

Customer Annual Report *2020-2021*



Chair's introduction



I want to welcome you to the Customer Annual Report for 2020/21.

I hope you enjoy reading this report which has been designed and developed by a group of customers involved in reviewing Thirteen's services and performance.

2020/21 has been challenging for us all, and we have had to adapt to new ways of working.

We have continued to challenge and hold Thirteen to account using the tools and workstreams we have in our Customer Involvement Framework, which is designed to encourage and provide opportunities for even more customers to have their say.

For many of us, the opportunity to continue to be involved with Thirteen has been a valuable lifeline by helping us keep in touch with others and interact with people during lockdown periods.

We're also delighted that three of our customers sit on the new national housing ombudsman's panel. Involvement and feedback from our residents is key to everything we do, and it's fantastic to see our customer voices not only being heard but making a real difference on a national scale.

We are always keen to hear from new customers interested in being involved and supporting our work. If you would like to get involved, please email customer.engagement@thirteengroup.co.uk or call **0300 111 1000**.

Val Scollen

Chair of Thirteen's Customer Involvement Framework and Customer.





Thirteen's customer involvement framework

We want to get things right, so we involve customers in developing our services. We want to know what's important to them and whether our services meet their expectations, as well as listen to their ideas for improving services and performance.

Our framework puts our customers at the heart of everything we do.

What does involvement look like?

Thirteen is committed to involving customers to scrutinise our services and performance, consult on our policy and strategy development, and test compliance with the regulatory consumer standards, reporting to the leadership team and Board.

The Thirteen Customer Involvement Framework, which we call BRICKS, provides a flexible, adaptable, value for money approach designed to support the delivery of our strategic plan and the objectives that sit within it.

BRICKS stands for build, review, interact, consult, knowledge and share. Our framework follows these principles:

- Customer involvement is embedded in the organisation and is an integral part of our culture and development.
- Customers are supported and trained to participate in activities based on their interests and skills.
- Customers are at the heart of Thirteen's decision making.
- We provide a wide range of flexible opportunities to reach more customers and engage with hard-to-reach groups to influence and shape the services they receive.
- Involved customers oversee our community fund, deciding which projects we will fund to support tenancy and community sustainability.
- We maximise and report on the effectiveness of our customer involvement activities.
- Ensuring we meet regulatory requirements in relation to customer involvement.
- We develop and maintain a sense of ownership and responsibility with our customers, specifically for building safety and regulatory compliance.

The chair of the involvement framework attends every Board meeting, while other involved customers regularly attend to provide updates on the work they have been carrying out and report on Thirteen's compliance with the consumer standards.

Our involved customers also provide video updates to the Board. The process works both ways, and similarly, Board directors also record a short video message after each meeting, which is shared with customers and on Thirteen's website.

In 2020-21 our customers worked on:

- A rolling programme to provide reassurance to the Board on our compliance with the Regulatory Consumer Standards including:
 - Home Standard.
 - Tenancy Standard.
 - Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard.
 - Neighbourhood and Community Standard.
- Developing and delivering our new customer experience operating model, which we call Touchpoints.
- Our environmental impact and how this is assessed within the Thirteen planning process.
- Reviewing how we support any customers whose homes are scheduled for demolition.
- Reviewing our repairs and maintenance service, shaping our priorities, responsibilities and the timings of our response.
- Developing the process around how our outbound customer contact technology works.





Our community fund

Thirteen's community fund invested **£131,763** in our communities to support a range of health, wellbeing and social activities for older people, children and local interest groups. Despite the pandemic meaning community activities were limited, the fund helped **68 community groups**, last year. Projects we supported included fitness classes, improvements to green spaces, food and care packs, home safety activities and a range of other social and community events across the Tees Valley.

Thirteen Academy

Thirteen Academy supports those from low-income households, who might not otherwise consider applying to university, to study for a degree. This life changing initiative supports customers, and their dependants, with aspirations to study at university, with a scholarship.

Last year, our involved customers awarded funding to **ten customers** to cover the cost of university course fees (**£9,250 per year**).

The customers we have supported have joined our involved customer group, plus one person has been successful in joining one of our group committees, and one has secured a temporary post within the Customer Involvement team.

Customer volunteers

In the last year, our involved customers gave more than **1,032** hours of their time across various activities, including helping to scrutinise our work and taking part in events and promotional opportunities. These 28 weeks of activity generated £1m of social value.



What we achieved throughout 2020-21

V1 maintained our regulatory financial viability at V1 (the highest possible rating)

G1 maintained our regulatory governance rating at G1 (the highest possible rating)

Investment in homes

From April 2020 to March 2021, we carried out over £60m of improvements to homes.

This included replacing kitchen, bathrooms, boilers and installing new roofs, windows and doors.

623

boilers installed

92

door installations

245

new roofs

476

(properties)
window installations

Fire risk assessments

Our homes in multi-storey blocks are regularly assessed for their level of fire risk, and our standard inspection cycle is over and above the recommendations set out in Local Government Association guidance, meaning we are going above and beyond to ensure our buildings are kept as safe as possible.

- High-rise properties are checked every six months.
- Complex or three-storey and above buildings are checked annually.
- Buildings considered low risk are checked every two years.

Our inspections help us identify any fire hazards and what improvements can be made, looking at multiple aspects of how the building is managed and what can be done to reduce the risk of a fire starting.

Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, our fire risk assessment inspection programme remained **100% compliant** through 2020-21.

Our regular visits quickly identify and record any defects and the actions or repairs undertaken to keep our customers safe. More importantly, we have ensured **100% of post inspections** were also completed on time.

As part of our approach, Thirteen's Building Safety Team regularly carries out a range of fire safety checks. Working with a team of joinery specialists, they carried out checks to **over 6,000** flat and communal fire doors.

Did you know?

Last year our trade operatives were unable to gain access to

17,430

properties to carry out pre-arranged repairs or safety checks resulting in a total no access cost of

£871,500



Customer satisfaction with services

Satisfaction indicates our customers' perception of the standard of service that we provide.

Our performance is measured against targets specific to the organisation, allowing us to measure our success over time. Like most landlords, Thirteen seeks feedback through various mechanisms, including one-off perception surveys and in-depth research.



87%

satisfaction with our neighbourhoods as places to live



75.3%

of customers agree their service charge provides value for money



75%

satisfied we listen to customer views and act upon them



53.1

customer net promotion score which measures how likely customers are to recommend us to others. 50 and above is excellent!

Repairs in customers' homes

We carry out a range of repairs in our customers' homes to ensure they're kept in good condition. Our skilled colleagues include plumbers, electricians, plasterers and bricklayers who maintain and repair homes, together

with gas fitters who service and repair heating systems. We have continued to improve our repairs system to help better allocate repairs jobs, ensure better customer service and increase satisfaction.



105,214

emergency repairs completed



91.2%

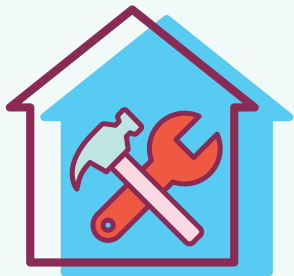
customer satisfaction with our repairs service

What we achieved throughout 2020-21



20,346

Welfare calls made during pandemic lockdown



18,530

Emergency repairs carried out through the pandemic



4,423

Customers helped with money advice and universal credit applications through the pandemic lockdown

Working with COVID-19

Anti Social Behaviour



Using technology we introduced our ASB 'Reportable' app, downloadable to a smart phone allowing our customers to report ASB quickly and conveniently 365 days of the year.

The ASB team has a daily conference call with Cleveland Police to understand demand and the impact on our estates and communities.

Assistive Technology



The Assistive Technology Team have maintained an emergency response and installation service throughout the crisis. We worked with Hartlepool Borough Council to provide an emergency hotline for customers in need of food parcels, prescriptions or just advice. We also worked with the council to facilitate discharges from hospital and care homes to free up much needed beds.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

2,913

ASB cases reported to Thirteen

8.8

out of 10 customers were satisfied with the service

Improving neighbourhood services

In April 2018, we changed the way we work in our neighbourhoods. Customers told us that they wanted our staff to be more visible in neighbourhoods, helping them deal with the issues they face on a day-to-day basis.

So, we adopted an operating model to put neighbourhoods at the heart of our business, with more neighbourhood co-ordinators managing a reduced number of properties.

116

neighbourhood co-ordinators manage Thirteen customers and homes

6,816

fly tipping and

108

graffiti removal jobs were carried out to keep our neighbourhoods clean and tidy



Supported housing services

We provide services to meet the needs of vulnerable people and support them to improve their quality of life. We support a wide range of people who face challenges in their lives, including homeless people, ex-offenders, people with mental health issues, people recovering from substance misuse, families, women and young people.

4,057

people helped by supported housing services



What we achieved throughout 2020-21

Supported living

Our extra care and sheltered housing schemes offer specialist support to help older and vulnerable people to live independently for longer. Accommodation and support are flexible and tailored to suit customer needs. Homes provide privacy and the chance to keep an active social life and remain at the heart of the community.

The service supported:

2,094

sheltered homes with support services available

611

extra care homes for older and vulnerable people

38

homes for people with learning difficulties

1,928

major and minor adaptations were carried out to customer homes

£1.2m

spent on adaptations to help customers remain in their homes

Employment support

Last year, Thirteen's employability service provided intensive support to customers across the Tees Valley and County Durham. Around **740** customers received our help each month.

386

people were helped into employment

193

of whom were Thirteen tenants

177

people were supported into an education or training programme

95

of whom were Thirteen tenants





3,761
properties were let to customers

Lettings

As part of our new homes' development programme, we build new homes for affordable rent. We have also brought existing empty homes back to life by carrying out extensive renovations to ensure customers live in a quality, secure rental property.

This included:

3,121
general needs homes

106
extra care

277
supported housing properties

257
homes for older people

Developing new homes

We place enormous importance on building new homes. In our strategic plan, we set out our intention to invest in new builds, including affordable rent, shared ownership and market sale, to ensure that we have the right mix and quality of homes to meet our customers' expectations now and in the future. Profits from new homes for market sale are reinvested back into Thirteen.

Last year, we invested over
£47m
in building new homes, building
355
new homes

4
social rent

265
affordable rent

47
shared ownership

39
private sale

What we achieved throughout 2020-21

Bespoke lettings

We have over

473

bespoke lettings homes designed for rent by specific customers such as students, medical staff etc.

These homes give customers the chance to live close to their place of study or work. The team also look after a number of homes for older and vulnerable people.

Leaseholders

We also have:

800

leaseholders

825

shared owners

146

leasehold schemes for the elderly/older person shared ownership

Financial inclusion

Many of our customers have minimal incomes. Although managing with a low cash flow makes some people an expert at budgeting, navigating complicated benefit systems, debts, and unexpected outgoings means that we often need to support customers with their finances to help keep their tenancies secure.

Our teams provided

4,423

customers with specialist advice on debts, budgeting, benefits, and financial confidence.

79%

of those customers were able to reduce their arrears within three months. The team assisted them in gaining

£2.04m

in income through unclaimed benefits, better budgeting and improved arrangements with creditors.

Rents and income

We had **16,467** customers with clear rent accounts at the end of 2020-21

14,259

customers in arrears

275

notices served for rent arrears

Value for money

We're committed to providing a value for money service, delivering our vision and maximising the social impact of our resources and investment. It's important because we want to make sure we can invest in more homes, invest in our existing homes and create quality services for residents, customers and other stakeholders.

Last year, we achieved:

£5.3m

total savings across all Thirteen's services which equates to

3.6%

of social housing turnover



Involving customers

Thirteen involves customers to bring fresh ideas and help us to improve services, neighbourhoods and opportunities for all customers. Customers are involved in helping us scrutinise our services and performance, consult on policies and strategies, and comply with regulations.

102

involved customer meetings held online

10

policies consulted on

12

surveys carried out

34

services changed or implemented as a result of customer involvement

4

consumer standards tested, and assurance given to the Board we are compliant



Touchpoints

We believe everyone should get the same quality of service, no matter where and how they come into contact with us. That's why we're investing in our touchpoints programme, including a high street presence, a new digital platform called My Thirteen and in our contact systems to promote the range of services that we have to offer and make all our services more accessible, direct, quick and easy.

13,154

customers signed up to My Thirteen

319,451

calls answered

37

seconds average call waiting time

31,023

emails received

Dealing with complaints

We're committed to resolving complaints promptly and fairly within five working days. Our aim is not to receive a repeat complaint, so we've been working with managers on the learnings from the ones we've had. We've been looking at where complaints are coming from, why they're happening and what we can do to work with customers and help stop them from happening again.

315

complaints received

100%

of complaints have been responded to and resolved within our target of five days

What we achieved throughout 2020-21

Environmental

Improving our approach to environment and sustainability cuts across everything we do. We are taking definitive action to reduce the carbon footprint of the organisation and have set an ambition to reach net zero carbon on direct business emissions by 2035 and on all our emissions by 2050, in line with government targets.

Offsetting our emissions

Through a partnership with Forest Carbon, Thirteen has purchased 2,362 trees across 1.02 hectares of new woodland on the outskirts of Crook, Durham, named Jon's Wood.

Through the growth of these trees, Thirteen has purchased a potential 727 tonnes of carbon capture credits. This equates to 16.8% of Thirteen's scope 1 & 2 emissions for 2020/21.



Energy efficiency improvements

Last year we carried out energy efficiency improvements to some of our homes including:

43

air source heat pumps were installed

21

properties benefited from 'fuel switch' – replacing storage heaters with full central heating systems

95

properties had their lofts insulated

39

properties had cavity wall insulation

Solar PV systems across our properties generated

1,169

megawatts



Waste management

Thirteen opened a state-of-the-art, environmental centre in Billingham in 2020, which gives us control over how we manage and processes our waste. The centre is unique in the region and the housing sector.

Since it's been operating, from the waste materials generated through planned maintenance work, repairs, environmental improvements and getting homes ready for the next customer, it has reclaimed:



We're working in partnership with various local industries in the North East to recycle many of these items.



How we compare against our peers

We're continuing to challenge ourselves to save money where we can and take the long-term view to invest in being more effective and efficient in the future. To do this, we benchmark against our peers, using the Regulator of Social Housing ("RSH") - Global Accounts and Housemark, using appropriate and representative peer groups.

Looking at our ambitions for the future, we also forecast over the next five years to understand where we're going and be clear and realistic about the scale of the task.

Operational measures	Thirteen	Benchmarking	
		Northern	National
Overall satisfaction with services provided by Thirteen (STAR survey Dec 19)	89.1%	86.60%	82.45%
Customers very or fairly satisfied that their rent provides value for money (STAR survey Dec 19)	90.8%	88.35%	84.07%
Repairs completed first time (from H Mark Performance return)	98.43%	90.85%	87.50%
Average calendar days to complete a repair (from H Mark Performance return)	6.95	11.23	9.4
Overall satisfaction with the quality of their home (STAR survey Dec 19)	88.3%	85.85%	83.32%
Complaints responded to within five working days (from H Mark Performance return)	100%	78.84%	97.04%
Valid gas safety certificates*	100%	100%	99.88%
Total current arrears (Arrears dashboard)	3.2%	3.70%	3.64%

*The pandemic brought challenges to maintaining gas safety inspections, with some clinically extremely vulnerable customers advised to shield and not allow visitors into their home. We took action to quickly address the challenges, while ensuring customers' wishes were listened to and they were kept safe in their homes.







At Thirteen, we've been working to help improve the lives of people in our neighbourhoods for years.

We provide our customers with homes, support and opportunities to grow.

As a not-for-profit housing association, we focus on delivering our charitable objectives of providing housing, care and support for those who need it.

We manage more than 35,000 properties across the North East, Yorkshire and Humber, providing services for over 70,000 customers.

Our strength, capacity and ambition to deliver what our customers need mean we can change things for the better.

This document gives you some quick and accessible information about the performance of Thirteen. It provides details about our performance in several important areas across the organisation and some of the things we've done to improve our services between April 2020 and March 2021. We also have more information about performance and Thirteen's impact on the area on the website at www.thirteengroup.co.uk/aboutus