

Summer Edition 2024

NORTH STAR



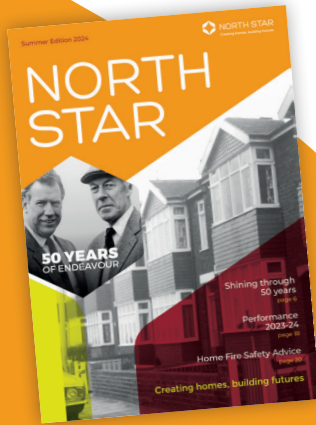
**50 YEARS
OF ENDEAVOUR**

Shining through
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Creating homes, building futures



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Hello and welcome to our latest newsletter and the last one that I shall be involved with as my plans to step down as Chief Executive are getting closer.

I announced that after 15 years in the role and 28 years with the organisation it was time for me to move on and the recruitment for my replacement is underway. It feels timely in our 50th anniversary year, that I end my tenure - I am the third person to hold this role over that period, which demonstrates major stability in the organisation. The new appointee will continue to guard our values, social purpose, and culture which we know sets us apart from others.

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

Focus On... Emma Jackson, Compliance Team Manager



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

I am currently on secondment as the compliance team manager. My role is to ensure a high quality customer focused cyclical maintenance service is delivered, giving North Star assurance that all regulatory and statutory duties are achieved.

Where did you work before North Star?

I worked at Electronic Security Solutions for nearly 10 years. My roles there included health and safety, quality assurance and sales.

What are your hobbies/interests?

Hobbies. what are they?? Any hobbies seem to have been taken over by my son's football. That being said I do really enjoy watching them play. I love spending time with my family

and friends, going on dog walks and trips to the beach.

What is your favourite:

Film? Pretty woman or dirty dancing - I do love a romantic movie!

Book? I have so many. I recently read It ends with us by Coleen Hoover and it was brilliant.

Holiday destination? I love any holiday but if I have to choose, I will go with Turkey as I am going back there this year.

Food? Tapas with a nice glass of red wine 😊

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself

I lived in Australia for two years. I was a bit of an adrenaline junkie back then and did a skydive over Airlie beach and scuba dive in the Whitsundays. Nowadays I daren't even go on the kids rides!!

NEWS

ENERGY EFFICIENCY WINNER



North Star named North East's leading housing association for energy efficiency

North Star won the Housing Association of the Year title at the North East Energy Efficiency Awards in Durham City.

The housing provider was also highly commended in two other categories - Small Project of the Year, and Large Scale Project of the Year.

Chris Harris, Asset Manager for North Star, said: "The importance of energy efficiency to every one of us is clear to see, so we

are delighted to be the housing association that's leading the way in the North-East.

"The award is a source of great pride but we are well aware that this has to be a long-term commitment, so the intention is to go on learning and improving, and not rest on our laurels."

North Star won the Housing Association of the Year title because of its overall approach to energy efficiency and supporting tenants in saving energy.

The high commendation in the Small Project of the Year was in recognition of North Star's trial in using a Victorian terraced house in Middlesbrough as a model for net zero technology not used before in a domestic dwelling.

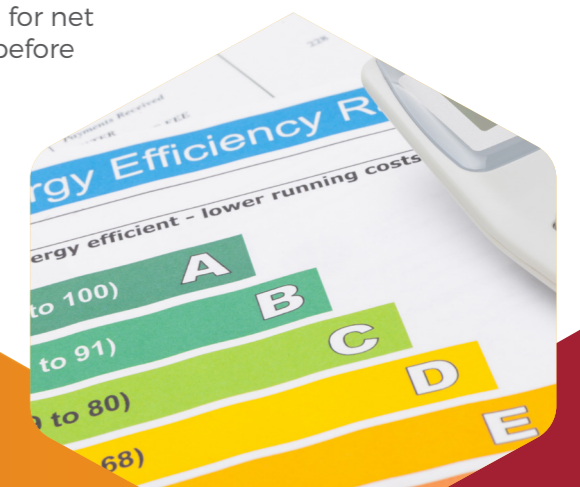
The Large Scale Project high commendation was for a project - managed by Align Property Partners (APP) - to fit new cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, and photovoltaics on 25 off-gas properties in Teesdale.

Looking to the future, North Star has already expressed an interest to the Tees Valley Combined Authority in being involved in round three of the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

"The aim is to access more funding, so we can carry out more innovative work on energy efficiency into the future," added Chris.

"The importance of energy efficiency to every one of us is clear to see, so we are delighted to be the housing association that's leading the way in the North-East."

Chris Harris, Asset Manager for North Star



A NORTH-EAST community charity has been presented with the country's highest honour for voluntary organisations.



SPROUTS WIN KINGS AWARD

The King's Award for Voluntary Service - the equivalent of the MBE for the voluntary sector - was presented to Sprouts Community Food Charity, in Stockton, by Sue Snowdon, Lord Lieutenant of County Durham.

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The charity works in partnership with North Star Housing to help provide a wide range of vital support projects in the community, particularly Thornaby and Stockton.

Mrs Snowdon said: "It is an absolute delight to be here and to meet all these people. It really is

wonderful what they're contributing, and you can feel the warmth, the camaraderie, and the friendship as soon as you arrive.

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Sprouts was founded in 2011 as Little Sprouts, and has since become a lifeline to many families throughout Stockton by offering a community shop, foodbanks, cooking workshops, children's holiday activities, meal services, and more.

The award was accepted by Sprouts manager, Debbie Fixter, and Joan Naylor, a Thornaby local who has volunteered for the charity for five years.

Debbie said: "For Sprouts to have such an impact, we are completely reliant on our amazing group of volunteers, who week-in, week-out, work tirelessly with compassion and commitment.

"Receiving The King's Award for Voluntary Service is a testament to their unwavering dedication and outstanding contributions to our community. This prestigious recognition is not just an acknowledgment of their efforts, it's a symbol of the immense respect and admiration we hold for them.

"This award is not lightly given or easily gained. It recognises hard work, vision, commitment, and dedication. It's highly prized and is recognised as the hallmark of excellence."

**Sue Snowdon,
Lord Lieutenant of
County Durham**

NORTH STAR DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

During the last year North Star has delivered 84 new homes comprising houses and bungalows in Middlesbrough, Sunderland, Stockton, Durham and North Yorkshire. Most were for rent although some were for supported housing and some for Rent to Buy. Here are a couple of our recent developments.



Chapelgarth
6 x 2 bedroomed houses and 3 x 3 bed roomed houses for rent on a private, for sale, site in Sunderland



Stockton, Middlesbrough and Bedale
20 houses (2,3 & 4 bedroomed) for rent and Rent to Buy



Middleton Tyas
3 x 2 bed roomed houses for rent on a private, for sale, site in North Yorkshire



NOTHING WASTED!

Fred is a lovely gent who works for one of North Star's partner organisations and helps keep Rainham safe, originally from Ghana, Fred has worked at Rainham for over 2 years.

Fred has been sending donations of used baby clothes, soft toys, books and non-bulky items to Ghana for over 2 years all shipped at his own cost!

North Star (Rainham House) have been very supportive in offering unwanted donations of clothes and forgotten toys that have been left behind, when tenants have moved on. Fred has been sending these items to Africa and all items have found a loving home!

Fred says "I usually pack the items in to strong boxes and ship them to Ghana, upon arrival in Ghana my elder brother who is a Reverend Minister, oversees the distribution to the needy and less privileged."

Staff have recently received beaded bracelets as a thank you from the village elders and would like to thank North Star for their help, especially in these difficult times.

Fred has said that the most urgent items needed are used or unwanted 0-2 years clothes and shoes for boys and girls.

STAR QUALITY

SHINING THROUGH 50 YEARS

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the pioneering housing association now known as North Star. Chief Executive, Angela Lockwood, talks to Peter Barron



"Then, and now, it's been about having the courage to have a go - to dare to be different."



The ink may be fading a little but, as she leafs back through old board papers from 50 years ago, Angela Lockwood is struck by how relevant they remain.

"Nothing's changed really," says the miner's daughter, who became Chief Executive of North Star Housing. "It's the same ethos - the same determination to make a difference."

This year marks the 50th anniversary of a pioneering organisation that started out as the Endeavour Housing Association in 1974 and continues today as North Star Housing.

The name may have changed, but the values have never faltered. And the ambition remains the same: to provide shelter, care, support, and comfort to those facing hardship in the North-East.

"Then, and now, it's been about having the courage to have a go - to dare to be different," says Angela, who has announced that she will step down from her role as CEO after 15 years in the summer.

"It'll be a wrench, but it feels like the right time to let someone else take it on to the next stage of the journey."

That journey stemmed from an idea in 1973 when the Rev. John Williams, in his role as Social Responsibility Officer for the

Teesside Churches, became aware of an unfulfilled housing need in the area.

He persuaded the Teesside and District Council of Churches to consider the possibility of a Cleveland housing association and that led to the registration of the Endeavour Housing Association in August 1974. Named after legendary explorer, Captain James Cook's ship, the first committee meeting was held a month later.

The first post was filled in January, 1975, when Kit Bartram became CEO, and half of the first year budget of £7,000 accounted for his salary.

With an expected annual income of just £1,500, the challenge was to fill the gap through donations, and the first house owned by the association was in Union Street, Middlesbrough. With the backing of a Government grant, Endeavour bought more empty terraced housing in the town, then did the same in Stockton and Hartlepool. Building conversions were added, including schools, a convent, bank, police station and restaurant.

Endeavour opened the region's first women's refuge in Hartlepool, then took over the listed Webb House building, opposite Middlesbrough Railway Station, and converted it into units for people recovering from mental health problems.



Having been raised in the east Durham mining community of Murton, Angela took her first step into the housing sector when she landed a temporary contract to become Sunderland City Council's first female rent collector since the war.

After taking a permanent rent collector's role with Home Group - the country's largest housing association at the time - she studied for the Chartered Institute of Housing qualification and became area manager.

After 11 years with Home Group, Angela joined Endeavour as housing manager in 1996, going on to become a director and Deputy Chief Executive as the association's influence spread to County Durham.

The opportunity arose to take on some former mining cottages in Evenwood, followed by the launch of a sheltered housing scheme in Barnard Castle. Then, when Teesdale District Council chose Endeavour as its preferred partner to invest in a stock of 1,000 houses, the Teesdale Housing Association was born.

It was at that point that a parent company was required, and the name North Star was chosen, reflecting its guiding role in helping lost people to a safe place.



£2.2m 'milestone' complex opens

Angela's housing mission

THE first female chief executive of Stockton-based North Star Housing Group (NSHG) has said that over the next 12 months she aims to help first-time buyers on to the property ladder, by building more affordable homes and continuing to regenerate areas across the Tees Valley.

Angela Lockwood, pictured, who has broken the 35-year male reign in the top job, vowed to increase affordable housing across the North-east through various initiatives including the Government's HomeBuy Direct Fund.

The Fund allows eligible first-time buyers to purchase 70% of a property with an equity loan provided for the remaining 30%.

NSHG subsidiary Endeavour Housing Association is part of a consortium of three other housing providers that make-up Time2Buy, the HomeBuy agent for the Tees Valley and Durham.

Chair of North Star Housing Group Keith Stansfield said: "We will be entering a new era of dynamism and enthusiasm to cope with the changes required for us to prosper and grow in the immediate and long-term future."

"The housing business in general is facing considerable difficulties and changes in the way that we do business are inevitable. North Star Group with its staff, senior management and boards is now well equipped to face the future, whatever that may bring."

Ms Lockwood replaces Charlie Hughes.

MOVING IN: Lillian Greenan, resident at a complex for elderly people in Stockton

THE first tenants have moved into a £2.2m apartment complex in Stockton for older residents.

Ruskin Court offers 20 two-bedroomed apartments, 15 of which are linked to Endeavour Housing Associations' Extra Care Service, in Aspen Gardens. The service is a joint endeavour between Endeavour Housing and Stockton Borough Council and is part of the £100m regeneration of Hardwick.

Tenants will receive care, and accommodation maintenance services.

Councillor Bill Stockton commended the partnership between Endeavour Housing and Stockton Borough Council and is part of the £100m regeneration of Hardwick.

Homes project is restarted

Vital cash helps kick start scheme

By SANDY MCKENZIE

WORK is under way on the second phase of a new housing project at St Cuthbert's Meadows in the West Lane area of Middlesbrough.

The scheme will see 69 homes built by March 2011.

The development brings together regeneration agency West Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Trust (WMNT), Hartlepool-based housebuilders, Yull Homes and Free Valley based Endeavour Housing Association.

A mixture of rented and houses for sale will be offered.

The project has restarted after £2.2m of Kickstart funding was allocated by the Government's Homes and Communities Agency.

The Kickstart programme is providing a cash injection in every region of the country to help house building.

The West Middlesbrough development is one of 91 schemes in the country to receive the cash.

The first phase of the development began in 2006 as part of WMNT's housing renewal programme in the West Lane area.

Under it 74 properties were built by 2008 along with a programme of facilities to older housing.

Of the 69 properties now being built 18 will be offered for rent to those unable to secure a mortgage in the current market.

John Stencel, WMNT's chief executive, said: "The physical environment of West Lane has improved beyond recognition during the course of the NDC programme. We're delighted we can now honour our commitment to the area and work with our partners to bring more high quality homes to West Middlesbrough."

Steve Jackson, head of partnership development for Yull Homes, said: "Phase One at St Cuthbert's Meadows has been a great success. We are pleased to see work start on these invaluable properties in Middlesbrough."

Angela Lockwood, chief executive of North Star Housing Association, said: "High quality affordable housing is much sought after and we are delighted to be providing additional units to meet local needs."

Housing Minister, John Healey, said: "This site in West Middlesbrough was stalled by the recession but thanks to Kickstart cash, workers are back on site, getting the work underway again means 70 jobs safeguarded and up to six local apprenticeships."

For details about WMNT's housing programme call Kelly Harrison on 01842 220555. Visit www.yullhomes.co.uk for house sales.

LAUNCH: From left, Angela Lockwood, Steve Jackson, Paul Jackson and Kelly Harrison celebrate the restart of the housing project. Picture by IAN MCINTYRE

SHINING THROUGH 50 YEARS

North Star portfolio has gone on to include:

- A growing stock of more than 4,000 houses.
- Five women's refuges.
- Schemes for people with learning disabilities and mental health problems.
- Drug and alcohol rehabilitation initiatives.
- Accommodation for people recovering from addictions, rough sleepers, and young people leaving the care system.
- A scheme for women with complex needs.
- 'Extra Care For Older People' – 50 units in Stockton, catering for the older generation.

"From its inception in 1974, it was always an organisation rooted in the community,"

Angela became Chief Executive in 2009 – one of only three CEOs the organisation has had in 50 years – and its growth continued. Darlington Housing Association joined in 2017 and, three years later, it was decided to consolidate the group under the single banner of North Star.

"From its inception in 1974, it was always an organisation rooted in the community," says Angela. "It stayed close to its customers, delivered a diverse range of highly valuable services, and found solutions to highly challenging housing issues. We have stuck to those principles throughout the 50 years."

Asked to identify the organisation's biggest achievement, she immediately cites the importance of maintaining independence as a relatively small housing association in a sector that has seen multiple mergers.

"We've stayed independently true to our roots and, therefore, been able to continue to do some great things in the community. We're happy to work on small projects, knowing that a collection of small things can have a big impact at the grass roots."

"If someone comes forward with a suggestion and sound reasoning, we'll listen, and work in partnership to make it happen. A lot of the innovative stuff has been unique to North Star – we've been out there, setting the tone wherever we could."

Angela is quick to acknowledge the importance of having a dedicated team and the support of a board – chaired by chartered accountant Anna Urbanowicz – that "has a high social purpose and upholds the values of the organisation".

However, there's no doubt about the personal influence Angela has had as CEO, using her formative experiences of growing up during the miners' strike and seeing deprivation in her local community.

"There was a lot of poverty but there was also deep trust, a sense of looking after each other, and the power of moving forward together," she recalls.

"I tried to bring what I learned on the grimy streets of east Durham into the culture of North Star, and it's been a privilege to have been able to align my own personal values to a caring, forward-thinking organisation that wants to provide the best possible housing opportunities, so people can move on with their lives with dignity and respect."

Whoever oversees the next chapter for North Star Housing after Angela Lockwood steps down in the summer, will inherit a proud history.

Here's to the next 50 years.



HALF A CENTURY OF FIRSTS



FINDING creative solutions to social problems has been at the heart of North Star's success. Here are some examples of its innovation:

- North Star established the region's first women's refuge, at Hartlepool, in the 1970s, and has gone on to add another four – at Middlesbrough, Stockton, Sunderland and Peterlee.
- North Star was recently announced as a winner in the Innovation category at the inaugural Housing Technology Awards in recognition of its creative use of artificial intelligence to streamline gas safety certifications.
- Last year, North Star used a Victorian terraced house in Middlesbrough as the model for a trial, using net zero technology never used before on a domestic dwelling.
- North Star was placed 11th in the Sunday Times Best Company Awards – at its first attempt.
- North Star launched the Hestia Project – a pioneering scheme in Middlesbrough for women with complex needs and who are at risk of homelessness.
- North Star has launched an Asian Elders Housing Scheme in Middlesbrough – the first in the area.
- North Star teamed up with the Sprouts Community Food Charity to establish the Thornaby Hub – a model that provides a lifeline to local people who are struggling to make ends meet.
- North Star has created housing by converting pubs, a bank, police station, convent, school, restaurant, and a church.
- In 2017, North Star became the first in the sector to achieve the Investors in People Platinum Award and went on to add two further re-accreditations.
- North Star has introduced a self-build for rent initiative in Middlesbrough.





CELEBRATING 50 YEARS AT OUR TENANT EVENT

NEWS

YOUNG@HEART

Young@Heart were successful in their application for a grant of £2,500. They provided feedback about the difference the funding has made.

The grant has been instrumental in the success of our warm/hub bistro. The funding has enabled us to deliver workshops, support volunteers giving us the room to flourish and plan for the future which provides the framework for all of our programmes and services. With the passionate involvement from residents and encouraging input, we have strengthened our community and our vision. We are really appreciative of the award as it has been essential to building a flourishing centre for community development and wellbeing.

Young@heart 2021 CIC brings together residents in Middlesbrough to reduce isolation, they are in the process of designing a new extended programme to launch in July/August, until then the bistro is open Tues & Sat 11am- 2pm which is inclusive to all residents of Middlesbrough and surrounding areas. The Hub is located at Varma House in Middlesbrough.

2 Park Road South,
Middlesbrough
07598 710195
Youngatheart890@gmail.com



EVENWOOD C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENT & TODDLER GROUP

Come and join us each Wednesday 9am - 11am at Evenwood C of E Primary School

Babies and Toddlers up to 4 years old

ALL WELCOME

Filled with play, stories and songs, activities and new friends.

Contact Rachel on 01388 832047

Or just drop by!



At our tenant event in Middlesbrough on 13th April, we challenged young people to design a postcard that they would send to North Star to help celebrate Endeavour's 50th Anniversary.



We were absolutely blown away with the artistic talent and creativity on show! Here are just some of the entries from Perrie, aged 5, Maggie Esther, aged 11 and Bola Samuel aged 4 and Lydia, aged 5. Congratulations to Maggie Esther and Bola Samuel, whose design won the competition on the day and top prize of a tablet computer!

Lydia aged 5

Perrie aged 5

Maggie Esther aged 11 & Bola Samuel aged 4

COMPLAINTS

PERFORMANCE AND LEARNING 2023/24

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.

Each year we monitor the performance of our complaints service. We don't just measure how many we receive, we also measure how well we have handled them and what we have learned as a result.

Complaints we received in 2023/24

In 2023/24 we received 143 formal complaints that were investigated at Stage 1 of our process. This is a reduction of 22% from the number we received in 2022/23 (186). This can be largely attributed to a reduction in complaints received about our repairs service. We are

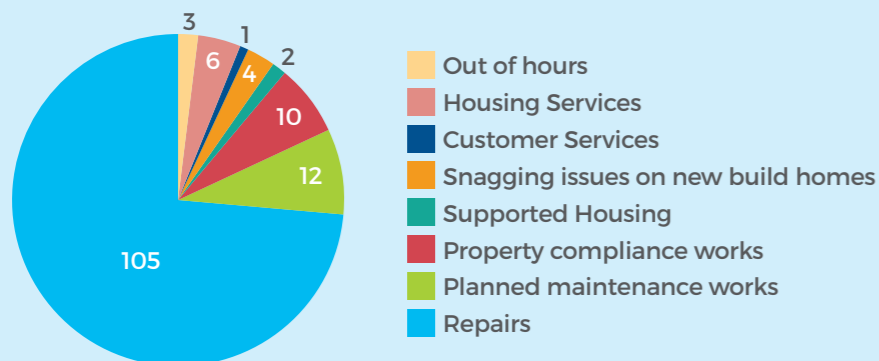
required by the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code to provide a response to your complaint within 10 working days or agree an extension if that timescale is not achievable. We were able to achieve this for 95% (136) of the Stage 1 complaints we received. The other 5% (7) missed their deadlines due to inability to contact tenants, time taken to investigate complex issues and time taken to completely resolve an issue.

On the left the pie chart shows how many complaints were received by different service areas at North Star and the bar graph shows the reasons given for those complaints.

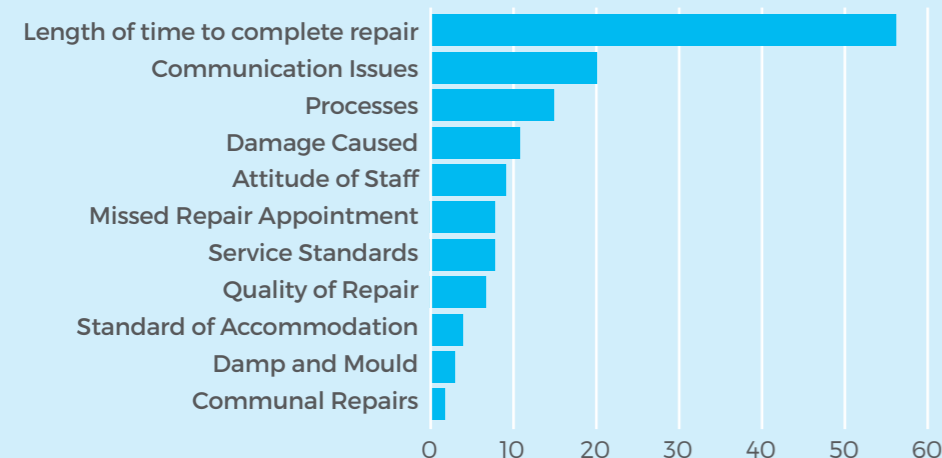
Unfortunately, in some instances we are unable to resolve a complaint at Stage 1 of our process and tenants can ask for their complaint to be investigated by a Head of Service or Director at Stage 2 of our complaints process. We received three requests from tenants to escalate their complaints to Stage 2. We were able to respond to all three within the Ombudsman's timescale of 10 working days.



Formal Complaints 2023/24



Stage 1 Reason for Complaint 2023/24



Following the completion of our complaints process we ask tenants to let us know whether or not they were satisfied with how we handled their complaint. We do this in two main ways:

1. We ask tenants through our Rant and Rave text message feedback system.

2. Our research partner The Leadership Factor (TLF) ask tenants as part of survey for the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) Process.

This year 64.2% of tenants told us through Rant and Rave that they were satisfied with how we handled their complaint.

51.8% told us they were satisfied as part of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) survey. This result is in line with top performing social landlords in the country based on results from TSM surveys completed earlier in the year. However, we aware that there is significant room for improvement and they way in which we handle complaints continues to be a priority area of focus.

What have we learned and what has happened?

Complaints provide a rich source of information about how our services are performing and how they can be improved. We are committed

to learning from the outcomes of complaints and translating that into service improvements that benefit all tenants.

Below is table that sets out the major themes of learning and action taken by each service area as a result of the complaints we have received.

Service area	Themes arising from complaints and /or significant issues.	Learning / Improvements implemented
Planned maintenance (12 complaints)	Poor communication relating to the proposed works and timescales.	We introduced new processes to keep customers informed of upcoming works and expected start dates.
Development (4 complaints)	Lack of communication regarding a boundary fence renewal.	Reviewed and improved our communication processes with other residents when acquiring properties.
Property Compliance (10 complaints)	One complaint regarding delays in repairing a lift in an older person's service. Remaining complaints were due to missed appointments, time taken to complete works and boiler issues.	We have reviewed and changed our protocols to manage any future breakdown of lifts more effectively. No theme with remaining complaints but issues are discussed in contractor meetings.
Maintenance (105 complaints)	Delays with repairs being carried out. Repairs not being completed first time. Lack of communication with customers and keeping customers updated with the follow-on work for their repairs.	We appointed new sub-contractors within our repairs service to assist with the backlog of repairs. Onboarded new specialist contractors to deal with more complex works such as Damp works, locksmiths etc. Contractors have reviewed their approach to stock to ensure stocks are available. Carried out a review of Property Services Team - to improve processes, communication, and workload within the team to allow time for more complex cases to be addressed. Introduced follow on works and major works cards to improve communication with customers. Reviewed the Void standard to ensure fit for purpose and meets customer satisfaction/ expectation.
Customers (4 complaints)	Customer wanted an online service to report an emergency repair. Complaint about poor communication with customers.	We introduced a new email address for customers report an emergency repair direct to the Out of Hours provider. Customers Services Team (CST) received training to improve initial communication at first point of contact.
Housing (6 complaints) and Supported Housing (2)	Decision making about allocations and how ASB was handled. Attitude of a staff member in a temporary accommodation service.	No action required as relevant policies were followed. No further follow up was required. Staff worked closely with relevant agencies and applied relevant policies and processes correctly.



On top of these more specific improvements we have implemented the general service improvements below:

- As part of our ongoing compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Code and our commitment to resolving complaints and learning, we have appointed a Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC). They will have responsibility for supporting a positive complaints culture and ensuring Board receive regular information on our approach to complaints. A member of North Stars Senior Management Team (Executive Director of Customers) has also been appointed as a senior person. They are responsible for complaint handling, assessing any themes or trends to identify any potential systemic issues or risks.
- We reviewed our Compensation and Remedy Policy to include gestures of good will, and other remedies. This included delegating authority to staff to resolve issues and compensate where appropriate at first point of contact.
- We are routinely contacting customers who have had a complaint with North Star to capture further insight and identify any learning as well as best practice. Customers are being contacted by a member of staff who is independent of the complaint and the Business Improvement Team.
- Introduced a new digital system that enables staff to arrange gestures of goodwill whilst the customer is still on the phone.
- To reduce call waiting times we implemented an automated service for customers who want to pay their rent electronically
- Developed and implemented a digital complaints case management system to improve record keeping, monitoring of targets and the identification of themes.
- The policy and process for tracking works associated with Damp has been reviewed. Performance against target is reported into Senior Management Team (SMT) and quarterly to Board
- Delivered training and awareness raising to staff relating to our approach, standards and expectations. This was also delivered to contractors of the repairs service.
- We have strengthened our communication to raise customer awareness of making a complaint. This includes regular social media posts, articles in our newsletters and further information on our website in addition to developing an easy read leaflet on how to make a complaint.
- We commissioned an independent organisation, Customer Service Solutions (CSS) to review our approach to complaint handling to improve the customer experience and satisfaction levels. CSS met with staff, contractors and customers who had a complaint with North Star within the last 12 months. From the review, several actions for improvement were identified. These actions have been implemented.



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.

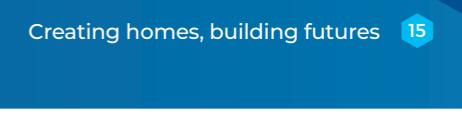
A stage one complaint will be dealt with by a manager who will endeavour to resolve the complaint within 10 working days.

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/.



Our Services

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

At North Star, we want everyone to feel safe in their own home and community.

We know the actions of our neighbours can have a huge impact on how safe we feel, so we take anti-social behavior (ASB) extremely seriously. We are committed to doing all we can, within our powers, to prevent, investigate and tackle ASB.

OUR APPROACH

There isn't an easy fix to ASB, it can often take many months if not longer for complex cases to be resolved. It can be upsetting for those who are affected by ASB. We are committed to supporting customers and putting their wellbeing first. Our aim is to help all customers remain in their own home and take legal action including eviction as a last resort.

Our first step is to have a conversation with anyone who has reported an incident so we can listen to their concerns.

For neighbour disputes, we try and encourage you to speak to your neighbours in a constructive way. We do recognise this can be difficult and where appropriate, we can use mediation services to resolve problems and low level ASB including noise.

The mediation service we use is fully independent and provides you with an opportunity to communicate better, understand each other's concerns, explore solutions, and work out an agreement to settle the dispute as quickly as possible.

Some types of ASB such as criminal offences including drug dealing are beyond our remit and

we work closely in partnership with the police and other agencies.

We often seek independent legal advice to check the action we are taking is appropriate and proportionate to the level of ASB reported to us.

HOW TO REPORT ASB

You can report ASB:

- Via our Customer Services Team on 03000 11 00 11
- Speaking to your housing/support officer direct
- Through our dedicated email address asb@northstarhg.co.uk
- By letter

More information on our approach to ASB can be found on <https://www.northstarhg.co.uk/your-home/anti-social-behaviour/>

MUTUAL EXCHANGE

We know it's difficult at the moment to move home due to the demands on social housing and the lack of available properties.

You can move home much more quickly to a property and an area you would like to live by exchanging with another tenant, this is called a mutual exchange.

You will have to find the person you would like to exchange with. You can do this by registering your property on

Home Swapper. It is free for you to register. Home Swapper is a scheme which operates across the country meaning you can look for a property outside of the area and with other landlords in an area you choose.

It's a quick and easy way to move home. We can provide support and assistance to those who are unable to access the system themselves.

We may refuse a request to exchange but only if there are



reasonable grounds for refusal and these are specified in the housing legislation.

If you would like to join the mutual exchange register you can do so by visiting <https://homeswapper.co.uk> or you can contact our Customer Service Team on 0300 011 0011 who will put you through to a Housing Officer who will provide advice and assistance.

At North Star, we want everyone to feel safe in their own home and community. We want our neighbourhoods to be safe places for everyone. We won't tolerate behaviour that prevents our customers feeling secure in their home and neighbourhood.

HATE CRIME

Hate Crime has no place in our communities, and we will support our customers who are affected by it.

We take reports seriously and working with other agencies will take the necessary steps to support our customers.

WHAT IS HATE CRIME?

A hate crime is a behaviour that someone thinks was caused by hostility, prejudice, or hatred of their:

- Disability including physical impairments, mental health problems, hearing and visual impairment and learning disabilities.
- Gender identity (people who identify as a man, woman, non-binary, trans or prefers to self-describe)
- Race, skin colour, nationality, ethnicity, or heritage
- Religion, faith, or belief including people without a religious belief.
- Sexual orientation (people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or heterosexual)

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU HAVE BEEN A VICTIM OR WITNESS OF HATE CRIME?

Report it to the police. Hate crime is a criminal offence. In an emergency ring 999.

If you don't want to ring the police, you can report hate crime through Crimestoppers on **0800 555111** or by visiting their website www.crimestoppers-uk.org

After you have reported it to the police, please report it to us.

HOW DO I REPORT HATE CRIME?

You can report hate crime?

- Via our Customer Services Team on **03000 11 00 11**
- Speaking to your housing/support officer direct
- Through our dedicated email address hatecrime@northstarhg.co.uk

The investigation will be led by the police as they have the power and duty to investigate and prosecute hate crime.

We will keep you updated throughout the case and explain if we are unable to share specific details.

More information on our approach to hate crime can be found on <https://www.northstarhg.co.uk/your-home/anti-social-behaviour/>

TENANCY FRAUD

Tenancy fraud is illegal and can cause longer waiting lists for those in genuine housing need and make it more difficult for us to manage our homes and respond to issues such as anti-social behaviour.

There are different types of tenancy fraud. The most common ones are:

- Unlawful subletting - where a customer rents out their home without permission.
- Abandonment - where a customer abandons their home and has not told us.
- By deception - using false information to gain a social housing home.
- Wrongly claimed succession - where a tenant dies, and someone tries to take over the home when they are not entitled to

If you suspect tenancy fraud or know if one of our homes has been empty for some time, you can report it to us. You can do this by either contacting our Customer Services Team on **03000 11 00 11** or speaking to your housing/support officer.

If you would rather do this anonymously, you are able to do so.

PERFORMANCE 2023-24

During a transparency consultation, over 200 tenants told us they would like to hear more about how we are performing. Below are the areas of performance that tenants told us were most important to them. You can get monthly updates on our performance by signing up to our performance update email.

Satisfaction with repairs service

The main theme of dissatisfaction was time to complete a repair. The back log of overdue repairs has dropped considerably, but during March a number of jobs falling into this category were completed, which has directly affected the satisfaction scoring below. We continue to monitor overdue jobs on a daily basis and discuss them at every contract meeting with contactors.

% of customers satisfied with repairs service:

QTR 1 23/24	QTR 2 23/24	QTR 3 23/24	QTR 4 23/24	March 23/24	Target	Performance against target- Traffic light definition	HouseMark quartile position*
82.4%	83.4%	84.2%	83.8%	81.8%	88%	On target <1.9% outside target >2% outside target	Top

Housing Management

% of rent lost due to empty homes:

QTR 1 23/24	QTR 2 23/24	QTR 3 23/24	QTR 4 23/24	March 23/24	Target	Performance against target- Traffic light definition	HouseMark quartile position*
0.87%	0.81%	0.80%	0.79%	0.79%	0.90%	On target <0.4% outside target >0.5% outside target	Top

Current tenant arrears as % of total rent due:

QTR 1 23/24	QTR 2 23/24	QTR 3 23/24	QTR 4 23/24	March 23/24	Target	Performance against target- Traffic light definition	HouseMark quartile position*
2.93%	2.98%	2.98%	3.02%	3.02%	2.90%	On target <0.4% outside target >0.5% outside target	Median

We are £22k outside of target. This is attributed to the cyclical nature of the majority of our rent payments - housing benefit, universal credit and housing benefit. Arrears have also been impacted by the Easter bank holiday with many payments not being received until the following week. Arrears in week one has subsequently reduced to 2.62%. This is in within target.



General Needs average relet times

We are three days outside of target. We have seen the number of empty properties reduce by 7% over the last year. Performance has been impacted by a number of properties requiring extensive work and taking longer to repair.

Average time to let a property:

QTR 1 23/24	QTR 2 23/24	QTR 3 23/24	QTR 4 23/24	March 23/24	Target	Performance against target- Traffic light definition	HouseMark quartile position*
22 days	23.5 days	22.5 days	23 days	23 days	20 days	On target <2.9 days outside target >3 days outside target	Top

Property Services

% properties with a valid gas certificate - month end

QTR 1 23/24	QTR 2 23/24	QTR 3 23/24	QTR 4 23/24	March 23/24	Target	Performance against target- Traffic light definition	HouseMark quartile position*
99.94%	99.90%	99.94%	99.97%	99.97%	100%	On target Below target	Top

There was one gas service outside of target as of the end of March 2024. The property has had issues with access and is being pursued in line with our no access protocol to facilitate a gas service as soon as possible.

Customer Service

% satisfaction with call handling:

QTR 1 23/24	QTR 2 23/24	QTR 3 23/24	QTR 4 23/24	March 23/24	Target	Performance against target- Traffic light definition	HouseMark quartile position*
96.6%	95.3%	94.6%	95.1%	96.5%	88%	On target <0.4% outside target >0.5% outside target	Top



Sign up for regular updates on North Star's performance by scanning the QR code!



TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES RESULTS 2023-24

In April 2023 the Regulator of Social Housing set out a new way to assess how Landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services.

Our full results, including how we have collected this data can be found on our website:

www.northstarhg.co.uk/get-involved/tenant-satisfaction-measures/



TP01

Satisfaction with overall service

83.2%

TP02

Satisfaction with the overall repairs service

78.5%

TP03

Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair

74.7%

TP04

Satisfaction that their home is well maintained

83%

TP05

Satisfaction that their home is safe

91.1%

TP06

Satisfaction that North Star listens to tenant views and acts upon them

77.5%

TP07

Satisfaction that North Star keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them

80%

TP08

Proportion of respondents who report that they agree North Star treats them fairly and with respect

88.1%

TP09

Satisfaction with North Star's approach to handling complaints

50.8%

TP010

Satisfaction that North Star keeps communal areas clean and well maintained

75.8%

TP011

Satisfaction that North Star makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods

72.3%

TP012

Satisfaction with North Star's approach to handling anti-social behaviour

71.3%



Money Matters

UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Universal Credit managed migration to be extended to a further half million claimants in the coming months.

Managed migration is the process where claimants on existing means tested benefits and tax credits – known as the legacy benefits – are told these benefits are ending and are asked to claim Universal Credit instead.

Up until recently managed migration only applied to people getting tax credits and no other legacy benefits.

However, the Department of Work and Pensions is now sending managed migration notices to claimants on other benefits. These will be issued:

- to claimants on income support and to those getting tax credits with housing benefit from April 2024;
- to claimants on housing benefit only from June 2024;
- to claimants on income-related employment and support allowance in combination with child tax credit from July 2024;
- to pension aged claimants (including mixed aged couples) of tax credits from August 2024; and
- to claimants on income-based jobseeker's allowance from September 2024.

The Department of Work and Pensions expects that all claimants in these groups will have been migrated onto Universal Credit by March 2025.

Disabled adults who are getting Income-related Employment and Support Allowance only or income related Employment Support Allowance in combination with housing benefit will be migrated slightly later. It is expected that the first claimants in this group will be migrated from autumn 2024 onwards, with the last claimants sent migration notices by December 2025.

If receive a migration notice you should claim Universal Credit by the deadline on the letter. You will usually get 3 months notice - your old benefits will stop after the deadline.

If you are confused or worried about what managed migration will mean for you and your family, contact us at welfare.benefits@northstarhg.co.uk



HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND (HSF)

The Government has announced a further 6 month extension of the Household Support Fund running from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024.

The grant funding is available to County Councils in England to support residents with energy bills, food and essential costs like Council Tax. Depending on your circumstances you may be eligible for support from the Household Support Fund. In some cases, you do not need to be in receipt of benefits.

www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/benefits-and-support/support-payments/household-support-fund/

www.stockton.gov.uk/household-support-fund

www.hartlepool.gov.uk/info/20127/benefits_and_grants/1086/household_support_fund

www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/benefits-and-support/household-support-fund

www.durham.gov.uk/article/26603/Household-Support-Fund-HSF-

www.darlington.gov.uk/benefits/household-support-fund/

www.northyorks.gov.uk/benefits/household-support-fund

www.southtyneside.gov.uk/article/17554/Support-from-the-Council#:~:text=Some%20of%20the%20Household%20Support,from%20any%20Post%20Office%20branch.

HOME FIRE SAFETY ADVICE

Every year in the UK, avoidable fires start in homes which result in injury or death and severe property damage. The effect of a fire and the resulting loss has a huge impact on the people involved. The following advice should help in preventing a fire from starting.

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.

ELECTRICS

Avoid overloading sockets or using multiple extension leads (daisy chaining) 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. Don't leave appliances on 'standby' as this could be a potential source of a fire and you will also save money! Buy electrical appliances from reputable sellers and repair or dispose of faulty electrical appliances.

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. Make sure your cooker controls are fully turned off when you finish cooking.

GAS

Do not store combustibles or other items in boiler cupboards as it may affect electrical and gas connections to the boiler causing a fire risk. Do not store gas cylinders inside your home. If you smell gas in your home, turn off the main gas valve located next to your gas meter, open your doors and windows to ventilate the property and evacuate everyone from your home. Do not use a phone inside the property or turn switches on or off.

When outside of the property, phone the National Gas Emergencies number on 0800 111 999. Follow the advice of the emergency adviser and wait for the gas engineer to arrive. Do not re-enter your home.

CANDLES

Ensure candles are not close to combustibles including curtains and soft furnishings. Don't leave candles unattended and ensure you extinguish them when not in use.

HEATERS

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.

SMOKING

Avoid smoking in bed or when you are feeling tired, make sure cigarette ends are properly extinguished. Do not smoke in communal shared areas.

EVACUATION PLAN

Think about various fire scenarios located in different rooms in your home. Think how you and your family or visitors would get out in a fire situation. Ensure your internal exit routes are clear and you can easily get out of your main doors and fire escape windows. If you live in a flat that has shared communal areas there will be evacuation procedures displayed.

CHILDREN

Supervise young children near ovens and fires. Keep matches and lighters out of reach.

GARDEN FIRE SAFETY

Take care if having a barbeque or using a fire pit in the garden. Keep heated appliances away from the building, wooden fences, bins and trees. Never empty hot ashes into bins.

SMOKE DETECTORS

North Star provide smoke detectors in your property. 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.



LIVING IN FLATS WITH SHARED INTERNAL AREAS

If you live in a flat that has shared internal communal areas there will be evacuation procedures displayed. Please ensure you know what your evacuation procedure is for your building. If in any doubt, please contact North Star. Your flat main entrance door is a fire door. Please ensure it closes fully into the frame by itself. Any damage to the door or the smoke seals around the frame must be reported.

Every year we will be sending you important fire safety information including information from your building fire risk assessment, fire safety advice and details of your evacuation procedures. If you would like a someone from North Star to come and see you to discuss your evacuation procedures, fire risk assessment information or anything relating to fire safety then we would be happy to visit you.

Reporting Fire Safety Concerns and for Further Fire Safety Advice

If you have any fire safety concerns or require further fire safety advice then please contact North Star Customer Services on **03000 110 011** or email **customer.services@northstarhg.co.uk**

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

- Cleveland Fire Brigade **01429 872311**
- Durham and Darlington Fire Brigade **0345 305 8383**
- Tyne and Wear Fire Brigade **0800 032 7777**

Home Insurance

It is strongly advised that you 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**.





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

 @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