbenton.

It was at this time that it also changed its name to Moneywise Newcastle Credit Union.

Newcastle City Council continues to support the credit union to this day by providing use of the payroll service to employees as well as use of the internal mailing system. It also allowed the credit union to undertake a range of publicity and recruitment initiatives throughout its premises and via payroll.

Community Credit Unions Transfer Their Engagements to Moneywise

Also in 2003, smaller localised credit unions across the City were encouraged to Join Moneywise. Of the nine community credit unions, most of whom had been running for 15 to 20 years in the most deprived estates in Newcastle and Longbenton, eight community credit unions transferred to Moneywise Newcastle, with a further credit union transferring in February 2004.

In 2017, Tees Credit Union completed a transfer of engagements into Moneywise Credit Union increasing the strength and reach of the Credit Union's bond to the Teesside area.

In 2018, Middlesbrough and Redcar Councils funded the set-up of a branch-based credit union located on respective high streets. These branches trade as South Tees Community Bank.

In 2020, Moneywise were awarded a contract with Sunderland City Council aimed at establishing a payroll deductions service within the council as well as establishing an online platform for the broader residents of Sunderland. We now have a membership approaching 500 within the first year.

In the last 10 years, membership has grown from 4,500 to over 11,000; members savings have increased from £250,000 to over £6 million and loans have increased from £1.5 to £3.5 million.



Our Services

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

We believe that everyone has the right to peaceful enjoyment of their home, free from intimidation, noise nuisance and disturbance.

From time to time, this may not be the case and in partnership with others including police, councils etc., we are committed to tackling issues related to anti-social behaviour, harassment, neighbour nuisance and hate crimes.

Anti-social behaviour can include a range of actions including:

- Domestic abuse.
- Noise nuisance.
- Damage to property.
- Aggressive and threatening behaviour.
- Hate crime and harassment.

We would not normally consider behaviour around different lifestyles/cultures which may not be considered unreasonable by most people as anti-social behaviour. These can include:

- Parking disputes.
- Complaints about normal domestic noise such as washing machines, children playing, doors banging etc.
- One off event such as birthday/ Christmas parties.
- Dogs barking at reasonable times and at acceptable levels.
- DIY during reasonable hours.

If you are experiencing anti-social behaviour, you can report it to North Star by:

- Contacting our Customer Services Team on 03000 11 00 11
- Via My North Star
- Direct to your housing/ supported housing officer

You can also report hate crime on line at

hatecrime@northstarhg.co.uk

If you are threatened with violence or are concerned for your safety or safety of others, you should call the police immediately on 999 or in a non-emergency on 101.

Further information about anti-social behaviour can be found on our website

www.northstarhg.co.uk

Working in partnership to deliver great outdoor spaces

Get in touch with North Star Housing 0300 011 0011

Greenfingers & NORTH STAR





Greenfingers are the grounds maintenance contractor for North Star Housing Group.

The attached table sets out when you can expect maintenance to

Visit: greenfingers-group.co.uk/north-star-housing-group



Ì			
	Grounds Maintenance	Frequency	M
)	Cutting grass	March - Two cuts in March. All grass cuttings to be removed on both occasions. April to October - One cut every 13 to 16 days, with a maximum of 14 visits during April to October.	*
	Edging Grass	One visit in October.	
	Bedd	ing Areas and Borders	
	Pruning / Cutting Back Shrubs	One visit in June and November	
3	Manual Weeding	Two visits in May, one visit in July, August, September and October.	
	Herbicide Application	One visit in April, July and September.	
		Hedges	0
	Clipping and Shaping	One visit in May, and November	
	Herbicide Application	One visit in April, July and September.	
b		Trees	S.
Ť	Inspection and Maintenance Report	One inspection in November.	
	Lifting of Canopies and General Maintenance	One visit in November.	
	Herbicide Application	One visit in April, July and September.	
	Hard Surfaces, Fences ar	nd Street Furniture Herbicide Application	
	Clearance of hardstanding areas	One visit on each grass cutting visit and one further visit in November and December.	
	Repairing / Repainting of Fences and Street Furniture	One inspection and report in November.	Su.
8	Litter	and Wind Blown Debris	C
3	Litter Removal	One visit on each grass cutting visit and one further visit in November, December and January.	
	Leaf Clearing	One visit in November, December and January.	

Customers generally accept that on occasions things go wrong but, expect that something will be done to put them right.

COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS & COMPLIMENTS PROCESS

North Star is an organisation that highly values complaints and comments, learns from them and uses them to improve services.

The Housing Ombudsman published a new complaint handling code in July 2020 and required all social landlords to self assess their current processes against this new code.

The new code led to North Star making some changes to our complaints process in January 2021 that are designed to make it easier and quicker to find a resolution when things go wrong.

The major changes to the process are:

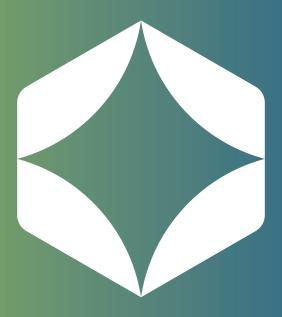
- Reducing North Star's complaints process from three stages to two stages, to speed it up.
- Customers will be able to contact the Housing Ombudsman at any stage, rather than having to wait for North Star to complete their process.

North Star will make contact with customers prior to providing an official written response to their complaint, particularly in instances where a complaint is not upheld. This is to ensure good dialogue is maintained and that the reasons for not upholding the complaint are clearly understood.

North Star undertook an online consultation session with customers who have had recent experience of the complaints process to gather views on the changes and ensure they will result in a better experience for all. You can read more about this session in the Get Involved section of this magazine.

If you would like to read more about the new complaints process, please visit https://www.northstarhg.co.uk/your-home/your-tenancy/complaints-compliments-and-comments/or contact us on 03000 11 00 11 to request a written copy of the information.





North Star

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

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

GET IN TOUCH







f/NorthStarHG

03000 11 00 11

Are you registered for my North Star if so contact us using the link:

www.mynorthstar.online

Write:

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

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

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

Please note our Teesdale office in Barnard Castle is by appointment only.

Creative Connected Courageous