

TENANT CONNECTION STRATEGY 2019-2023



NORTH STAR

Creating homes, building futures

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS NORTH STAR?

North Star is a North East based Housing Association and our purpose is to provide affordable housing, invest in our communities and develop new homes across the Tees Valley, North Yorkshire and County Durham.

We care about the people and the communities that we serve. We work, in collaboration with others, to create stable, secure, trusting and supportive environments where people feel they belong.

OUR VALUES ARE AT OUR CORE:

CREATIVE

We create environments to enable people, places and communities to thrive. We believe many things are possible and that our energy brings about exciting change.

CONNECTED

We are connected to the world we live in. Therefore, we are relevant, informed and knowledgeable. We develop strong relationships that are based on integrity and trust.

COURAGEOUS

We challenge ourselves and others. We experiment; pioneer and we dare to be different.

At North Star, we place people at the forefront of everything we do. Our vision, our values and our organisational strategy are all centred on creating and sustaining great places for people to live and work in.

WHAT DOES THIS STRATEGY DO?

This strategy sets out how we will connect our tenants to our business over the next four years, putting them at the heart of everything we do. It details our priorities and how we will ensure that in 2023 tenants are able to connect with us in the ways they want to and that are most convenient for them.

This strategy will support both the delivery of the Communities Team's vision and North Star's wider organisational vision to 2023.



WHAT IS TENANT CONNECTION?

We want to connect tenants to our business and share power with them.

This will amplify their voice and ensure it is a key part of our decision making. It will allow tenants to act as critical friends, not only highlighting areas for improvement but suggesting solutions and working with us to implement them.

We value co-creation and meaningful conversations with our tenants that give them a powerful voice within the business.

Tenant Connection drives service improvement and efficiency at North Star.

OUR APPROACH

North Star has a long history of involving tenants, going back to the very beginning of our organisation in the 1970s. Our approach is embedded in our culture of trust and co-creation, which was demonstrated during the development of the corporate vision to 2023.

We understand the benefit of tenants having the ability to hold us to account directly and this strategy is designed to ensure we share power with them wherever possible.

North Star understands that there is no one-size fits all solution to Tenant Connections and therefore, we are committed to providing as broad a range of involvement activities as possible.

Our vision for our communities and Tenant Connections in 2023:

We are pioneers, working together to transform lives and create a sense of belonging. We build thriving communities and share power with tenants to make change happen:

- Our insight is developed through our close relationships and strong links with tenants and communities. This insight shapes what we do and how we do it.
- Tenants and communities connect with us in ways that they want to.
- We work together to identify what is strong and build on this to change what is wrong.
- Social value and impact is maximised in all that we do.
- We are future focused and connected to the outside world; sharing, learning and experimenting.
- We build on the best of the old ways, to develop stronger, new ways.



OUR TENANT CONNECTION GROUPS

Tenants' Voice Scrutiny Panel

TVSP is a group of North Star tenants who take a detailed look at the services we provide. They present their findings and recommendations directly to our Board and are able to make real change happen at North Star.

Policy Review Group

Policy Review Group meet to discuss North Star's policies and procedures when they are reviewed. The group meets before staff undertake the review to suggest changes and areas for consideration during the review. Staff then feedback to the group on the changes that have been made.

Consumer Standards Group

The Consumer Standards Group meet to test North Star's performance against the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer standards (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-standards#consumer-standards>). The group identify where North Star can improve or alter services to ensure they are fully compliant.

Tenant Advisors

Tenant Advisors is a group of tenants focused on practical methods of providing feedback on North Star's services. This includes visiting void properties and checking we are meeting our void standard, mystery shopping services to ensure we are meeting the high standards we set ourselves and taking part in procurement exercises to ensure we are getting the right contractors and value for money.

Performance Group

The Performance Group looks at North Star's performance indicators including how our repairs service is operating, how much rent we are collecting and how long it takes us to let homes. The group also look at complaints data to ensure we are dealing with them effectively and quickly.

Task and Finish Groups

Throughout the year, we run a number of groups that look at specific issues or services at the organisation. This could include how we use digital technology to choosing new contractors.



OUR PRIORITIES

Tenant Connections at North Star are vital to delivering not only the vision for our communities but our corporate vision as a whole. We want to put tenants at the heart of everything we do and our priorities are designed to make this happen.

Creating change with as many people as possible

We currently engage with approximately 450 tenants and we want to make sure that everyone who wants to engage with us can, in a way that is as easy and convenient for them as possible. We want to ensure the feedback we receive reflects the diverse communities we work in

How will we do this?

- Developing our online engagement offer.
- Working with tenants to understand any barriers to engagement and removing them.
- Working with tenants we don't usually hear from on issues that are important to them.
- Developing a clear engagement offer for all of our tenants, that ensures they understand the level of service they can expect from us and what to do if they don't think we're meeting it.
- Working with tenants to ensure connection activities reflect the diversity of our communities.
- Working with partners in the various strands of diversity to better understand how we can engage and support tenants in our communities.



UNLOCKING POTENTIAL TO CREATE BELONGING

Tenant Connection is not just about generating feedback for North Star, it is also about providing opportunities for tenants to develop and find fulfilment. We want tenants to feel that their involvement has benefits beyond service improvement and create a shared sense of belonging for everyone connected to North Star. We also know that this is the best way to ensure all North Star's Tenant Connection activities are truly independent.

How will we do this?

- Continue to develop stretching and fulfilling training and development opportunities.
- Ensure all Tenant Connection activities are interesting, rewarding and never more complicated than they need to be.
- Provide opportunities for tenants to take on more roles and responsibilities within activities when and where they want to.
- Ensure tenants are able to connect with North Star in ways that work for them.



MAKING DECISIONS BASED ON WHAT WE KNOW, NOT WHAT WE THINK WE KNOW

North Star collects huge amounts of data and information that can support really good decision making. Sometimes it can be challenging to make sure that all this information is available to everyone who needs it, when they need it. North Star is committed to ensuring all our Tenant Connection initiatives have access to all the information they need to make effective decisions. We also want to make sure that tenants have unfiltered access to our Senior Management Team and Board so they can directly communicate their decisions and opinions to them.

How will we do this?

- Ensure all information available to North Star is available to tenants if required.
- Work with tenants to ensure information is accessible and understandable i.e. free from jargon.
- Create opportunities for tenants to meet and communicate with Senior Management and the Board as often as possible.
- Make sure everyone understands the impact Tenant Connection activities have on the business.
- Feed back directly to tenants the outcome of their contributions, each time a contribution is made.



HOW WE MONITOR AND REPORT

We monitor the impact of Tenant Connections using a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods. We want to ensure our activities are effective and fit for purpose. Effective monitoring helps us to do this.

We monitor our Tenant Connection activity using the following:

- Detailed records of the number of hours tenants contribute to the organisation through attending and taking part in Tenant Connection activity.
- Detailed records of Tenant Connection activities including minutes that are made widely available.
- Numbers of tenants signed up to each Tenant Connection group.
- The social value generated by Tenant Connection activity.

We report on the impact of Tenant Connections by:

- Producing a written report to the Board on the progress and detail of Tenant Connection activity each year.
- Having a section of North Star's annual Social Value report dedicated to Tenant Connections.
- Providing regular updates on Tenant Connection activity through our tenant magazine and online.
- Producing an annual report to tenants.



HOW WILL WE KNOW THIS STRATEGY HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL?

In 2023 North Star's Tenant Connection initiatives are a vibrant mix of engagement activities that works with tenants from across North Star's geography and across all strands of diversity.

In 2023, the following indicators will tell us the strategy has been successful:

- North Star meaningfully engages with over 500 tenants each year using a variety of face-to-face and online methods.
- Tenants meet with the Board and/or Senior Management at least twice a year in addition to engagement through conferences and Tenant Connection activities.
- The tenants we engage with reflect the diversity profile of our communities.
- Every policy, procedure and project that has an impact on tenants and the services they receive is demonstrably a result of co-creation.
- All North Star staff and managers with responsibility for policy development, procurement and service delivery receive an annual refresher session on North Star's Tenant Connection commitments.
- All North Staff will play a role in listening to feedback and implementing change.
- Customer insight allows us to monitor and forecast satisfaction levels. We are able to allocate resources flexibly based on what we know.






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

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

Creative

Connected

Courageous