



# NORTH STAR



Save Money,  
Save Energy!  
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Creating homes, building futures





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**H**ello and welcome to North Stars' Winter magazine which is full of information and advice. As we near the end of 2022 we want to share some of our successes, celebrations, and challenges.

A key focus of this issue is to provide information on how we are performing as a landlord and we would welcome your views on whether we are doing well enough and what we can do better.

We have also included information on cost-of-living issues and the support on offer at North Star. Please do contact us for advice, as we have a lot of expertise and contacts and we know how challenging times are.

Damp and mould issues are a major concern, as it affects health and well-being and we do not want anyone to live under these conditions, so please do let us know if you have a

problem. We will respond quickly.

As we come to the end of another year, we are pleased with the progress we have made in delivering our objectives. We have started an inclusive process to develop our three-year vision to 2026 and we will share more as it unfolds. We have involved a range of people in this process, including customers, to ensure we get the right priorities going forward. Front and centre will be improved frontline services and involvement, along with environmental commitments, ethical practices, new technology and low carbon new build housing.

I hope you find this useful and please do let us have feedback – my email address is **angela.lockwood@northstarhg.co.uk**

Best wishes  
**Angela Lockwood,**  
Chief Executive



## Focus On... Our Head of Finance, Andrew Carlton

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

Head of Finance – the job role covers financial planning for North Star, budgeting and 30 year business planning as well as overseeing the financial reporting for the organisation. I'm also responsible for areas of Risk Management, Insurance and Treasury Management.

### Where did you work before North Star?

I've worked in social housing since 2008, joining then Cestria Community Housing Association - now Karbon Homes. Before joining North Star I was fortunate enough to undertake a secondment with The Foundation of Light, the registered Charity of Sunderland AFC, as their Interim Head of Finance.

### What are your hobbies/interests?

Spending time with my two boys & family, walking, camping and being a long suffering football fan!

### What is your favourite:

**TV Series?** Vikings  
**Book?** The Great Gatsby  
**Holiday destination?** Alykes, Zante  
**Food?** Gyros

### Tell us an interesting fact about yourself

I'm also a newly appointed Board member of Catalyst Stockton, a charity providing support for the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector in Stockton-on-Tees.



NEW  
For You



We have worked with community food charity Sprouts CiC for a number of years and their recipes are always delicious! Especially this festive biscuit recipe, ideal as a gift for family and friends or even Santa himself on Christmas Eve!

# CHRISTMAS BISCUITS

## Ingredients

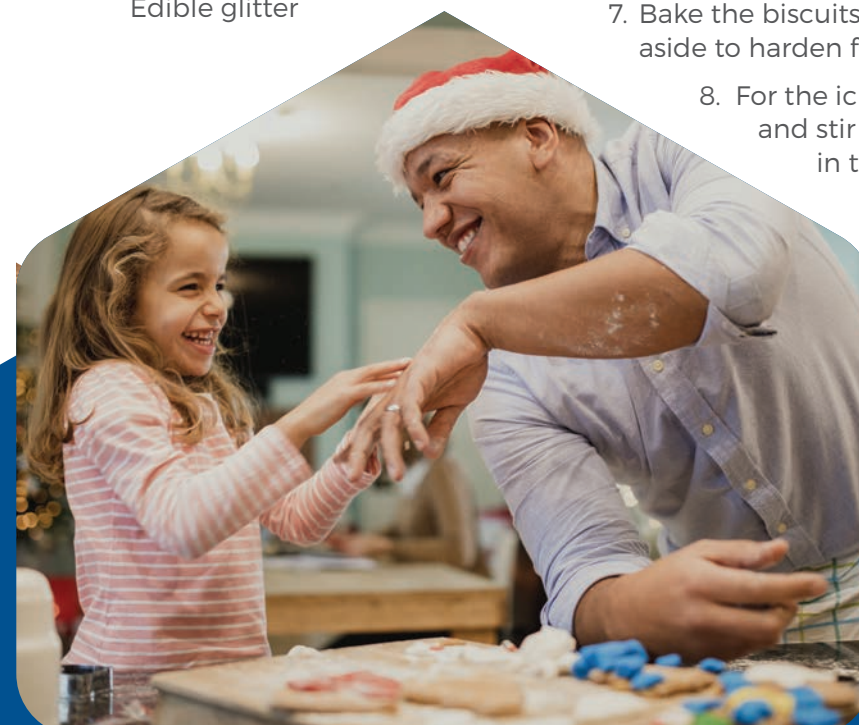
100g unsalted butter, softened at room temperature  
100g caster sugar  
1 free-range egg, lightly beaten  
1 tsp vanilla extract  
275g plain flour

## To decorate

400g icing sugar  
3-4 tbsp water  
2-3 drops food colourings  
Edible glitter

## Method

1. Preheat the oven to 190C/375F/Gas 5. Line a baking tray with greaseproof paper.
2. Cream the butter and sugar together in a bowl until pale, light and fluffy.
3. Beat in the egg and vanilla extract, a little at a time, until well combined.
4. Stir in the flour until the mixture comes together as a dough.
5. Roll the dough out on a lightly floured work surface to a thickness of 1cm/½in.
6. Using biscuit cutters or a glass, cut biscuits out of the dough and carefully place onto the baking tray. To make into Christmas tree decorations, carefully make a hole in the top of the biscuit using a straw.
7. Bake the biscuits for 8-10 minutes, or until pale golden-brown. Set aside to harden for 5 minutes, then cool on a wire rack.
8. For the icing, sift the icing sugar into a large mixing bowl and stir in enough water to create a smooth mixture. Stir in the food colouring.
9. Carefully spread the icing onto the biscuits using a knife and sprinkle over the glitter. Set aside until the icing hardens.





NEW  
For You

# CHATBOT / WHATSAPP

We're really pleased to announce the launch of our new chatbot! The chatbot sits on our website and acts as an assistant to help answer your questions and give you quick access to information.

## What does this mean for you?

Our automated chatbot technology gives you more options in how you choose to communicate with us. Our other contact options such as telephone and email are still available for those who prefer it, however the WhatsApp, Live Chat and the Chatbot are designed to help you self-serve and get instant answers to your questions.

Our WhatsApp and Chatbot channels can:

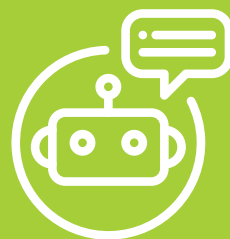
- Give instant answers, 24/7 in over 120 languages
- Answer common and transactional questions
- Signpost and self-serve
- Request repairs

The chatbot sits on our website and acts as an assistant to help answer your questions and give you quick access to information. The more the chatbot is used, the more intelligent it becomes!

If you prefer to chat to a person instead, you can request live chat (during office hours) through the chatbot and speak to a member of our team who can help you with your queries.

Our WhatsApp number is 07700376012, alternatively you can scan the QR code below to open up a chat. Our WhatsApp account uses the same chatbot technology and is available 24/7.

Head over to our website and click the icon that pops up in the bottom right corner to give it a try – [www.northstarhg.co.uk](http://www.northstarhg.co.uk)



Scan the QR code and try our new chatbox and live chat on WhatsApp!

Message us on WhatsApp  
07700376012



# TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES

The Regulator of Social Housing is creating a new system for assessing how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services.

In addition to introducing revised consumer standards, this will involve a set of tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs) that social landlords must report on.

Residents will be able to use these measures to understand how well their landlords are doing.

There are 22 TSMs covering five themes, 10 of these will be measured by landlords directly, and 12 will be by landlords carrying out tenant perception surveys.

The themes are:

- Keeping properties in good repair
- Maintaining building safety
- Respectful and helpful engagement
- Effective handling of complaints
- Responsible neighborhood management

The new TSMs make the performance of landlords more visible for tenants as well as informing the Regulator of Social Housing how landlords can improve services for their tenants.

These will come into place from April 2023.

If you would like any more information, contact our Customer Services Team on 03000 11 00 11







# NORTH STAR AIDS AND ADAPTATION SERVICES

## WHAT ARE AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS?

This can be an item of equipment or an alteration made to your home, which assists you or a member living in your home to live independently. The changes make it safer and easier for you to carry out your daily duties.

North Star can assist you through our Aids and Adaptation services. North Star offer two types of Aids & Adaptations services:

- Minor Adaptation (request made by you or family/friend). Examples include: grab rails, steps lever taps, small removable ramps and sensory items (flashing & amplified doorbell etc).

- Major Adaptation (Referral made by an Occupation Therapist). Examples include: metal handrails outside, level access showers, satirlifts, larger ramps and hoist.

## HOW NORTH STAR CAN ASSIST WITH AIDS & ADAPTATION?

Minor adaptation requests can be made by calling **03000 11 00 11** or via email: **adaptations@northstarhg.co.uk**

Major adaptation referrals are carried out by the local authority. An Occupational Therapist will need to be assigned to you so a full assessment of your needs can be carried out. The works will then be carried out via a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).

### Residents Comments

"I would like to say thank you to North Star for installation of metal handrails."

## NEW REPAIRS CONTRACTOR NOW LIVE!

Ian Williams have been delivering our day-to-day and void repairs from the 1st September 2022.

Ian Williams deliver over 300,000 responsive repairs and maintenance visits across the country every year and their staff are co-located with North Star in our head office in Thornaby.

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.

Within the next few weeks, we will be able to provide customers receiving day to day repairs with the ability to track an operative's location when they are on route so customer have a better understand of when they will be arriving.

There has been no change to the way in which you can report repairs to North Star.

Phone: **03000 11 00 11**

email: **customer.services@northstarhg.co.uk**

WhatsApp: **07700 376 012**

## Are you struggling to make ends meet?

You may not be claiming your full entitlement.

Talk to someone who can help with your budgeting and claiming benefits.

Our impartial advice service helps our tenants with budgeting, benefits queries and income maximisation. It can also help our new tenants with setting a budget for their new home to help sustain their tenancy.

For free and confidential help and advice on managing your money, contact our welfare benefits team: **welfare.benefits@northstarhg.co.uk**

Call: **03000 11 00 11**



## Levick Court Celebrates its 10 Year Anniversary

"Brenda Pugh, Support Worker at Levick Court gave us this report of the celebrations:

"Levick Court has been open 10years, the tenants are proud to be in such a lovely building and scheme."

"They feel safe within the building and enjoy the activities they have, coffee mornings every Wednesday which is attended by ladies from within the community, they also attend the fortnightly bingo nights which are a huge success."

"The event was held after discussions with the tenants, then myself obtaining funding to go towards the event there was a gorgeous anniversary cake, along with a live singer who all enjoyed."

"Some of the original tenants who have been in Levick Court since it opened attended a couple of the original tenants could not due to illness they were very much missed."

"The buffet was provided by our caterers who service Aspen Gardens which was excellent."

"The evening went very well and very quickly, tenants getting up to dance after Betty one of my tenant's had asked "Brenda will there be space to dance"? which I made sure there was for her and others to join in."

## GRADUATION CEREMONY RAINHAM HOUSE

Monday 14th November will mark a fantastic achievement by eight vulnerable tenants who will celebrate their very first qualification.

Rainham House have worked with Middlesbrough based training provider ITEC, to deliver a Level 1 Well Being and Mental Health course for Rainham and Hestia tenants and Essential Skills in IT for the Rough Sleepers Accommodation Service.

This is the first time Rainham has been able to offer in house training, in the hope that tenants leave the service equipped with a qualification. We have aimed to remove all barriers to learning for those who have experienced trauma in their lives which has stopped our tenants from being able to travel and attend College.

All tenants attended the six-week program and developed transferable skills that they will be able to use to gain employment, voluntary work or attend vocational courses.

Many who attended the in-house course had only experienced learning at school, their understanding of education was distressing and many left schools without qualifications. At Rainham House we have ensured that all tenants have felt valued and understood.

All tenants attended for 6 weeks sometimes, twice a week and throughout these six weeks we saw dramatic improvements in confidence and self-belief, many were in situ, waiting to commence the course before the trainer had arrived on site! Many tenants are now applying for courses at local Colleges and one tenant has attended an interview for a part-time job!

Monday 14th November we will mark their achievement with a Graduation Ceremony at Rainham House, tenants will be given their certificate by Andy Preston, the Mayor of Middlesbrough and as an incentive for completing the course ITEC have donated £100 shopping vouchers for the ladies and the men will receive a SMART phone.

We are hoping to offer more courses in the future for tenants and we applaud this huge accomplishment.

Paul and Liam who successfully completed the Well Being and Mental Health course





# FIRE SAFETY CONSULTATION

The Communities Team was recently asked to consult with all tenants regarding Fire Safety in three quite different types of properties:

- ◆ Tenants living in properties with delayed evacuation instructions in place;
- ◆ Tenants living in properties with communal areas and
- ◆ General needs tenants.

All tenants living in properties with delayed evacuation instructions in place, and supported properties with communal areas, had a questionnaire hand delivered either by the Tenant Connector or staff on site, and were offered the opportunity to take part in a meeting if they wanted more information or had any queries. Tenants living in general needs properties were sent a copy of the questionnaire either by email, text or post.

This was clearly high priority for a lot of tenants as we had an amazing response to the survey and the vast majority of tenants felt similar issues were important to them.

Fire Safety is clearly very important to North Star and to our tenants and we had 721 responses in total which highlighted the following recommendations which will be put forward to North Stars Health and Safety Team for consideration:

- ◆ Printed copy of Fire Safety Instructions to be given to each tenant in schemes with delayed evacuation and properties with communal areas.
- ◆ Pictorial information provided where appropriate.
  - North Stars Tenant Scrutiny Panel is carrying out research on this subject and hope to put recommendations to Board in December.
- ◆ Have fire safety as a regular agenda item at residents' scheme meetings.
- ◆ Give assurance that all necessary fire safety measures are in place.

- ◆ Create a video 'You Said We Did' for social media and website about

- The importance of checking alarms regularly
- How to check smoke alarms
- How to check carbon monoxide alarms

- ◆ Promote the free Fire Service Home Safety check:

- On social media
- North Star website
- Tenants Newsletters

The response to the Fire Safety Survey was very positive, tenants completed hard copy surveys, online surveys via text and email links and in scheme meetings. Issues raised were relevant and many can be easily addressed by implementing the recommendations above.

**IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS REGARDING DOMESTIC ABUSE PLEASE CONTACT US.**

**North Star are committed to signposting and supporting customers who may be experiencing domestic abuse**

Reports of domestic abuse increase by 38% when England lose at football. During Christmas, domestic abuse crimes increase more than any other time of the year.

If you have concerns regarding a partner or concerns relating to a family member, friend or neighbours partner, you can request a disclosure under Clare's Law. Clare's Law is a domestic abuse disclosures scheme is a police policy giving people the right to know if their current or ex-partner has any previous history of violence or abuse. An application can be made at your local police station or by calling 101. Information regarding the scheme can be found at [clares-law.com](http://clares-law.com)

If you are suffering domestic abuse, more help can be found on our website. In case of an emergency, contact the police on 999.

## NO ONE WANTS TO LIVE IN A HOME WITH MOULD!

We want to work with you to solve any damp, mould or condensation issues in your home.

We also want to prevent these issues from happening again, and to make sure that you can settle in a home that is warm, safe, and secure.

If you have damp, mould, or condensation in your home, please contact us either by visiting our website and using our dedicated damp, mould and condensation reporting tool or by calling us on 0300 11 00 11.

Please remember that everyday activities like cooking, showering and drying clothes create moisture in your home which can lead to condensation. It can help if you:

- ◆ cover pans when cooking
- ◆ use extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms
- ◆ close internal doors when you cook or shower
- ◆ leave a gap between furniture and external walls
- ◆ dry clothes outdoors or use a vented tumble dryer
- ◆ open bedroom windows for 5-10 minutes when you get up

It also makes a big difference if you have a low background temperature of at least 15 degrees in all rooms. We understand that this may be difficult due to rising energy costs.

**Please call us on 0300 11 00 11 and ask to find out more about our Living Well in Winter campaign.**





# Save Money, Save Energy!

Cut your bills and reduce your carbon emissions with these handy tips

## WATER

A running tap wastes more than 6 litres of water every minute, turn it off while brushing your teeth, shaving or washing your face.

Typically 27% of water used in the home is in the shower, keeping your shower time to just 4 minutes could save a typical household £95 a year on their energy bills.

Reduce the amount of water and energy you use by ordering your **free water saving kit** from Northumbria Water, subject to availability.

[www.nwl.watersavingkit.com](http://www.nwl.watersavingkit.com)

Have you thought about water use outside the home?

Up to 90,000 litres of water can fall onto a roof in a year. Installing a water butt is relatively easy and can be used for watering your garden and plants.

## ELECTRICITY

**Home appliances** - When choosing energy efficient appliances for your home look out for the energy rating label and consider the size of appliance that you require.

The quickest way to understand your home energy consumption is to see it in real time. Using an energy monitor will show you your usage in power and cost.

### TOP TIPS

Avoid leaving your appliances on standby. On average, UK households spend £65 a year powering appliances left in standby mode. Most appliances will reset when turned back on.

Use the economy cycle on your washing machine whenever you can and washing full loads will reduce your energy consumption.

Your freezer will run more efficiently when it's defrosted regularly. Using a vacuum cleaner to clean the condenser coils underneath your fridge or freezer will also help increase efficiency.

## LIGHTING

Lighting accounts for 11% of a typical household's electricity consumption.

Energy efficient lighting helps lower electricity bills and carbon dioxide emissions. If you replace all the bulbs in your home with LED lights, you could reduce your carbon dioxide emissions by up to 40kg a year.

### TOP TIP

Always turn lights off when leaving a room, the typical household could save almost £20 a year just by switching off the lights when not needed.

## Water

**Northumbrian Water**  
[www.nwl.co.uk](http://www.nwl.co.uk)

0345 7335566

[energyhelpline.com](http://energyhelpline.com)  
0800 0740745

## HEATING

Set your heating and hot water to come on and off when you need them.

Room thermostats turn the heating on until the room reaches the temperature set, then off until the temperature drops.

Your room thermostat should be set to the lowest comfortable temperature, for most this is between 18-21 degrees. For every degree you increase the temperature, it will increase the heating bill by about 10%.

### TOP TIP

Turning down your room thermostat by just one degree can save you around £115 a year on average for a typical home.

Close the curtains at night. Thick or lined curtains are surprisingly effective at keeping heat in. Close internal doors to keep heat in the rooms you are using.



# Keep Well in Winter

Our Keep Well in Winter campaign aims to ensure all our tenants are supported and no-one in our communities goes without enough food, warmth, or essential items to keep well at home especially during the colder months.

We recognise that the current cost of living crisis extends beyond the winter months.

Keep Well in Winter provides a holistic package of support including vouchers for food, energy, and essential items to keep well during the colder months and support and guidance on maximizing income and managing the rising cost of living.

The package of support and help that you may be able to access either directly through the scheme or by being referred to other organisations can include:



**Vouchers towards your food shopping in a choice of mainstream supermarkets**



**Vouchers towards the cost of gas and electric bills**



**Purchasing of essential items to keep warm such as blankets, heaters, hot water bottles**



**Referral to our Welfare Benefits Team who can work with you to look at ways of maximising your income and getting specialist advice and support such as benefits, grants etc.**



**Referring to Citizens Advice Bureau for specialist debt advice and support**

If you would like to access this support, please email [keepwell@northstarhg.co.uk](mailto:keepwell@northstarhg.co.uk) or contact our Customer Services Team for more information on **03000 11 00 11**.

## FOR FURTHER HELP & ADVICE

**General Home Energy Efficiency**

[www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)  
0800 444202

**Advice on debt and energy issues**

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)  
find your local branch in the phone book

[www.moneysavingexpert.com](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com)

**Switching Energy Suppliers**

[www.uswitch.com](http://www.uswitch.com)  
0800 6888557





# North Star GRANTS ROUNDUP

North Star offers grants to groups working in our communities. They can apply for up to £2,500 for a project or idea. Decisions on which groups we fund are made by a panel of staff and tenants. You can see more about the grants and how to apply at : [www.northstarhg.co.uk/get-involved/community-grants/](http://www.northstarhg.co.uk/get-involved/community-grants/) If you would like to be on the panel or have any questions about our grants, please contact us on: [communities@northstarhg.co.uk](mailto:communities@northstarhg.co.uk) or 03000 11 00 11 and ask for the communities team. In the past few months we have funded a number of amazing projects. Here are just a few.

## CULTIVATE TEES VALLEY

Is an environmental organisation developing urban food growing gardens.

They carried out weekly grow in the community sessions in Stockton and Thornaby. Activities included seed sowing, watering, food harvesting, looking after chickens (feeding, watering,

cleaning out, egg gathering), build projects (chicken coop run, raised beds), garden design and creation.

They have got the community involved in partnership working, participants learnt new skills and all attendees who were interviewed said they felt less isolated and lonely and their mental health had improved while attending the sessions.

"Cultivate gives me a purpose, time for me to enjoy being me, the ability to support others on their growing journey, new skills to grow my own food and most of all a sense of worth - what I do there means something for the whole community."



## ROSEBERRY COMMUNITY CONSORTIUM

Is a charity to help and guide young people of Teesside, including music tuition, singing and dancing.

They were awarded funding for a computer and to run activities at their Community Hub, this included creating engaging videos highlighting activities available at the centre and delivered a holiday activities program for young people. They produced a video involving young people and charity trustees and the video was showcased in Arc.

They also run a neurodiverse choir every Monday and regular podcasting sessions. Other classes included anti-bullying techniques, movement and co-ordination and job search and cv writing.



In the last round of grants, we awarded seven projects across the region funding to support Jubilee events in their local community. These included:

## BEYOND LIMITS

**Butterknowle, Evenwood, Cockfield, and surrounding areas**

We gave a contribution to their Jubilee event, a small community brunch followed by a garden party in the grounds of the charity, activities included an assault course, slide and disco dome, giant garden games, and a farm animal petting zoo as well as Cinderella carriage rides, limo rides and live entertainment. Afternoon teas were delivered with handmade gifts to local care homes and to community members unable to leave their home. Over 300 attendees.



## 1ST CARLIN HOW & SKINNINGROVE GIRLGUIDING

**East Cleveland**

Funding was awarded for materials and crafts to help the young people decorate the local community centre & create items to wear during their community parade.

## WOODLANDS VILLAGE HALL WOODLAND

**Butterknowle Cockfield Copley and others**

This grant supported four days of celebration. This included events for all ages and range of interests, such as a tea dance, family fun pet show, kids sport activities, street party, evening beacon lighting and pipers; and best decorated house and scarecrow competition.





# NORTH STAR 2022 TENANT CELEBRATION

**North Star held a tenant celebration event for over 250 people at Darlington College on 24th September 2022. The event was packed with entertainment for children and adults, street food and useful information for tenants.**

Animal Antics petting zoo introduced people to cockroaches, millipedes and rabbits, Crazy Colin was on hand with magic tricks, balloons and bubbles for the children and there were inflatables too! Also popular on the day were the Henna artists and face painter.

There was lots of useful information on offer from North Star teams. ICT and Digital were on hand to explain our new

Chatbot to tenants and even ran a competition to name and design it! They also managed to help fix devices for tenants on the day that made sure they were able to access involvement opportunities and contact North Star through WhatsApp. Housing and Welfare Benefits were on-hand to answer any queries, make appointments with tenants needing further support and distribute free North Star reusable water bottles!

We had stalls from a number of local partners and charities with lots of useful information including Nite Light CiC running an affordable food market stall, Sprouts CiC demonstrating healthy cooking techniques

and CAB providing much needed advice amongst many others.

The feedback, from tenants, partners and staff has been overwhelmingly positive and we can't wait to organise the next one!

The communities team would like to say a huge thank-you to everyone who attended and helped out on the day. We couldn't have done it without you!



Thanks for reaching out!

## North Star and Buildroute team up to make nature reserve more accessible

As part of its contract with North Star Buildroute has made social value commitments. In October 2022, they worked with North Star staff and members of Friends of Drinkfield Marsh, in Darlington, to construct two natural looking handrails on the marsh's most slippery paths.

The work was completed in a day and all materials were kindly donated by Buildroute. The Marsh's users were very positive of the work on the Facebook's Friends Group.

A big thank-you to Andy and Mick from Buildroute and all the North Star staff who helped on the day.



**"Well done folks. This will make our walk down that slope safer in the winter months."**

LOCAL'S SHOW THEIR APPRECIATION



**"Looks great. Thanks to all involved."**

LOCAL'S SHOW THEIR APPRECIATION



# Tenants Annual Report Data 2021/22

**"97.4% of tenants are satisfied that North Star provides a home that is safe & secure."**

## Our Homes

**3818**

Homes that we own and/or manage

**599**

Supported Housing

**66**

Managed for others

**15**

Shared equity / Leaseholders

**3138**

General Needs

## Your Home



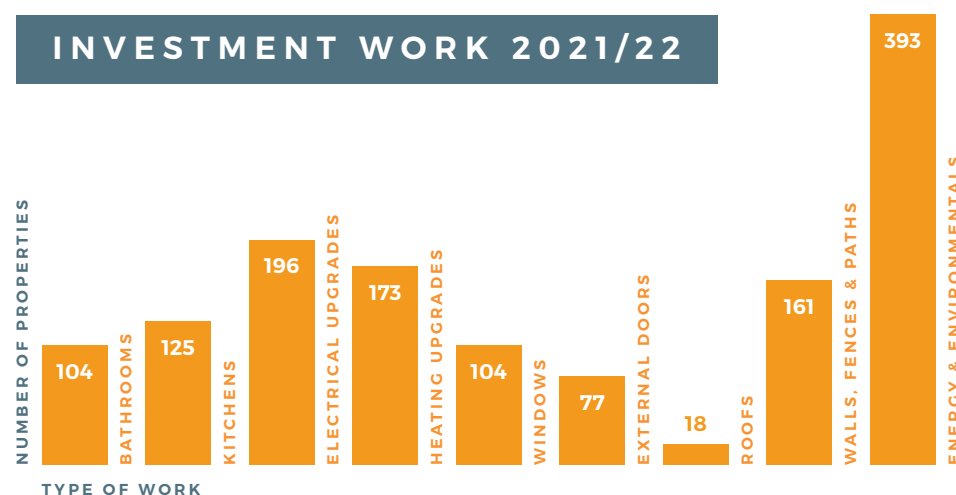
**£3.5m**

Spent on improving over 955 homes.

### Planned Maintenance

We have increased the amount we spend on improving homes. During the year we invested £3.5m improving 955 homes with planned investment works with a focus on energy and environmental works, electrical and heating upgrades, as well as a large external works programme.

### INVESTMENT WORK 2021/22



	Target 2021/22	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Percentage satisfied with Planned investment work	95%	94.4%	96%	94%



North Star completed 14,943 repairs in 2021/22 which is an 11% increase from previous year. This increase is due to 500 additional joinery repairs, 300 additional fencing repairs and 200 additional roofing and plumbing repairs.

**"Electrical Safety checks on 99.3% of homes."**

**"92% of repairs completed on time."**

**"100% of required asbestos safety checks completed."**

**Average number of repairs per property**  
**Average cost of a responsive repair**

**3.1**  
**£91.20**

Maintenance	Target 2020/21	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	How we compare to others
Percentage satisfied with the repairs service	92%	88.3%	90%	88.6%	Average
Percentage of appointments kept	95%	95.8%	93%	99.3%	👍
Percentage of properties with a valid gas safety certificate at year end	100%	100%	100%	99.8%	Average
Percentage of fire safety checks completed	100%	99.4%	98.8%	100%	👍

## Your tenancy

**Number of homes let in 2021/22**

**336**

Our Welfare Benefits Officers continued to provide support to maximise customers income in partnership with other agencies and charities. The team supported 657 households and maximised income by £586k.

	Target 2020/21	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	How we compare to others
% rent lost through homes being empty	1.2%	1.2%	0.85%	1.02%	👍
Average number of days taken to let a home	25 days	24	20	25	👍
Current tenants arrears	2.75%	1.94%	2.29%	2.5%	Average



Your neighbourhoods

- + 46 reports of ASB (45 in 2021/22)
- + We continue to work in partnership with police, local authorities, victim support and other agencies to tackle ASB.
- + Tenant satisfaction with how we managed ASB
  - + 2021/22: 85%
  - + 2020/21: 100%
  - + 2019/20: 95%,

Improving our services

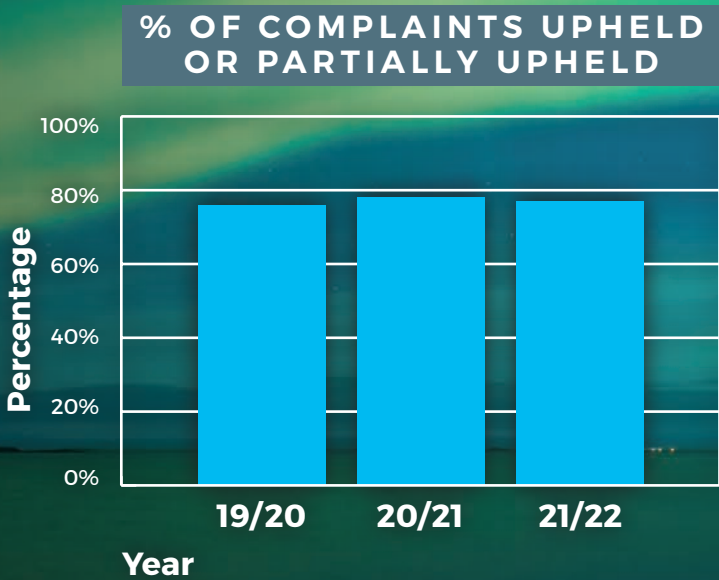
North Star is a member of The Housing Ombudsman scheme and each year we assess our complaints service against the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code. The latest self-assessment can be viewed in the Complaints section on our website along with our learning from complaints and complaints policy.



In 2021/22 we received 120 complaints, which was 25 more than the 95 received the previous year.

Complaints	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Asset Management	11	7	8
Compliance	17	13	9
Customer Services	0	2	14
Development	2	2	1
Finance	1	0	0
Housing	9	2	13
Maintenance	53	67	73
Supported Housing	1	2	2
Total	94	95	120

“85.3% of customers said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall services provided by North Star.”



You said

North Star takes too long to complete repairs.

We did

We meet weekly with our contractors to monitor progress on all overdue jobs and ensure they are resolved at the earliest opportunity.

Number of complaints resolved at stage 1 = 111 (93%) Stage 2 = 9 (7%)  
Percentage of complaints responded to within 10 working days = 86.2%

Complaints by Service Area	Total in number	%
Length of time to complete repair	30	25%
Communication issues	20	17%
Processes	16	13%
Service Standards	12	10%
Attitude of staff	11	9%
Standard of accommodation	10	8%
Quality of repair	8	7%
Damage caused	7	6%
Damp and mould	5	4%
Missed repair appointment	1	1%
Missed repair appointment	120	100%

North Star values customer feedback and all complaints received, either formally or informally are acted on to improve our services.

In June 2021, we introduced a new real time feedback service called Rant and Rave to capture transactional feedback and satisfaction through text messaging. This has led to a 33% reduction in informal complaints and supports the identification of trends and learning as well as rapid contact with dissatisfied customers.

New Homes

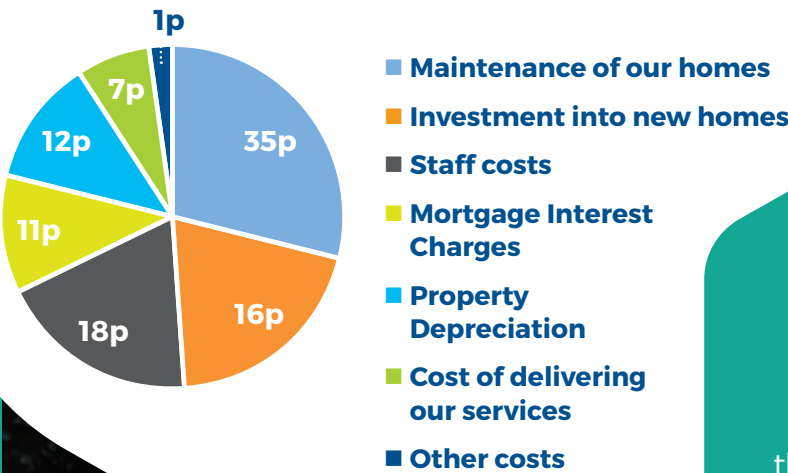
This year, we funded the delivery of 32 new homes across Durham and the Tees Valley. We are committed to providing high quality, energy efficient, affordable homes to those that need it. We have 196 new homes in the pipeline.

Compliments

We received 113 compliments during the year:

- + 66 were in relation to repairs satisfaction
- + 27 were for housing and supported housing
- + 16 were in relation to our customer services team
- + 4 were for North Star’s work in our communities.

What we spend each pound on



You said

You were unhappy with planned door replacement work being delayed.

We did

We have asked the contractor to review their supply chain due to delays but we will review the contract for future programmes.



# A FIRE IN YOUR HOME

## THE AVOIDABLE COSTS

Although rare, the impact from a fire in your home can be devastating. Since April 2021, there have been 6 serious fires in North Star properties. The main causes of these fires were faulty electrical appliances. Thankfully our tenants managed to evacuate their homes and no one was injured. However, these fires resulted in significant damage with the loss of valuable and sentimental possessions, such as TVs, kitchen appliances, furniture, clothing and family photos. Our affected tenants also have to go through the upheaval of being temporarily relocated to another property until repairs have been completed and this may take a long time.

**The following examples show the devastating results in two North Star properties where the total repair costs come to £275,000.**

In this North Star property, all possessions were lost and the property had significant damage. The fire was caused by a faulty tumble dryer which was positioned under the stairs. Repairs will take 12 months to complete. The tenants had to be relocated to another property.

In this property a mattress caught fire caused by a faulty phone charger. The mattress was dragged into the bathroom which caused significant damage to the bathroom and smoke damage to the rest of the property. The tenants had to be relocated to another property and the repairs took over 4 months to complete.

### WHAT NORTH STAR DO TO KEEP YOU SAFE

North Star carry out a number of checks in and around your home to make sure you live in a safe environment.

**Gas / Solid Fuel Safety** - Every year, engineers service your gas boilers and solid fuel fires to ensure they are safe and work correctly, while they are at your home they will also check your smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detector.

**Electrical Safety** - We engage electricians who carry out an inspection of your electrical supply every 5 years to ensure there are no electrical issues or faults.

**Fire Safety** - North Star engage specialist contractors to carry out fire risk assessments, service fire alarm systems and emergency lighting in your communal areas. We also have staff who carry out regular inspections to ensure communal areas are safe, evacuation routes are unobstructed and doors work correctly.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO TO STAY SAFE

#### Servicing and inspections of your heating and electrical systems

- It is important that you are at home during an appointment to give access to our engineers and electricians to carry out vital safety checks on your heating and electrical systems.

**Cooking** - don't leave cooking unattended, keep combustible items away from the oven and hob. Clean any grease build up and residues. Use a deep fat fryer with thermal control rather than a chip pan.

**Heating Appliances** - keep combustibles at least 1 meter away from a heater, don't leave an open fire unattended including garden heating equipment and barbeques. Replace faulty heating equipment. Make sure your boiler gets serviced annually.

**Careless Smoking** - avoid smoking in bed or when you are feeling tired, make sure cigarette ends are properly extinguished.

**Electrical Equipment** - avoid overloading sockets or extension leads as heat can build up in cables and cause a fire, check for any damage to cables or the appliance, unplug electrical appliances if not in use and make sure you don't have any heavy items including furniture, on top of cables as this can damage the cable and start a fire.

### OTHER COMMON CAUSES OF FIRE

**Candles** - keep away from combustibles including soft furnishings and extinguish when not in use

**Children** - supervise near ovens and other heat sources. Keep lighters and matches out of reach from children.

**Flammable liquids** - the vapours from flammable liquids can ignite if there is a heat source nearby. Take care when using flammable liquids, use away from heat sources in a well ventilated area, ensure lids are on properly and safely store in a cupboard.

### TEST YOUR SMOKE DETECTOR

Smoke detectors can save lives and alert you that there is a fire in your home. The detector will sound an alarm when smoke particles reach the detector. Never remove a smoke detector and it is recommended to test them weekly.

**Fire Doors** - If you live in a flat that has a communal area shared with other flats then your flat entrance door will be a fire door. Your flat entrance door should be able to close fully into the frame unaided. If your door does not close fully, has a fault or is damaged then please report this to Customer Services immediately.



### HOME CONTENTS INSURANCE

It is strongly advised that residents have home insurance in place which will help replace any costly items within your home, including furniture, TV's, phones and computer equipment. Expensive items could get accidentally damaged or destroyed in a fire situation. North Star can give advice on obtaining home insurance at a very competitive rate which will give you peace of mind knowing that you can replace those costly items without costing the earth. For more information on home insurance please contact your Housing Officer at North Star on **03000 110 011**.



### Reporting a fire safety concern

If you have any fire safety concerns then please inform North Star Customer Services on **03000 110 011**

Email: **customer.services@northstarhg.co.uk**

Alternatively you can contact your local fire authority for further advice or to carry out a home fire safety check:

Cleveland Fire Brigade **01429 872311**

Durham and Darlington Fire Brigade **0345 305 8383**

Tyne and Wear Fire Brigade **0800 032 7777**



## Our Services

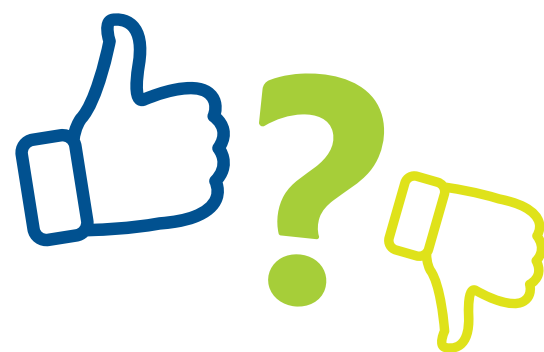
# COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS & COMPLIMENTS PROCESS

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/](https://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](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)



# ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

**We want everyone to feel safe in their home and we believe everyone should be able to live and enjoy their home without being disturbed by others.**

From time to time, this may not be the case and we are committed to tackling issues related to anti-social behaviour, harassment, neighbour nuisance and hate crimes.

Nuisance and anti-social behaviour is behaviour which causes or is likely to cause fear, alarm, and distress.

Anti-social behaviour can include a range of actions including noise nuisance such as loud music, dogs barking to more serious incidents such as threatening behaviour and hate crime.

We take all incidents of anti-social behaviour seriously and will act quickly to resolve any issues.

We would not normally consider behaviour around different lifestyles or cultures or

which may not be considered unreasonable by most people as anti-social behaviour.

**These can include:**

- ◆ DIY during reasonable hours
- ◆ Occasional dog barking
- ◆ Young people gathering socially or children playing
- ◆ Someone parking lawfully outside your home
- ◆ Cooking smells
- ◆ Day to day noises such as low-level TV, household appliances

### How to report anti-social behaviour?

**You can report anti-social behaviour by:**

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

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

### What you can expect from us?

**When you report an incident to us, we will:**

- ◆ Decide if it is anti-social behaviour and if it is, will then prioritise it dependent on its nature and how it is affecting you.
- ◆ Ask you for as much detail as possible to make sure we fully understand the issue and the impact this behaviour is having on you.
- ◆ Always ensure your report is treated in confidence.
- ◆ Contact you to agree an action plan and what action we can take.
- ◆ Make sure you are kept updated throughout the case and explain if we are unable to share specific details with you.
- ◆ We will work closely with other agencies including local authorities, police, community safer partnership and resident groups.







## 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

 [customer.services@northstarhg.co.uk](mailto:customer.services@northstarhg.co.uk)

 [www.northstarhg.co.uk](http://www.northstarhg.co.uk)

 @northstarhg

 /NorthStarHG

 03000 11 00 11

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

[www.mynorthstar.online](http://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**