

Summer Edition 2022



NORTH STAR

Creating homes, building futures

NORTH STAR

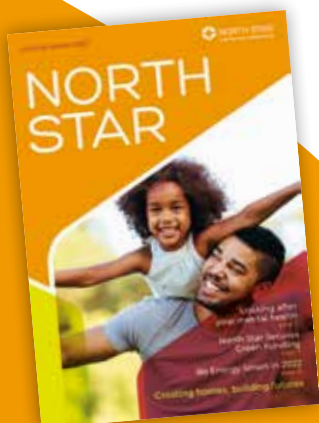


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Creating homes, building futures



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Welcome to our magazine, which is full of updates, information and advice on areas we think useful. We have been busy working to improve services such as the maintenance contract, where we involved customers in the selection process and in the drafting of the initial specification which reflected experiences and future requirements to ensure we have a strong, responsive and effective service.

We are concerned about the current "cost of living" crisis and its impact, therefore this edition focuses on this aspect. We also have staff who can help, so please do contact us if you need advice.

We take our responsibilities to the environment very seriously

and have developed an environmental strategy to deliver change. We are also very committed to behaving ethically in all we do, and we have a set of values and a social purpose statement to support this. Our updated equality, diversity and inclusion policy furthers our commitment to fairness.

Investing in people, property and new build continues at pace and our emerging vision and three year strategy will undoubtedly strengthen this commitment.

I hope you find this magazine useful and we are very keen to have feedback on any aspect – this is invaluable as it helps us to improve.

Best wishes
Angela Lockwood,
Chief Executive



LEADING AND GROWING – NORTH STAR TO 2026

On Friday 20th May we took an exciting step into the future, looking at what is the very best North Star can be in 2026.

Staff, tenants and board members all gathered at Darlington Mowden Park Rugby Club to discuss their thoughts, ideas and proposals to keep North Star strong into 2026 and beyond.

Many organisations produce corporate strategies to help plan for the future but, not many involve as many people as North Star to create them. This year we were delighted to welcome

5 involved tenants to the event. They were able to shape the ideas and proposals discussed on the day from a tenants' point of view and ensured all discussions were had with tenants' concerns at the heart of them.

Look out for more updates on the development of the plan on social media and our website.



Focus On... Adam Pearce



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

I'm North Star's new Property and Repairs Manager. My role consists of running the Day-to-Day repairs contract and managing the turn around of void properties. I currently have a team of five surveyors and look after all North Star properties. This is a very busy role with a huge amount of responsibility, but I always aim to provide the best service possible to our customers!

Where did you work before North Star?

I've only been in the role since November and really excited to be at NorthStar. Prior to my move here I have predominantly worked within the Social Housing sector for Believe Housing as electrical team lead and Thirteen where I was electrical coordinator. I entered the sector straight from school where I served my time as an apprentice electrician at Coast and Country Housing. Since then, I have been back to college completing my management qualifications and HNC and am currently studying at Sheffield Hallam University completing my degree.

What are your hobbies/interests?

I am a social person and love time with my friends and family; whether this is going out for drinks, food or a general catch up. When I can, I love my holidays and love seeing various parts of the world. I have a huge to visit list! To wind down from work and my studies I do enjoy swimming too, I find this a great way to switch off from my busy life.

What is your favourite:

Film? This is a tough one, my favourite set of films are James Bond films, but I wouldn't say I have a favourite film overall.

Book? I won't lie, I'm not really a book person but I read when I must, not out of choice.

Holiday destination? After the last two years that is a very hard question. I love traveling! Prior to lockdowns I visited France quite a lot, but I must admit I'm very well-travelled. I do still need to rearrange my trip to Japan when restrictions lift.

Food? That's one thing I am, a foodie. I love to try new food especially when away on holiday. I love Chinese, Indian etc but if I had to pick I think Thai would be my number one choice.

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself

I once made a speech in the House of Commons to support apprenticeships which is something I am a big advocate of! I even got to stand on the balcony overlooking the Thames.



NEW
For You

We are trialling video content to give our newsletter articles some more detail and give you more insight into what's happening in North Star and the communities we work with. Where you see these QR codes you can scan with your mobile phone camera to see video versions of the article. We would really like to know if this is something you would like to see more of. Let us know by contacting communities@northstarhg.co.uk or 03000 11 00 11 and asking for the communities team.



SCAN ME

LOOKING AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH



Did you know that 25% of people will experience a mental health problem of some kind every year in England?

Chances are, someone close to you is affected by mental health – if they aren't comfortable talking about it, MIND UK's online community, Side By Side is here to provide likeminded peer support.

Side by Side is a supportive online community where you can:

- feel at home
- talk about your mental health
- connect with others who understand what you are going through.

We all know what it's like to struggle sometimes. Side by Side provides a safe place to listen, share and be heard.

Find out more at: www.mind.org.uk/information-support/side-by-side-our-online-community

Are you or is someone you know a new North Star tenant?



SCAN ME

We have created this video as a quick start guide for new tenants. It has lots of information that may be useful in the early days of your tenancy, including:

- North Star's responsibilities
- Tenants' responsibilities
- How to set up energy suppliers
- How to access services online
- How to become an involved tenant

All the information mentioned in the video can be found on the North Star website:

www.northstarhg.co.uk/your-home/quick-start-guide



Recipe Ideas From



Sausage Casserole

Serves 4

8 sausages 1 onion, peeled and sliced
2 carrots, peeled, halved lengthways and sliced. 1 tin tomatoes 1 tin beans
2tbs tomato puree 1 stock cube made up with 100ml water 1 tsp oregano or mixed herbs Salt and pepper

The sausages need browning really well, before they go into the slow cooker, as they won't get any more colour once in the pot. Place the browned sausages and the rest of the ingredients, except the beans, into the pot. Cook on low for 4 hours. Add the beans and stir well to mix the sauces together. Cook for a further hour. Serve with mash. Or you can add a tin of potatoes when adding the beans, for a complete meal.



Creating homes, building futures

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NEWS

FOOD AND FRIENDSHIP INITIATIVE AT ROSEDALE COURT

Residents at Rosedale Court in Middlesbrough have been taking part in Food and Friendship sessions run by Together Middlesbrough and Cleveland (TMC).

The sessions were run by Julie McGee from TMC, who brought fresh produce to Rosedale Court, and taught residents to make

home cooked meals. Residents involved in the sessions got to sample the and also keep it for their lunch or evening meal. Sometimes the meals were shared with other residents in the building as there was often plenty to go around.

Sadly, the last session was held towards the end of March due to the end of their funding. Julie would love to return in the future

to hold other events should they have funding in place to cover these. The residents have agreed they would welcome them back with open arms as they thoroughly enjoyed their sessions. One of the late tenants also participated in these sessions which makes the memories of these events all the more special to the residents at Rosedale Court.



New project at Worsley

At Worsley we have set up a Dementia café once a month working in partnership with DH Law and Belinda Williams, Dementia Friendly Communities Coordinator, Darlington Alzheimer's Society and John Watley from Whitehouse Funeral Service. We meet on the first Monday of the month except on bank holiday and then we meet the week after. We meet between 12 and 2pm, due to the time of the meeting we serve sandwiches and homemade cakes which our tenants provide at a small charge.

We have NHS information network who regularly attend sessions and have worked with some of the group giving information of support and financial help that is available in Darlington.

We advertise in our local community and encourage tenants from Worsley to attend. The idea of the café is to bring together people with dementia and their support network.

We ask the group what their interests are and then theme a session around their interest.

April we had a craft session making Easter wreaths and painting eggs. In May, John provided a slide show with various pictures which brought back memories we all could share and in June we celebrated the Queens Jubilee.

In the future we plan to work with children from a local school and possibly have a trip out.



North Star Secures Green Funding

North Star has been granted vital Government funding towards two North-East schemes that will reduce carbon emissions and help tenants save on their fuel bills.

A total of £550,000 has been secured through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

The funding will account for around 65 per cent of the cost of two projects: external wall insulation and associated works on 31 terraced properties in Darlington; and 12 'hard to treat' properties in Middleton-in-Teesdale.

The successful bids were made by North Star's asset team through

the Tees Valley Combined Authority and Durham County Council.

The grants are the first of this size to be made under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and will help North Star set off towards its long-term goal of meeting Government targets for all properties to be carbon zero by 2050.

Chris Harris, North Star's Asset and Compliance Manager, said: "Securing this funding is a real milestone because it marks the beginning of our journey towards carbon zero, and it means we can help our tenants to reduce their bills at a time when fuel costs are rising steeply.

"The cost of major energy efficiency improvement works is huge, so we hope our success in this bid is just the start in accessing more funding in future to help us achieve our carbon reduction targets."

It was announced in October that the Government has allocated £800m to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund as part of a multi-billion pounds investment over three-years.

North Star is now working with contractors to progress the work in Darlington and Middleton-in-Teesdale as soon as possible. Dates for the beginning of the work, along with details of the locations, will be confirmed soon.



NEW REPAIRS CONTRACTOR FROM SEPTEMBER 2022

We are delighted to announce that following a detailed review of our repairs service and competitive procurement process, Ian Williams will be delivering our day-to-day and void repairs from the 1st September 2022.

Ian Williams delivers over 300,000 responsive repairs and maintenance visits across the country every year and will be co-locating with ourselves in our head office in Thornaby. Co-location of the Ian Williams team at our head office will help deliver efficiencies though sharing overhead costs whilst also helping foster partnership and collaboration. Ian Williams aim to complete the majority

of works by directly employed teams and are supported by industry leading technology, award winning health & safety practices and specialist training.

Ian Williams know that the key priority for our customers is providing a right first-time repair and have best in class technology to ensure this is achieved whenever possible. Working with Ian Williams will allow us to continue to improve the service we offer to customers. For example, they will be implementing the technology to provide customers receiving day to day repairs with the ability to track an operatives location when they are on route so customer have a better understand of when they will be arriving.

There will be no change in the way customers report repairs or disruption to the repairs service and there will be opportunities to meet with the Ian Williams dedicated contract team either as part of online or in person events prior to the 1st September 2022 – these will be shared on social media and our website nearer the time.



SCAN ME

NEWS

ENERGY EFFICIENT TRIAL IN MIDDLESBROUGH

North Star has started a trial aimed at developing a blueprint for energy-efficient homes across the region.

The work is being done using an empty property in Middlesbrough to test new designs and advanced technology as part of its drive towards decarbonising its stock of homes.

The house at the centre of the experiment is a pre-1920s mid-terrace, town centre property that needed refurbishment – including a new kitchen, bathroom, windows, doors, and boiler – when the previous long-term tenants moved out.

The house had an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of F and North Star's aim is to get this house as close to an EPC 'A' rating, with the remaining stock up to a C rating, or above by 2028.

Therefore, the association, which manages around 900 similar properties, decided it was the ideal opportunity to launch its first "Retrofit" trial to help develop a greener model.

Nicola Dixon, an Asset Management Surveyor for North Star and a qualified Retrofit co-ordinator, is leading the project with colleague Andy Moses.

Nicola said: "We wanted to trial new smart energy-efficient technologies and designs, so we've stripped the house right back to be able to more or less start from scratch.

"We are looking to change the layout to a more open-plan design, with low-energy lighting, internal wall insulation, and a ventilation strategy that improves the air quality, while producing lower energy bills.

"It's a question of trying to see what components work best, as we move towards developing a model that can be rolled out across this house type, this trial will help map out how we move forward and is an exciting and important stage in North Star's journey towards decarbonisation."

Emma Speight, Executive Director of Assets and Growth at North Star, added: "The aim is to reduce the carbon emissions from homes and make them more energy efficient and affordable for our tenants. This pilot project is a great opportunity for us to learn, understand and monitor the benefits of decarbonisation investment in a terraced property."

The renovation will also feature smart heating and hot water technologies – moving away from gas boilers – and cleaner internal air quality. Some of the property's attractive external architectural designs will be retained.

The house is expected to be ready for new tenants in the autumn.

North Star's ultimate aim is to decarbonise as much of its stock as possible by 2050.

NORTH STAR GRANTS

North Star have continued to support community groups in Tees Valley and County with the North Star Community Grants scheme. It is available, through online application, four times a year, and the panel of tenants who consider the applications has recently awarded £14,360 to 10 projects

Peter Locke, Head of Communities, said: "We had some really great projects to consider, and we appreciate that there are cost of living pressures at the moment. We felt that there were a couple of projects that would be a real benefit to our community and to our tenants."

Some beneficiaries that have benefitted from grants recently are: Nite Lite CiC, Stockton; £900: Distribution of surplus food via a market stall in Stockton – aim to increase health and wellbeing and reduce poverty; Bright Woods, Evenwood, Cockfield & Barnard Castle; £2,500: Access to forest school sessions for adults designed to reduce loneliness and increase physical activity; Let's Pretend & Play, Belle Vue Estate, Hartlepool; £750: Funding for family activities across the Easter holidays; FRADE, Middlesbrough; £340: Support to purchase tools

for a gardening project – part of the SHED project designed to reduce social isolation; Hardwick Partnership, Hardwick, Stockton; £1,570: Grant to purchase tablets for socially isolated people on Hardwick estate – group will also provide support to use them and access to affordable broadband; Eden Network, Gresham, Middlesbrough; £2,500: Support to expand their eco-shop model into Gresham, providing surplus food for low prices tackling both food poverty and waste; Teesside Vineyard Church, Thornaby; £2,050: Support to set up a stay-and-play session to allow parents to see the range of free and low-cost baby and children's equipment they are able to provide; Belle Vue Centre, Belle Vue Estate, Hartlepool; £2,500 : Support to expand the Project 85 Eco-Shop model – the shop provides low-cost clothing and food for a small membership fee and low price; The Moses Project, Stockton; £1,250: Support for the homeless drop-in and to purchase household items once clients have been allocated a tenancy; Five Lamps, Thornaby; £2,000: Support to equip the sensory room at the The Youthy to encourage more engagement.

We have also supported a number of groups to hold platinum jubilee celebrations.

"We are really pleased to be able to support such a wide range of community projects from across the North East," said Peter.

"We had an amazing response to the funding and we are only sorry we couldn't support all of the applications we received. We know this funding will have a fantastic impact in our communities and we're proud to be able to support such wonderful charitable organisations."

The application is available at <https://www.northstarhg.co.uk/get-involved/community-grants/>

This grant funding is included in our Social Value Report, which recognises the value to customers and communities, on top of what we do to provide good-quality, safe, and secure homes.

The 2021/22 report aims to capture the social value generated by North Star's activities, and can be viewed here: <https://www.northstarhg.co.uk/about-north-star/corporate-information/social-value-reports/>



SCAN ME

MONEY MATTERS

BE ENERGY SMART IN 2022

Do you need free impartial advice with your energy costs?

Do you need support maximising your income through grants and benefits?

Be Energy Smart this Year with the Energy Advice Line

Energy costs are going to increase a lot this year, and with other prices going up as well, making sure you can stay warm and manage your energy bills could be a problem.

To help, Stockton & District Advice & Information Service (Citizens Advice) has set up a new Energy Advice Line to give you specialist and independent advice.

The advice Service is:

- ◆ Independent
- ◆ Free
- ◆ Confidential
- ◆ Impartial

Call us and we will arrange for one of our Energy Advisers to ring you back at a time convenient for you.

Our Energy Advisers can give you independent advice on:

- ◆ How to minimise your fuel costs
- ◆ Getting the best deal on energy costs
- ◆ How to maximise income through grants and benefits

- ◆ Warm Home Discount and Cold Weather Payment
- ◆ Priority Services Register
- ◆ Energy efficiency and practical support services
- ◆ Meters and smart meters
- ◆ Carbon monoxide safety

Call us now on: **01642 626135** and we will arrange for one of our Energy Advisers to ring you back at a time convenient for you.

Make sure you are Energy Smart in 2022.



PENSION CREDIT

If you and your partner have reached state pension age, you may be eligible for Pension Credit to assist with living costs!

Pension Credit can also be used to subsidise your housing costs such as ground rent or service charges.

You might get extra help if you're a carer, severely disabled, or responsible for a child or young person.

Pension Credit is separate from your State Pension and you can get Pension Credit even if you have other income, savings or own your own home.

Find out more:
www.gov.uk/pension-credit

Help with budgeting

Budgeting can be challenging, but the first step is understanding what you've earned and spent, and where you may be able to cut costs.

This budgeting tool from Citizens Advice takes 30 minutes to complete, and could help you enjoy significant monthly savings!

Complete the form here:
www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/budgeting/budgeting/work-out-your-budget/

Is your lender on the list?

Loan sharks can be difficult to spot. They may pretend to be your friend, offering to lend you money in times of financial hardship.

However, they will charge extortionate interest rates, and potentially harass, extort and threaten you in order to try and recoup their loan.

Authorised money lenders will always be listed on the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)'s website.

If you're unsure whether your lender is legitimate, always check first!

Browse the list:
<https://register.fca.org.uk/s/>



ONE OFF PAYMENT FOR HOUSEHOLDS

One-off £650 cost of living payment to be made to all households on DWP and HMRC means-tested benefits

The Chancellor Rishi Sunak has announced that the government will make a one-off £650 cost of living payment to all households on DWP and HMRC means-tested benefits.

The £650 cost of living payment:

- is payable to households who, as at 25 May 2022, are in receipt of (or have begun a claim, which is later successful, for) universal credit, income-based jobseeker's allowance, income-related employment and support allowance, income support, working tax credit, child tax credit or pension credit;
- will be paid in two lump sums directly into the claimant's bank account - the DWP will make the first payment from July 2022 and the second in the autumn, while payments from HMRC for those on tax credits only will follow shortly after to avoid duplicate payments; and

- will be tax-free, will not count towards the benefit cap, and will not have any impact on existing benefit awards.

The chancellor has also announced:

A £300 pensioner cost of living payment which:

- will be paid to all pensioner households (those where a person is aged 66 or over between 19-25 September 2022) as a top-up to their annual winter fuel payment in November/December 2022; and
- is not taxable and does not affect eligibility for other benefits and will be paid on top of any other one-off support the household is entitled to.

A £150 disability cost of living payment which:

- is payable to people who, as at 25 May 2022, are in receipt of (or have begun a claim, which is later successful, for) disability living allowance, personal independence payment, attendance allowance, Scottish disability benefits, armed forces independence payment, constant attendance allowance or war pension mobility supplement;

- will be paid directly to eligible people from September 2022; and
- will be exempt from tax, will not count towards the benefit cap, will not have any impact on existing benefit awards and will be paid on top of any other one-off support the person is entitled to.

Mr Sunak also announced that the £200 support announced on 3 February 2022 is being replaced with a £400 energy bills support scheme payment which:

- will be paid as a grant and not recovered;
- will be delivered by energy suppliers to households with a domestic electricity meter over six months from October 2022 - direct debit and credit customers will have the money credited to their account, while customers with pre-payment meters will have the money applied to their meter or paid via a voucher.

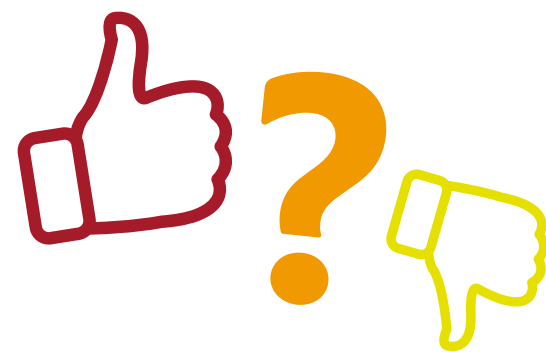
For more information see the government articles:

www.gov.uk/government/news/millions-of-most-vulnerable-households-will-receive-1200-of-help-with-cost-of-living

www.gov.uk/government/publications/cost-of-living-support/cost-of-living-support-factsheet-26-may-2022

If you would like to know more about these payments and how to access them please contact our welfare benefits team on:
Welfare.Benefits@northstarhg.co.uk
or **03000 11 00 11**.

Our Services



COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS & COMPLIMENTS PROCESS

We welcome complaints, comments and compliments. We value this feedback because without it, we would not be able to learn from when things have gone wrong and also when things go right.

How to make a complaint

We want to make it as easy as possible to make a complaint about our services and they can be made in any of the following ways?

-  **In person**
-  **In writing**
-  **By telephone**
-  **By email on services @northstarhg.co.uk**
-  **Via our website, northstarhg.co.uk/your-home/your-tenancy/complaints-compliments-and-comments/**
-  **Through another person, perhaps an advocate, social worker, solicitor, etc.**
-  **Through comments made on surveys**
-  **Through comments on social media such as Facebook, Twitter etc.**

We will deal with anonymous complaints, comments and compliments in the same way.

We have a simple complaints process involving just two stages.

Once we have received your complaint, we will write to you within two working days providing you with details of who will be looking into the complaint and when you should receive a response by.

A stage one complaint will be dealt with by a manager who will endeavour to resolve the complaint within 10 working days.

If you are not happy with the outcome of stage one, it will go to the stage two process and will be dealt with by a senior manager or director who will endeavour to resolve the complaint in 10 working days.

If we are unable to resolve the complaint in these timescales, we will contact you in writing on what we are intending to do to resolve the complaint and by when.

When we are writing to you, we will provide information on how the complaint can be escalated if you remain dis-satisfied.

If you are not satisfied with how North Star is handling your complaint, you can refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman, www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk



ARE YOU SUFFERING FROM DAMP, MOULD OR CONDENSATION IN YOUR HOME?

We want to help remove any damp, mould or condensation issues from your home, and ensure this problem never occurs again.

Report any issues here, and we'll be in touch to resolve your issue.

Learn more: www.northstarhg.co.uk/do-you-have-damp-mould-or-condensation-in-your-home

SERVICE WITH RESPECT

At North Star, we support the Service With Respect campaign from the Institute of Customer Service.

We're committed to providing excellent customer service, but we maintain a zero-tolerance policy for harassment, bullying, and abuse.

Our employees treat people with dignity and respect, and deserve the same courtesy.

Find out more: www.northstarhg.co.uk/about-north-star/equality-diversity



Make your life simpler with the My North Star online service, your one-stop shop for all things North Star!

Order home repairs, make rent payments, book appointments and more at the push of a button.

Plus, it's compatible with smartphone, desktop and tablet, so you can be in control from anywhere in the world!

Find out more: www.northstarhg.co.uk/your-home/my-north-star





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

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

www.mynorthstar.online

 www.northstarhg.co.uk

 [@northstarhg](https://www.facebook.com/northstarhg)

 [@northstarhg](https://twitter.com/northstarhg)

 03000 11 00 11

 customer.services@northstarhg.co.uk

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.

Creative

Connected

Courageous