

NORTH STAR



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Creating homes, building futures



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Hello and welcome to North Star' latest magazine, aimed at keeping you informed and updated on our activity. As a not-for-profit landlord, we invest all surplus into improving current housing, building new homes, and improving services. I hope this magazine gives you a flavour on how we are achieving this. The cost-of-living crisis has impacted on everyone, and North Star has not been immune, as we balance major increases across all aspects of the business. However, our values: **Creative, Courageous and Connected** have kept North Star strong throughout and we are progressing our ambitions.

During the year we co-created our three-year exciting new strategy: Leading & Growing 2026, we succeeded in achieving net zero carbon on a Victorian terraced house, with major investment, resulting in no fuel costs for the tenant. We will take

this learning forward.

We commenced the implementation of a new housing ICT system to improve internal efficiency and accessibility for tenants and we delivered housing for rough sleepers who otherwise would have been living on the street. These are just a few initiatives we have been involved with and there is more information in the magazine.

We welcome feedback on how we are doing, how we can improve and issues you need support with. If things aren't working let us know by contacting your housing officer or any staff member. My email address is: angela.lockwood@northstarhg.co.uk if you want to contact me direct.

Best wishes

Angela Lockwood,
Chief Executive



**NORTH STAR**
Creating homes, building futures

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

From everyone at North Star

Our phone lines will be closed from 5:00pm Friday 22nd December 2023 until 9:00am Tuesday 2nd January 2024.

For any emergency repairs during the festive period, please call 03000 11 00 11 or email emergencyrepairs@orbisprotect.com

COMPLAINTS PUTTING THINGS RIGHT



When things go wrong it can be frustrating and annoying. We aim to put things right, as quickly as we can.

We ask our customers to rate how we manage complaints. Currently, they are scoring us, an average of 3 out of 5 and we want to improve this. Customers have told us that the following things are important when dealing with complaints:

- Good communication and keeping people updated on the progress of the complaint.
- Listening to what went wrong and understanding the effect it has had.
- Sorting the issue out as quickly as possible.

"Quick response. Planned remedy quickly resolved."

"I was listened to and the member of staff was so helpful and took us seriously and has got repairs in place. I feel so relieved someone actually did something for us."

"Good communication and information from the case manager who kept me updated with respects to their actions"

We know from speaking to tenants that people value a quick response, good communication during the complaints process and a fair and transparent outcome.

As part of our work on the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, read more about TSM's here:

www.northstarhg.co.uk/about-north-star/news/tenant-satisfaction-measures/ and with our Rant and Rave system we have received a number of recommendations for improvement from tenants.

Complaints – A tenants' experience

Certain details of this case study have been removed to preserve the privacy of the tenants involved.

"I had a problem in my property, that due to a number of factors, had been difficult for North Star to resolve. Following several visits from contractors, during which they had attempted to fix the problem, it became clear that replacing the component in question was required."

"Operatives visited my property a couple of times to take measurements for the new component and on the third visit I felt it necessary to complain."

"When I complained a manager from North Star visited my property and looked at the issues I had been having. They agreed to go away and investigate and report back on why the issues had arisen and what the next steps would be."

"I am pleased to say that this sped up the process enormously and the challenges that had caused the delays were explained to me."

"I was compensated for the disruption and the the time and trouble I had gone to in making the complaint."

"Overall, it was frustrating that I had to complain however, I found that during the process I was listened to, communication was good and I was very pleased with the outcome."

Continued Overleaf



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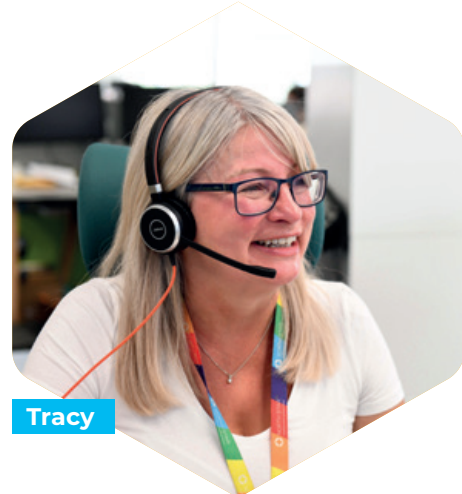
When I complained a manager from North Star visited my property and looked at the issues I had been having.

”



Who will deal with your complaint?

Depending on what you are complaining about and the circumstances that have led to it, a complaint could be dealt with by different members of staff. Below, we introduce you to some of those people and how they try to ensure we put things right as soon as we possibly can.



Tracy

Tracy Stoker, Customer Services Assistant (CSA).

'As a CSA, we tend to be the first point of contact for customer complaints. In some instances, we know these problems can be sorted quickly. This will involve us saying sorry and if possible, making changes to resolve the issue. We really do want to sort the problem as quickly as possible. We will talk to our line manager and other staff about the complaints and issues customers are having and record them. This way we can learn from these problems and hopefully avoid people coming across them in the future.'

Adam Pearce, Property and Repairs Manager.

'If a customer asks for their complaint to be investigated at stage one of the complaint policy, a manager like me, will be asked to look into it.

This part can feel a bit formal but, at this stage, we want to make sure we understand fully what has gone wrong and really

consider what sort of actions will put things right for the customer. We will always want to talk to you so that we understand the issue, and explain what we will do about it. To understand their point of view as clearly as possible and secondly to explain what we



Adam

propose to do about it. This allows us really think about what we can do better and hopefully, provide a customer with the assurance that the service they have experienced will be improved.'

Katherine Allen, Complaints and Performance Co-Ordinator.

'My role is to work with staff and managers to resolve issues that tenants have as quickly as possible. We know that things go wrong and when they do, I work directly with our staff and contractors to put things right.



Katherine



Sara

Sara Herrington, Head of Customers.

'In some circumstances, a customer may not be satisfied with how we have dealt with their complaint at stage one. Thankfully, this doesn't happen very often but, if it does, a Head of Service or Director will become involved.

My role is to review everything that has happened so far, all the relevant information and if possible, to speak to the customer to understand why they are not satisfied and what they believe will resolve the issue. We know that by this stage, the customer will have had a lot of contact with us and may be frustrated.

We want to avoid customers having to explain things over and over again, and at this stage, we will try to focus in on the issues that the customer may feel we have not properly considered. Again, our aim is to ensure that we put things right for the customer and assure them that we understand both what went wrong and how to stop it happening again.'

How we deal with complaints

our process explained

If you are unhappy with the service you have received, we want to know.

We are committed to providing you with a high-quality service. Your feedback helps us to better understand how we are performing and where we need to improve.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff or those acting on our behalf, affecting an individual, resident or group of residents.

We will ensure we respond quickly to complaints and make improvements where required.

All complaints will be monitored to ensure that we are being fair and transparent, and we learn from them.

The **Housing Ombudsman** can be contacted for advice and information at any point during the complaint process.

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 complaints@northstarhg.co.uk
- Via our website, northstarhg.co.uk
- 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.

Stage One

A stage one complaint will be dealt with by a manager who will contact you and discuss how the complaint can be resolved.

We aim to provide a full written response within 10 working days.

Stage Two

If you are not happy with the outcome of stage one, you can ask for a review on how the complaint has been handled. At stage two it 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.

Closing Complaints

We will write to you and let you know when we consider the complaint closed, giving you the opportunity to provide further feedback or to escalate the

complaint accordingly. We will provide timescales for this in the letter.

If you are not satisfied after stage two of our complaints procedure, you are able to refer your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

Exclusions

A complaint regarding a breach of tenancy such as anti social behaviour will not be regarded as a complaint unless the complaint is about our handling of the issue.

We will not accept the following complaints:

- Where the matter is subject to legal proceedings
- Where the complainant is acting unreasonably
- Where the service failure occurred more than six months prior
- Where the problem is a recurring issue and we are satisfied we have previously resolved the issue

If we decide not to accept your complaint, we will write to you and explain why and you will have the right to challenge this decision by referring the matter to the Housing Ombudsman.

The Housing Ombudsman

North Star is a member of the Housing Ombudsman service. This is a free, independent complaint resolution service. The Housing Ombudsman can be contacted for advice and information at any point during the complaint process. However, the Housing Ombudsman service can only review your complaint once you have completed both stages of North Star's Complaints process.

NEWS

LEADING AND GROWING TO 2026

At North Star we always aim to live our values of being: Creative, Courageous, and Connected. People are at the heart of what we do. This means we do things differently. Since 2013 we have developed our organisational vision in several ways. Although, one thing has remained the same - the principle that everyone has a voice, we work things out together, and nothings agreed until everyone agrees.

Follow the link to find out how 130 people (Board, Customers and Staff) developed the vision to 2026. You can see more here - <https://tinyurl.com/4w6eknws>.

Amongst our priorities for the next three years are:

- creating a training and employment offer for tenants who are seeking work.
- ensuring our supported housing offer continues to thrive and working with local authority partners we will develop new services for older people, young people and adults with complex needs.
- making sure all North Star homes meet Energy Performance Certificate C standard reducing our carbon footprint and increasing the efficiency of tenants' homes.
- technology will be implemented that improves our services and maximises our effectiveness.
- we will continue to develop our staff team to meet the needs of our tenants. We will bring new thinking into the organisation and provide opportunities for people to develop towards their ambitions.
- we will remain financially strong with strong operating margins and credit ratings.

You can see the full strategy document on our website by visiting - www.northstarhg.co.uk/about-north-star/corporate-information/vision-to-2026/ and clicking the link 'Leading and Growing to 2026 Brochure'.



Mutual Exchange

A mutual exchange is a quick and easy way to move to a property that is of your choice in an area you would like to live. It is a home swap between two social housing tenants and gives you more control over where you would like to live. This can be with tenants with the same or different landlords. It can be in any area across the UK.



We have seen a big increase in the demand for housing and a reduction in the number of people leaving their home, this can make it more difficult and take longer to move tenants to where they would like to live.

North Star subscribe to HomeSwapper and you can access this free of charge at www.homeswapper.co.uk and you can register your application, search for properties that may suit you and communicate with others who are looking to swap homes.

HomeSwapper is the leading UK mutual exchange service with over 500,000, tenants looking to swap Council or Housing Association homes.

If you would like more information on mutual exchange please call 0300 011 0011 or email customer.services@northstarhg.co.uk

NORTH STAR CREATING NEW COMMUNITIES

We are delighted to announce the successful completion of 9 high quality, two and three bedroom houses for affordable rent on The Birches site in Chapelgarth, in partnership with Story Homes.

It is the second development working with Story Homes and we continue to strengthen our partnership with future sites in the pipeline together.

The new properties have proven to be extremely popular and our Housing Team have worked closely with Sunderland City Council to allocate the new builds.

These are a great addition to our portfolio of stock, in a desirable location within Sunderland. The houses have been constructed to

a very high standard with modern kitchens and bathrooms and are an ideal starter home. They have great pedestrian links to local amenities and public transport.

In addition to these properties, we have also delivered a further 29 new homes within the Sunderland district, Hartlepool, Darlington, Stockton-on Tees and Barnard Castle since April.





Before

After

GREENER HOUSING

TRIAL TO DEVELOP GREENER HOUSING MODEL PRODUCES 'EXCITING' RESULTS

A trial aimed at developing a blueprint for energy-efficient homes across the North East region has been completed with "exciting results".

North Star Housing has invested in the year-long experiment on a Victorian terraced house in Middlesbrough to learn lessons for the future – and a North-East MP is now going to highlight its success in Parliament.

The house at the centre of the trial needed extensive refurbishment when the previous tenant moved out, and North Star saw it as the ideal opportunity for an advanced 'Retrofit' trial to develop a greener model.

The house had a very poor Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of F, and the aim was to get it up to C. However, through North Star research and investment, the property has emerged from the experiment with an A rating.

At an open day to mark the completion of the project, Emma Speight, North Star's Executive Director of Assets and Growth, said: "The experiment has exceeded our expectations and the results are really exciting.

"When the previous tenant moved out, we thought 'let's do something different' to increase energy efficiency, massively reduce tenants' bills, and address the Government's target of getting housing stock to net zero by 2050.

"North Star manages around 4,000 social housing properties across the North-East, including 800 terraced houses, and although we can't scale this up on our own, by trialing new technologies, understanding the performance and benefits to tenants and the environment, it could pave the way for future investment or new financial structures led by Government."

The project was led by North Star's Asset Management Surveyors and qualified Retrofit co-ordinators Nicola Dixon and Andy Moses.

The house was stripped right back and redesigned from scratch, using smart energy-efficient technologies, low-energy lighting, wall and attic insulation, as well as insulation between the floorboards, heating powered by light, and a ventilation strategy to ensure good air quality.

The renovation has also featured smart heating and hot water technologies instead of a gas boiler, electric radiators linked to Wi-Fi and operated by an App, plus advanced solar panels using acclaimed inventor John Quinn's HONE system.

"It's brilliant to see a house like this go from an F rating to an A, and the potential for the future is enormous if the right Government support is put in place to enable it to be scaled up," said Nicola.

Andy added: "It's a glimpse of what can be done with this kind of Victorian property. It's now a question of seeing how it performs and gathering data and feedback from the new tenant."

North Star is also engaged in Retrofit projects on 25 properties in Darlington and 12 in Middleton-in-Teesdale.

The open day attracted interest from local authorities, energy companies, other housing associations, and politicians, including Darlington MP Peter Gibson.



Mr Gibson, who highlighted the North Star project during a Westminster debate last year, said: "It's really exciting to see what's been achieved, and what's really interesting is learning more about the costs, and what level of grants would be needed in the future if it was scaled up. I'll continue to press this in the Commons."

www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/23720419-middlesbrough-greener-housing-trial-produces-exciting-results/



STARTS AT HOME

Rainham House celebrated Supported Housing on the 1st of September with the Starts at Home Campaign! We wanted to create a safe space for the tenants to put all their worries aside and focus on their mental health and wellbeing utilising the skills of

staff who offered acupuncture, Reflexology and outside agencies who volunteered their time to give tenants treatments such as eye brow and face waxing and Reiki Healing. A tenant even painted everyone's nails!



Treatments were done in a relaxing setting with music, incense, and mood lighting to create a calm and peaceful space.

ALL AGREED THAT WE SHOULD DO ANOTHER DAY VERY SOON.

starts at home

Get Involved



Communities Update

In 2022/23 North Star has delivered over £5m of Social Value. You can see more about our work in the Social Value Report available on our website www.northstarhg.co.uk/about-north-star/corporate-information/social-value-reports/

Here are some stories from projects we have funded this year

Bright Woods Forest Schools

The project was to deliver a number of one-off workshops to promote health, wellbeing and self-care. This was based on our successful weekly sessions, that bring people together in our woodland setting to spend time in nature, carry out creative projects and eat together.

Since losing their partner one of the participants hadn't had much reason to leave the house, the workshop provided a welcome excuse to go to the community centre and spend some time in the company of others.

Since attending the workshops two people have joined the weekly wellbeing sessions and have been attending regularly and another participant expressed an interest to join in the future.

Groundwork Youth Shack Project

Last year, Youth Shack launched their pilot project with the aim of improving the health and wellbeing of young people living in Redcar and Cleveland, increasing their confidence, raising aspirations, and helping them to realise their full potential moving into sustained employment; all of this whilst increasing awareness of the green agenda and connecting to local green spaces.

The pilot project was a huge success, seeing 38 young people completing the programme and 24% of those young people going into employment following the programme. All participants developed their employability skills such as CV writing, interview skills and job search skills with the help of Youth Coaches for the Tees Valley Pathways YEI Programme, as well as improving their own confidence.



TENANT CONNECTION UPDATE SEPTEMBER 2023

North Star offers tenants a number of ways to influence how we do things. This update captures all the work done by our Tenant Connection Groups.

Policy Group

The Policy Review Group met in August to start their review of North Star's Damp Mould and Condensation Policy. They made 12 recommendations for improvement and their report has been sent to the service manager for consideration.

The Tenants Voice Scrutiny Panel (TVSP)

The Tenants Voice Scrutiny Panel have just started their review of North Stars 3rd Customer Commitment. A survey was sent to all North Star tenants by email and text and we had over 400 responses. They will be using this feedback to select their next scrutiny piece.

4 TVSP members attended the TPAS National Tenant Conference in Coventry in July. The group attended for 2 full days of workshops and networking. They have provided reports to the rest of TVSP to share best practise from across the housing sector.

Performance Group

Will be meeting next in December to review North Star's performance and complaints data. They use this information to hold North Star to account, interview staff and make recommendations that feed into the work that TVSP carry out.

Consumer Standards

The Regulator of Social Housing is seeking views on the government's revised regulatory consumer standards. North Star will be inviting Involved Tenants to discuss the new draft standards in the next couple of months.

We will also be inviting Involved Tenants to help us find out what is most important to tenants in the new standards and selecting ways to check that North Star are sticking to them.

Task and Finish Groups

Our Involved Tenants recently carried out a review of the Your Home, Your Tenancy section of the website. The recommendations that were made by the group have been passed to the Customer Experience Manager for their comments. The group will review any of the accepted recommendations by checking the website once changes have been made.

Find out more about how to get involved by visiting: <https://www.northstarhg.co.uk/get-involved/its-your-voice/>

Tenants Annual Report Data

2022/23

100% of asbestos management surveys completed

Our Homes

 **3830**

Homes that we own and/or manage

3191

General Needs

596

Supported Housing

27

Managed on behalf of others

16

Shared ownership

Your Home



£3.43m

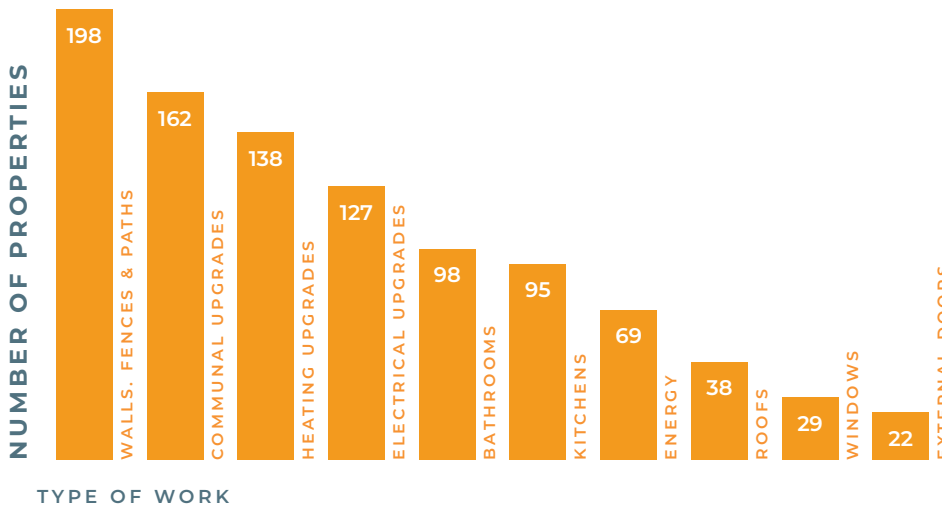
Spent on improving over 976 homes.

Planned Maintenance

We are investing in improving our homes. During the year we invested **£3.43m** improving **976** homes with planned investment works with a focus on energy and environmental works along with heating upgrades.

We also completed insulation work to **133** properties to get them up to EPC Level C and make them more energy efficient.

PLANNED MAINTENANCE INVESTMENT BY WORK TYPE 2022/23



	Target 2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Percentage satisfied with Planned investment work	95%	96%	94%	92%



93.8% of tenants are satisfied that North Star provides a home that is safe & secure

Electrical Safety checks on 99.4% of homes

100% of fire safety checks completed

97% of emergency repairs completed on time




North Star completed **15,609** repairs in 2022/23 which is an **4.3%** increase from previous year. The increase in our repairs volumes is primarily attributed to electrical, roofing repairs, joinery work and damp repairs.

Average number of repairs per property

4

Average direct cost of a responsive repair

£115.00



Maintenance	Target 2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	How we compare to others
Percentage satisfied with the repairs service	92%	90%	88.6%	85.6%	Average
Percentage of appointments kept	95%	93%	99.3%	95.8%	
Percentage of properties with a valid gas safety certificate at year end	100%	100%	99.8%	99.74%	
Percentage of fire safety checks completed	100%	98.8%	100%	100%	

Your tenancy

Number of homes let in 2022/23

282

Our Welfare Benefits Officers continued to provide support to maximise customers income in partnership with other agencies and charities. We saw a significant increase in demand for the service during 2022/23 to help with the cost of living crisis. The team supported **1066** households and maximised income for them by **£602k**.

	Target 2021/22	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	How we compare to others
% rent lost through homes being empty	1%	1.02%	0.89%	0.94%	
Average number of days taken to let a home	20 days	25 days	21 days	24.5 days	
Current tenants arrears	2.5%	2.5%	2.54%	3.10%	Average

97.4% of new tenants were satisfied with their new home

Your neighbourhoods

- + 35 reports of ASB (45 in 2022/23)
- + 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
 - + 2022/23: 100%
 - + 2021/22: 85%
 - + 2020/21: 100%

Improving our services

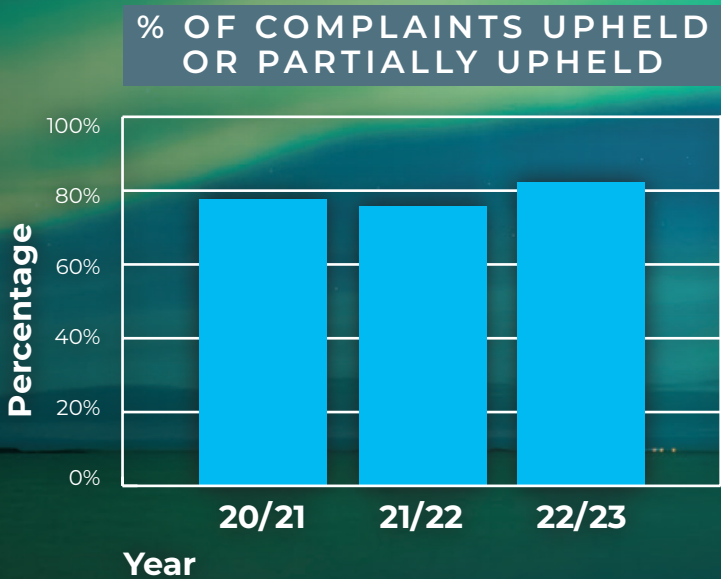
North Star is a member of The Housing Ombudsman scheme and each year we assess our complaints service against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. The latest self-assessment can be viewed in the Complaints section on our website along with our learning from complaints and complaints policy.



In 2022/23 we received 186 complaints, which was 66 more than 95 received the previous year.

Complaints	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Asset Management	7	8	19
Compliance	13	9	9
Customer Services	2	14	6
Development	2	1	4
Housing	2	13	11
Maintenance	67	73	135
Supported Housing	2	2	2
Total	95	120	186

“84.8% of customers said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall services provided by North Star”



You said

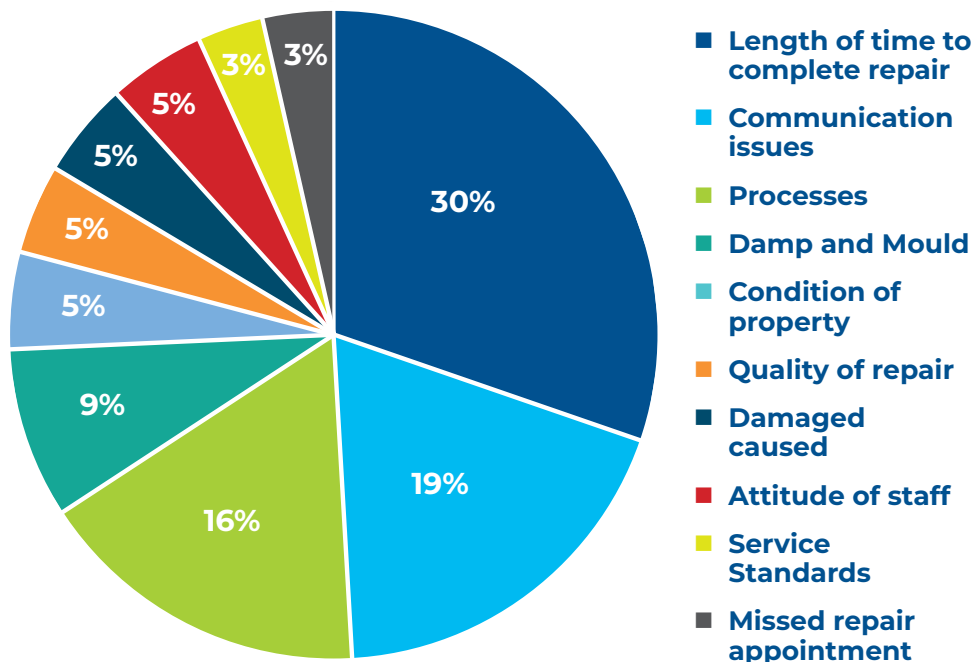
North Star takes too long to complete repairs.

We did

We meet weekly with our contractors to monitor progress on all overdue jobs and ensure they are resolved at the earliest opportunity. During 2022/23 we have used additional contractors to help with the increase in repair requests and help ensure jobs are completed within time.

Number of complaints resolved at stage 1 = 171 (92%) Stage 2 = 15 (6%)
Percentage of complaints responded to within 10 working days = 82%

Formal complaints by theme 2022/23



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

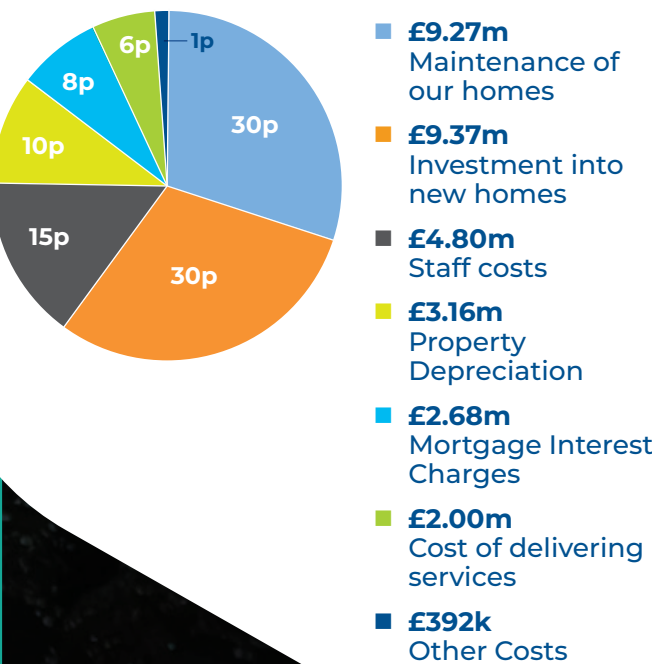
This year, we funded the delivery of 71 new homes across Durham and the Tees Valley. We are committed to providing high quality, energy efficient, affordable homes to those that need it. We have plans to deliver 75 new homes in 2023/24.

Compliments

We received 62 compliments during the year:

- + 32 were in relation to repairs satisfaction
- + 18 were for housing and supported housing
- + 8 were in relation to our customer services team
- + 4 were for other services

What we spend each pound on



You said

The handling of complaints could be better.

We did

Staff training has been completed to improve the handling of complaints and resolve issues as quickly as possible. North Star has implemented a new complaints handling system which should improve case handling and recording.

MONEY MATTERS

UNIVERSAL CREDIT MIGRATION NOTICES

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have started to send out notices to people getting tax credits, either just tax credits, or tax credits with other benefits to move onto Universal Credit. It is expected that everyone receiving Tax Credits will migrate to Universal Credit by April 2024

Over the next few years, everyone on Income Support, income-related ESA, income-based JSA, and Housing Benefit will also be receiving this notice. People who get ESA and don't get any other benefits will probably be the last to be moved over.

Some claimants will be entitled to less money on Universal Credit than they will normally get from their legacy benefits. If this is the case, there'll be transitional protection for people moving over to Universal Credit, so they are not financially worse off. This protection is only available to people who have received a migration notice and claim by the deadline date on their letter or people who have Severe Disability Premium in their legacy benefits.

Look out for a letter called a 'Universal Credit Migration Notice' from the DWP. Tax Credit claimants will receive this letter from the DWP with a HMRC logo.



This notice letter is important as it will tell you that your existing benefits are stopping, and you need to make a claim for Universal Credit. It will also tell you what you need to do and by when.

You might get a leaflet telling you to get ready for Universal Credit – if the letter you get doesn't have a deadline on it, it isn't your migration notice. Wait until you get a proper migration notice

If you are struggling to make ends meet and would like to discuss the support we may be able to offer, please contact our Welfare Benefit Team at welfare.benefits@northstarhg.co.uk for further advice.



Our Services



DO YOU HAVE DAMP, MOULD OR CONDENSATION IN YOUR HOME?

North Star's priority is to ensure our customers have a safe and secure home to live in.

If you spot signs of damp and mould in your home, please report it to us immediately so we can work together to resolve this. You can do this by filling in the form on our website, emailing disrepair@northstarhg.co.uk or calling our Customer Services Team on 03000 11 00 11.

We take reports of damp and mould very seriously. Inspections will be prioritised within 10 working days. Repair work will be carried out within 20 days, unless this requires specialist damp works which will be completed within 40 days. 3 months after completion of works, we will complete a follow up call with you to ensure the work has been successful.

There are lots of reasons that damp, mould and condensation can occur in homes. To make sure every case is properly investigated we will:

- Listen to you and take your report seriously
- Visit and inspect your home to find out what the cause is and any work that may be required
- Ensure all repair work is carried out, if needed
- Make improvements to the ventilation of your home (extractor fans etc.), if needed
- Undertake mould treatment, if needed.

We may also provide advice on how we can work with you to make changes to prevent mould in the future.

What are damp, mould and condensation?

Damp

Damp looks like a wet patch on a wall or ceiling and usually appears when condensation is left for a long time. If not treated, damp can cause structural issues over a long period of time.

Mould

Mould is black dots in areas where water collects such as windows. Mould can be bad for your health, so it is important not to leave it and to act.

Condensation

Condensation is when water or moisture in the air collects on a cooler surface. Most people have condensation, such as droplets of water after a shower. Condensation is usually nothing to worry about, but if left too long, can lead to damp and mould.

How to avoid damp, mould and condensation

Keep your home properly ventilated

Try and open windows regularly to let moisture out and fresh air in. Try to use an extractor fan if you have one. When you are cooking or having a shower or bath, try and keep the kitchen and bathroom doors closed.

Stop rooms from getting cold

Mould can grow in very cold rooms – it is recommended that you do not let your home temperature fall below 14°C. If you are struggling to keep your home warm due to the high energy costs,

contact our Welfare Benefits Team, who may be able to provide you with further support and advice.

Remove moisture from your home

Condensation is a common cause of mould on the surfaces in your home – mainly in the kitchen and bathroom. To avoid this, wipe condensation or water droplets from walls, tiles, windows, and shower screens. If you have a leak or damp patch, please report this immediately to us.

Avoid placing furniture close to walls

Mould can grow in spaces where air can't circulate, so try and avoid having large pieces of furniture against the wall.

Drying clothes on the radiator

Drying clothes on the radiator increases the moisture that they release and can cause damp spots. Try and hang them on a clothes airer in a well-ventilated room with the door closed, if possible.

Report damp, mould or condensation at www.northstarhg.co.uk/your-home/repairs/do-you-have-damp-mould-or-condensation-in-your-home/

Have a Happy and Safe Christmas

Christmas is a wonderful time of year when we decorate our houses with lights and tinsel to create a festive atmosphere. It is also a time when potential fire risks are introduced into our homes. For example, are you aware that most 4 socket extension leads have a 13amp maximum load? That's one 13amp appliance or two 5amp and one 3amp appliances plugged into the extension lead. If the maximum load is exceeded then the cable from the extension lead to the wall socket heats up.

The more the maximum load is exceeded the hotter the cable gets which is a fire risk. Never exceed the maximum amp loading. This will be highlighted on the extension lead. Never use multiple extension leads connected together as this is a major fire risk. It is advised to use extension leads with its own electrical surge protection.

A number of fires are started every year from faulty decorative lights and electrical appliances.

Always make sure any electrical appliance display the British Standard Kitemark or the CE mark on the plug or somewhere on the appliance. If it is not displayed then there is no evidence of any safety testing of the appliance which could be a risk and a potential source of fire. Always turn off electrical appliance when not in use and buy from reputable sources.

Candles create a warm cosy atmosphere, however, can start a fire if left unattended or located close to combustible materials such as decorations, paper or fabric. In 2021-2022, fire crews in England tackled 940 serious fires started by candles leaving homeowners facing average repair bills of £18,000. Always put candles in a suitable holder away from combustible materials and keep them out of reach of young children. Never leave candles unattended and remember to extinguish them before you go to bed.

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.

QR Code Fire Safety Posters

If you live in a flat with shared communal areas you will notice a QR poster displayed on the wall near the main entrance. If you scan the QR code using a smart phone or tablet, it will give you access to important fire safety information including the fire risk assessment for your building, fire safety advice, fire door information and your evacuation procedures all of which are downloadable. If you have any difficulty trying to access the QR folder then please contact North Star Customer Services for further help and advice.

Reporting a fire safety concern

If you have any fire safety concerns then please inform North Star Customer Services on **0300 0110011**

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

FOCUS ON... ROSEDALE COURT

by Michelle Peacock, Support Worker

GARDENING CLUB



Dave Ayton and I started a gardening club on the 11th of April which we hold every Tuesday at 10.30 am. Residents have learned how to sow and propagate seeds, repot them, and watch them grow. So far, we've grown carrots and purple carrot seedlings, broccoli and cauliflower, beetroots, leeks and shallots, onions, various salad leaves and green beans.

The aim of the residents is to grow the vegetables that would make a Sunday Lunch and sit together as a team to enjoy meals from their produce. Residents are thoroughly enjoying this, as are Dave and me.

SPROUTS COOKING SESSIONS

Jo and Emily from Sprouts Community Food Charity have been attending Rosedale Court to run cooking classes. They have made a sausage casserole and strawberry and white chocolate cheesecake, minestrone soup, a crouton salad and rocky road.

We have a further 2 cooking sessions to go and residents take the recipes home with them. Debbie at Sprouts also recently put me and 2 of our more active residents through the Food Safety in Catering, so we are well prepared to cater for events.



"Rosedale Court residents and staff are proud to support and promote DAW 23"

ROSEDALE RESIDENT'S ASSOCIATION

They have been organising many tombolas and raffles to raise money for tenant activities. Their latest tombola held on the May Day Bank Holiday raised £100.

DEMENTIA ACTION WEEK

We held a bake sale and Rosedale Residents Association organised and ran the raffle. Between us, we made £225.80 to be donated to Teesside Dementia Link Services. I'd like to thank Tony McClurg, Sonia Kamara and Ann Bennions from the Residents Association for their hard work and support, and Michael Gilmartin for baking us a couple of quiches.

I'd also like to thank my mum for baking us a lemon drizzle cake and tiffin tray bake and Angela Lockwood for donating some raffle prizes to the cause.





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://www.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