



## Walking football club scores funding

Page 7

Thirteen helped me find a job pg 3

Top tips for the cold season pg 17

Get involved with Thirteen pg 15

Investing in homes and neighbourhoods pg 18-19



# What's inside

	Page
Welcome from Val	2
Thirteen helped me find a job	3
Gresham revival takes a step forward	4
Shared Ownership	5
Competition time	6
Walking football team scores funding from Thirteen	7
Going greener and growing wilder	8-9
Welcome aboard to our new customers	10
Teaming up to drive up home safety	10
“What do you think about your neighbourhood?”	11
Calculate what benefits you're entitled to	12
Save time, do it online with My Thirteen	12
Involved customers join national panel	13
What our involved customers have been up to	14-15
Empty homes scheme throws open its doors	16
Hot tips for the cold season	17
Investing in homes and neighbourhoods	18-19
Useful contacts	20



## Welcome from Val

**We hope you like the new look of our customer magazine, Together.**

Firstly, I want to extend a very warm welcome to new customers in Hull and Middlesbrough who joined Thirteen this summer. I hope you're having a great experience so far!

In this issue we'll be sharing what involved customers have been up to over these past months and some of the exciting projects we've been part of. We'll also introduce you to Tees Valley Walking Group, one of the fabulous groups we've been able to support through our community fund.

You'll also hear from Estelle, a Thirteen customer, as she shares her inspirational story of how she and her son managed to successfully secure new jobs with support from Thirteen's employability team, despite all the challenges that have come with the pandemic.

We're also sharing some top tips on getting your home winter ready as the colder weather kicks in, as well as some of the other ways we've been helping to promote home safety to customers.

As always, there are some great prizes up for grabs too, so grab a cuppa and enjoy!

**Val Scollen**

Chair of the Customer Engagement Framework

## Wordsearch solution from issue 4 of Together



**Did you manage to find the missing word from our last crossword?**

The missing word was 'Customers'. You can find a new puzzle on page 6.

# I was made redundant during lockdown but Thirteen helped me to find a job

Like many people across the country, Estelle Potts found her world turned upside down when she was made redundant from her cosmetics job during the pandemic.

“It was a really worrying time for me and my family. I was finding it hard to find a new job and I’d lost my confidence after searching and applying for months without any luck.

“I spoke with Tracy from Thirteen’s employability team and I couldn’t have wished for a nicer person. She was so down to earth and approachable.

Estelle’s caseworker Tracy discussed Estelle’s work experience and found her skills were a good match for a support worker post that was being advertised at Thirteen.

“Tracy helped me with my application and after I was offered an interview, she helped me to prepare by holding mock interviews and offering lots of useful tips on interview techniques, which filled me with confidence. The interview went really well and I was thrilled when I got the job!

“It was a temporary position to cover maternity leave, but Tracy kept in touch and offered me help and advice when it was time to apply for other roles. Her support helped me to secure myself a full-time position as a touchpoint advisor at Thirteen.

“When my son Grant saw a trades apprenticeship advertised with Vision Building Services, I encouraged him to speak to the Thirteen employability team too and they helped him with his CV and interview skills. He’s since been accepted and is looking forward to starting there.”






If you need help finding jobs or training, Thirteen’s employability team offer a range of free training and support services to help you with your search. From one-to-one support with CVs, application forms, interview skills and career planning, to access to employment, training and volunteering opportunities.

Get in touch with the team by emailing [employability@thirteengroup.co.uk](mailto:employability@thirteengroup.co.uk) or call **01642 947 840**.

## Got a query?

Our friendly customer service colleagues are on hand to offer you help and advice about all things related to your home and tenancy.

-  **0300 111 1000 from 8am to 8pm**
-  **customerservices@thirteengroup.co.uk**
-  **www.thirteengroup.co.uk**

# Gresham revival takes a step forward

Middlesbrough Mayor Andy Preston recently visited our new development in Gresham, Middlesbrough.

The scheme, known as 'Union Village' to signify the union of the old development with the new, is on land between Diamond Road and Union Street.

It's an eagerly anticipated development that is set to make a massive difference to the town. It brings land that has been derelict for years back to life and will fill a critical piece in the jigsaw of ambitious plans to regenerate this part of central Middlesbrough.

These new, affordable and much-needed high-quality homes will all be for affordable rent and include two to four-bedroom homes with a mix of houses, apartments, and bungalows.

The first phase will start with 145 homes, with more to come under phase two, planned for 2022. The first customers will open the front door of their new home in summer 2022.

Thirteen is investing over £30m into the housing scheme, but a development of this scale can only be delivered in partnership – with funding from Homes England and £3.6m from the Government's Brownfield Housing Fund.

## Revival

"This long-awaited milestone is another step towards bringing much needed new homes to Gresham, and so much hard work has gone into making it happen," said Thirteen's director of strategic partnerships, Sharon Thomas.

"It's a really exciting scheme, and we're thrilled to be working with Middlesbrough Council and the Middlesbrough Mayor, the Tees Valley Combined Authority and Tees Valley Mayor as well as Homes England and other partners to deliver these fantastic new homes in the heart of the town, contributing to the revival of this historic neighbourhood."

Middlesbrough Mayor Andy Preston added: "Gresham's been neglected and let down for far too long, but that's all changing now. Union Village is an amazing scheme that will deliver the sort of great quality, affordable homes that are key to our plans to revitalise the town centre.

"Our fantastic partnership with Thirteen is setting the standard for new housing across Middlesbrough for many years to come."



# thirteen

Managing and building homes

## Shared Ownership: Part buy, part rent

Deposits  
from  
**£1,725**

## Always wanted to be a homeowner but didn't think it was for you?

Shared ownership is the affordable way to get on the property ladder quicker and easier. There's a low deposit and you can buy a bit and rent a bit with the option of increasing how much you own when the time is right for you.

Properties currently available in Ashington, Crawcrook, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Peterlee and Stockton-on-Tees.\* For more information contact our sales team on 01642 947 070.

For future developments visit our website [thirteengroup.co.uk](http://thirteengroup.co.uk)

\*Correct at time of printing.

# Competition time

## Win a £50 shopping voucher!



In honour of our friends at Tees Valley Walking Football Club, we've put together this fun footie-themed crossword! All-but-one of the words listed below are hidden in this wordsearch, but can you find out which one's missing?

Words may be forwards, backwards, upwards, downwards or even diagonal! They may overlap too.

**MATCH**

**REFEREE**

**COACH**

**CORNER**

**TACKLE**

**PENALTY**

**HALF TIME**

**GOALIE**

**TEAM**

**SAVE**

**FOUL**

**SCORE**

**PITCH**



To enter, all you have to do is solve the wordsearch and tell us which word is missing from the grid.

You can then either email us at

**communications@thirteengroup.co.uk** with the answer or post it to: **Together magazine, Thirteen, 2 Hudson Quay, Windward Way, Middlesbrough, TS2 1QG.**

Entries close on **Monday 31 January 2022**

One winner with the correct answer will be chosen in a random draw and notified within 28 days of the closing date.

The missing word is: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address or mobile number: \_\_\_\_\_

# Cover story: Walking football team scores funding from Thirteen



Funding from Thirteen is helping sport enthusiasts across Teesside get active and enjoy walking football.

Tees Valley Walking Football Club has received £1,500 from Thirteen's community fund to go towards pitch fees and purchasing football kits for each player.

Designed for people later in life, walking football is played on a five-a-side pitch at a slower pace, which reduces the chance of injury. The club trains at Goals in Middlesbrough every Monday and Thursday and its 32-strong squad competes in walking football tournaments around the country.

Club secretary Andrew Charlesworth believes that the funding from Thirteen will do more than pay pitch fees and buy kits for each player: "It has come at a great time because it will help us encourage more people to get involved in walking football as lockdown restrictions ease.

"Activities play an important role in physical and mental health, so we set up a walking football club as a way for people to make new friends and enjoy exercising, no matter their ability or fitness level."

Thirteen's community fund supports groups that make a positive contribution in their neighbourhoods. Terry Riley, customer involvement co-ordinator at Thirteen, said: "It's fantastic to see people in our neighbourhoods come together and share their passion for football, and I'm delighted that we've been able to support the club through our community fund."

Applications for funding are welcome from a range of organisations including community groups, charities, voluntary organisations and residents' associations.

A group of Thirteen's involved customers meet to decide which applications to fund.

Jim Scollen, customer stream lead for Thirteen's community fund, said: "Tees Valley Walking Football Club stood out because of the inclusive environment they've created for people to get involved in sport activities."

Club secretary Andrew Charlesworth concluded: "After a challenging year, meeting each week has given our players something to look forward to. It's a brilliant atmosphere when we get together and everyone can go at their own pace – as long as there's no running!"

**Find out how to apply for Thirteen's community fund by visiting our website.**



# Going greener an

Thirteen is taking steps today, so we can start enjoying a greener tomorrow.



## Earning carbon credits in Crook

Did you know that as trees grow they turn greenhouse gas into solid carbon stored in their trunks and roots? At the same time, they help to increase biodiversity to support birds, bees and insects, and create more pleasant places for us humans too.

A partnership between Thirteen and Forest Carbon has seen 23,625 trees planted over 10 hectares at Jon's Wood in Crook, County Durham, that are set to capture over 7,200 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> over their lifetime. The project aims to promote a greener future, reduce Thirteen's carbon footprint and earn carbon credits through local woodland creation.

Thirteen has purchased 10% of the carbon credits generated by the new woodland. That's 10% of our carbon footprint for the last year – a big step towards our goal of becoming carbon neutral.

A carbon credit represents either the permanent removal of a tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere, or saving one tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> being emitted, through changes in land use or energy generation.





# and growing wilder

## Blooming marvellous in Middlesbrough

Stunning, colourful wildflowers brought a splash of colour this summer to 35,000 square metres of land over more than ten estates in Middlesbrough, in a brilliant partnership between Middlesbrough Council and Thirteen.

The flowers formed a wildflower trail from Brambles Farm to Netherfields and across to Hemlington, lining the grass verges for everyone to enjoy.

“Bringing wildflowers into our communities and gardens has many benefits that are really important to us at Thirteen,” says Thirteen’s environmental specialist John Woods. “It looks beautiful, it’s great for people’s mental health and wellbeing and it can help us all connect with nature.

“Moreover, wildflowers attract bees, and we know that bees are sadly on a decline. A major reason for this is loss of habitat. Bees are one of our most important pollinators. Their hard work pollinates over 70% of the food that we eat, so every patch of wildflowers that we add to the community makes a real difference to the survival of these wonderful insects.

Thirteen has joined the Northern Carbon Partnership by partnering with Forest Carbon, which has created 200 new woodlands and planted 10.5 million trees since 2008 through partnerships. Its director, Stephen Prior said: “New UK woodlands not only provide long term CO2 capture, but also a wide range of other benefits to wider society. They also offer businesses the opportunity to invest locally in respect of their carbon footprints.”

Thirteen’s head of environmental sustainability, Samantha Granger, added: “We launched our Take Control campaign last year to reach net zero carbon by 2030, and we’ve made some significant changes already to help us achieve this - from looking at cleaner sources of energy, installing renewable energy in our office buildings to exploring how we can use lower carbon renewable technologies.



“Taking action to manage the environment, reduce the impact of climate change and support biodiversity is our priority. This is just one of many projects which will improve the environment for our customers, creating more natural habitats for wildlife and a stronger ecosystem.”

Cllr Barrie Cooper, Middlesbrough Council’s executive member for environment, finance and governance, said: “The wildflowers make a lovely display and bring numerous environmental benefits as well as making areas more attractive. We’re really grateful for the work put in by the team at Thirteen to make it happen.”

“Our customers are our priority and we’re continuing to look at how we reduce their energy costs and improve the areas where they live, through community and education projects which will have a lasting positive impact on the environment.”



# Welcome aboard to our new customers

This summer a welcome pack hit the mats of 1,300 new households in Middlesbrough and Hull after Thirteen bought a number of homes and buildings from Clarion Housing Group.

Following a six-week customer consultation period, the deal saw Thirteen take over the ownership and management not only of the 1,300 homes, but sheltered housing schemes and other community buildings too.

## Meet your landlord

From day one, our teams have been working hard to help new customers settle in and we're preparing to open our brand-new store in Hull to give customers space to chat with us about their home and tenancy.



"This is one of hopefully many new exciting ventures for Thirteen to help us bring quality services and products to more customers throughout Yorkshire and the North East," says David Ripley, executive director of customer services at Thirteen.

"We pride ourselves on excellent customer service and our teams have done a fantastic job in helping our new customers have the best experience possible with Thirteen as their new landlord and help them to feel at home with us."

# Teaming up to drive up home safety

A week-long safety campaign saw Thirteen staff out and about to make customers aware of how they can keep themselves safer at home.

The high-profile event saw Thirteen's own building safety teams visiting customers across the Tees Valley in partnership with Cleveland Fire Brigade. Their mission: to speak to customers and provide practical advice and guidance on home safety.

They highlighted what people can do for themselves, ranging from how to prevent accidental fires in the home to the importance of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. They also reminded people of how Thirteen can help them, including carrying out gas and electrical safety checks, both of which are a legal requirement.

## Dedicated and experienced

"Home safety is something which we should all take very seriously," says Steph Kelley, building safety operations



manager. "The team are continuing to work with customers to educate them about building and fire safety and what they can do to help themselves to stay safe in their home.

"We're incredibly fortunate at Thirteen to have a dedicated and experienced building safety team, which includes two fire risk specialists who have both served 30 years with the local fire brigade. This complements the technical expertise within the team, who work together to help keep communities and buildings safe.

"It's vitally important that our customers are safe in their homes. We've pledged our ongoing commitment to building safety and we're continuing to make further investment to make our properties even safer."

# What do you think about your neighbourhood?

Over the summer, we ran a campaign in five areas of the Tees Valley to find out what people thought about living in their neighbourhoods. We wanted locals to share what they thought was good about where they live and why they liked living there.

We began by asking people to complete a special survey about their part of Teesside. It was important for us to get a feel for customers feelings, so we invited people to send us photos, videos, music, drawings, words or anything else which they thought best represented their area.

## Focus on something good

The campaign ran from July to September in Pallister Park and Grove Hill in Middlesbrough, Dyke House and Owton Manor in Hartlepool, and Primrose Hill in Stockton.

As a thank-you for getting involved, we offered £100 Love2Shop vouchers for the best submission in each area.

We're using the information to help us plan how we work with partners to support projects and activities in the areas.

At the minute, we're looking at the results of the surveys. We'll bring you an update in the next edition of Together and you can find out more when we publish our future plans for each area on [www.thirteengroup.co.uk](http://www.thirteengroup.co.uk).

You can also get more details about the consultation or our work in each of these areas by emailing [community.resilience@thirteengroup.co.uk](mailto:community.resilience@thirteengroup.co.uk)



# Calculate whether you're missing out on benefits. It's simple.



Don't be one of the millions of people who are missing out on the benefits they're entitled to. Just use the free and confidential benefit calculator offered by the national charity group Turn2Us.

It's quick and easy to use the calculator to discover what benefits you're entitled to claim. Last year alone, more than two million calculations have been made to help people get the information and support they need.

You can use the calculator by visiting the Thirteen website or [turn2us.org.uk](http://turn2us.org.uk).

If you're having any concerns about paying your rent, please get in touch with us so that we can offer you advice and support.

Call: **0300 111 1000**

Email: [customerservices@thirteengroup.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@thirteengroup.co.uk)

## Save time, do it online with My Thirteen

My Thirteen offers a convenient way to manage your home all in one place.

Login to manage your account whenever and wherever you want 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

### With My Thirteen you can:

- Pay your rent
- Book a repair
- Update your account details
- View your tenancy information
- Search for a new home
- And much more!



It's easy to get started with My Thirteen. Simply visit [www.mythirteen.co.uk](http://www.mythirteen.co.uk) and call us on **0300 111 1000** to activate your account.

Join the 19,000 people already using My Thirteen to access the services and information they need at any time they need them.

**“I think it is really useful for customers who don't like talking on phones. It's a great service for managing your tenancy online.”**

**“The activation process was simple and quick, service is easy to use and straightforward.”**

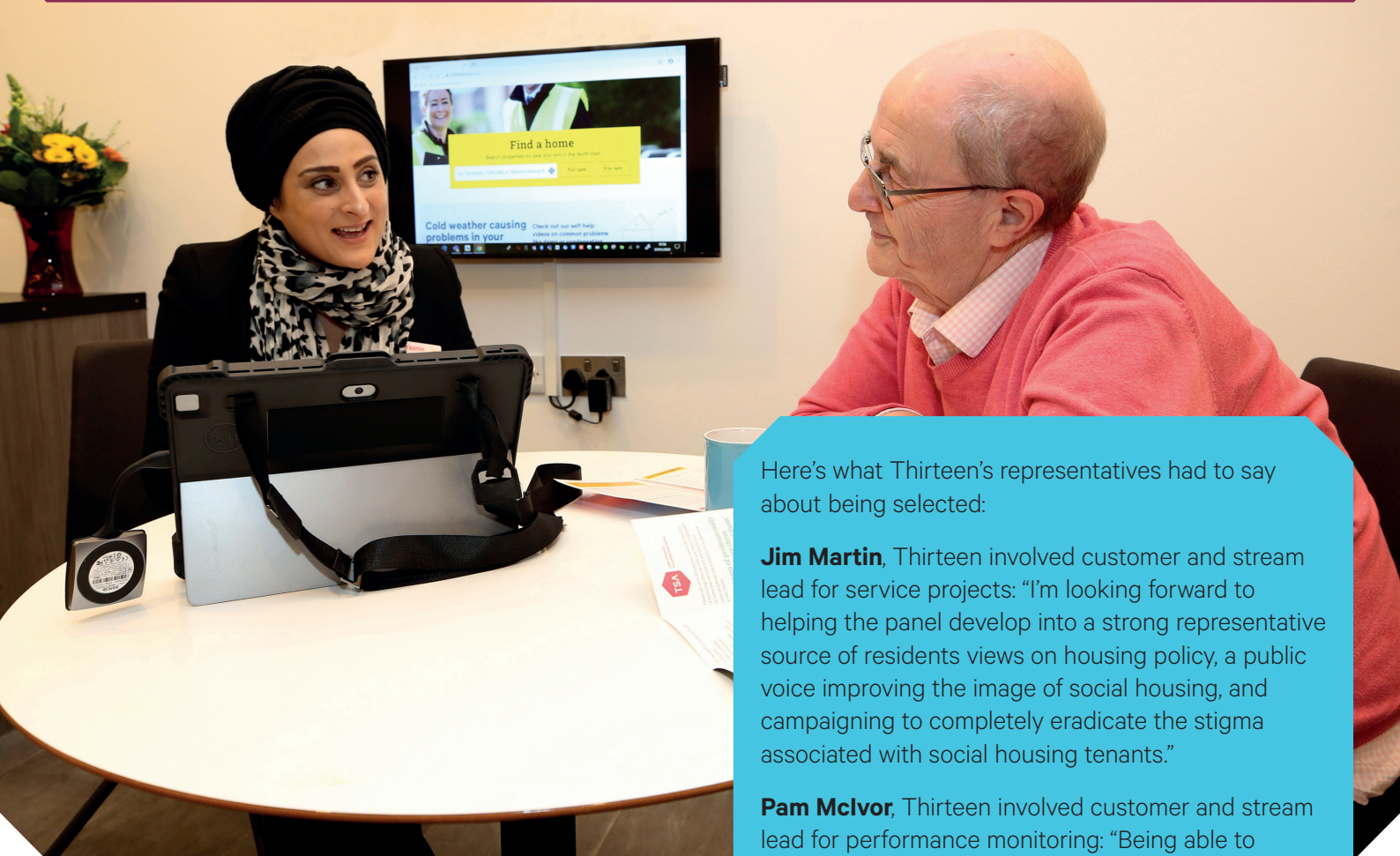
**“Uploading documents is really easy and going forward I can update my own when I need to – brilliant.”**

**“I can't fault my experience and would recommend My Thirteen to anyone.”**

**“It was really easy to activate my account. I work full-time, so I like the fact I can log in on an evening to manage my account and search for a home.”**

Our involved customers help us to shape our decisions and put the customer voice at the heart of all we do here. Here's what our customers have been working on recently...

## Involved customers join national panel



The views of our involved customers are going to be heard at national level by the Housing Ombudsman.

Thirteen involved customers, Pam McIvor, Jim Scollen and Jim Martin have been selected to sit on a new resident panel of the Housing Ombudsman – the service set up to resolve complaints about social housing organisations.

The aim of the panel is to create a stronger resident voice by seeking feedback from the residents themselves. It's a chance to help develop the service, as well as contribute their experience of using it.

The panel members will meet twice each year on key areas such as the developing the Housing Ombudsman's annual business plan and three-year corporate plan, alongside contributing to future service improvements.

Here's what Thirteen's representatives had to say about being selected:

**Jim Martin**, Thirteen involved customer and stream lead for service projects: "I'm looking forward to helping the panel develop into a strong representative source of residents views on housing policy, a public voice improving the image of social housing, and campaigning to completely eradicate the stigma associated with social housing tenants."

**Pam McIvor**, Thirteen involved customer and stream lead for performance monitoring: "Being able to influence the Housing Ombudsman strategically and to be part of a national organisation is very rewarding. I am looking forward to the next three years and to making a difference to both tenants and landlords."

**Jim Scollen**, Thirteen involved customer and stream lead for the community fund: "I feel proud to be in at the start of something new and feel the panel is something we have needed for a long time. I can't wait to get started and help make a difference."

On hearing the news, Jane Hobbs, Thirteen's senior compliance business partner, said: "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."

# What our involved cust

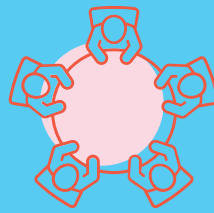
## There's even more great work happening

Over the last year, our involved customers have...

Influenced **10**  
of Thirteen's  
policies



Attended **102**  
meetings



Volunteered **1,082**  
hours to help us  
improve our  
neighbourhoods  
and services



Made **34**  
recommendations  
about our  
services



Approved **68** community  
fund applications with  
**£131,763.12**  
of funding from  
Thirteen



**15** customers have been  
supported into university  
education through the  
Thirteen Academy.  
They have also become  
involved with Thirteen

Here's a snapshot of just some of ways customers have been involved recently.

**Gresham regeneration** Customers gave us their feedback on artwork to promote the development of new homes at Gresham in Middlesbrough, known as Union Village. Their views will help the marketing team for future displays.

**Community resilience** customers recently met with the team to give their views about website content for community resilience, the team's priorities and a community map with information about community groups, projects and support services.

**Building safety and property compliance** customers helped the building safety team to find out how other residents feel in their homes to make sure everyone feels safe. One of our customers took part in Home Safety Week by door knocking with the building safety team to promote safety and raise awareness.

**Community fund** Every few weeks our involved customers help choose which great causes we fund through our community fund. Over the last three months, 38 applications were approved with £61,699.17 from Thirteen. This includes:

- Billingham Town Council for Sunday lunches in the community.
- Redcar & District Parkinson's Support Group, to help those who suffer from Parkinson's disease and their family and carers.
- Children's Safety Education Foundation to run PSHE lessons that challenge myths and present the reality of carrying a knife to secondary school.

# Customers have been up to

## Get involved with Thirteen

Getting involved with Thirteen means that you can have your say about what matters to you most as a customer, helping us improve services, neighbourhoods and opportunities.

As your landlord, we want to get things right and make sure our services meet your expectations.

If you're passionate about influencing decisions that affect your community, here's why you should get involved...

- Sharing your feedback lets us know what's important to you, helping us deliver a great customer experience
- You can keep up to date about what's happening at Thirteen, what's coming up, and give your views on our plans
- It's a great way to learn new skills for your CV
- It doesn't need to be a big commitment. You can get involved as much or as little as you like, based on your interests and time

- Anyone can get involved, no matter your age or experience
- You can meet other customers in your neighbourhood, as well as colleagues at Thirteen

Whether you want to fill in a quick survey online, send your views about services, documents and publications, attend meetings with other customers, or take part in task and finish groups, our friendly team is ready to hear from you. Just let us know what you're interested in and we can help with the rest.

### Interested?

To find out more about getting involved

✉ [customer.engagement@thirteengroup.co.uk](mailto:customer.engagement@thirteengroup.co.uk)

☎ 0300 111 1000.

## Thirteen customers join first of its kind Social Housing Tenants' Climate Jury

A group of Thirteen customers, chosen at random, were invited to be part of a tenants' jury to understand how we can work together to tackle climate change in our homes and neighbourhoods.

The Social Housing Tenants' Climate Jury is made up of 30 tenants from First Choice Homes Oldham, Karbon Homes, Salix Homes, Thirteen Group, and Yorkshire Housing.

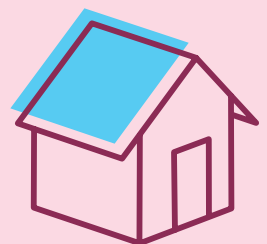
The project is led by the Northern Housing Consortium, which represents the views of housing organisations in the North of England, and overseen by an independent panel.

Thirteen's head of environmental sustainability Samantha Granger said:



"We wanted to be a part of the Tenants' Climate Jury to ensure that our customers had a voice.

"Retrofitting homes is a challenge and one which everyone is facing. This is about looking at what needs to be done to deliver sustainable homes which are fit for the future and that are right for our customers."



# Empty homes scheme throws opens its doors

Making empty homes fit for families once more saves building new ones and removes a blight on communities. It's a win, win proposition that an innovative scheme in Sunderland is proving by completing its first properties.

'Empty Homes' is a new partnership between Thirteen, Sunderland City Council and local charity Back on The Map, assisted by funding from Homes England. Its ambition is to unlock the potential of empty homes across the Pallion, Millfield and Hendon areas, minimising the time they stand empty and driving up standards of affordable accommodation in the city's rental sector.

Already the partnership has renovated seven recently purchased empty properties, with more planned over the next year. Work has included new doors, windows, kitchens, central heating, roofing and bathrooms, as well as painting and decorating.

## Places people want to live in

"This fantastic scheme is not only bringing long-term empty properties back into use and helping the many

people who need housing", says David Murray, Thirteen's regeneration empty homes co-ordinator. "It's regenerating neighbourhoods, making a real difference to the communities, offering the right homes and creating places people really want to live in."

The scheme supports and complements Sunderland City Council's £59million Housing Delivery and Investment Plan (HDIP) which aims to bring more than 360 empty properties into use as family homes over the next five years.

Sunderland City Council's assistant director of housing, Graham Scanlon, said: "We're delighted that our partnership with Thirteen is breathing new life into homes that have been empty for a long time. This is an exciting partnership and programme of work that will ensure that the city has more high-quality homes for affordable rent, which is something residents have told us they want to see."







# Hot tips for the cold season

It's time to think about keeping your home safe this winter

Winter is our busiest time of year for repairs so to avoid delays later on, now's the time to make sure that any repairs are requested straight away to get your home winter ready. You can report non-urgent repairs quickly and easily online through **My Thirteen**, or call us on **0300 111 1000**.

Here are some top tips for keeping you and your home safe:

- If you haven't used your heating for a while, turn it on for 20-30 minutes to make sure it's working properly, and all radiators are heating up as expected.
- The nights are getting darker. If you have any external lights, check to make sure they're working.
- Report any blocked or broken gutters.
- Make sure all your ventilation is working, such as kitchen and bathroom fans.

## Drive out damp

Condensation and mould are unpleasant and unhealthy, but there are lots of things you can do to help prevent them creeping into your home.

- Keep your home well ventilated if you're drying washing indoors, cooking, or using the shower.
- Heat your home with a small amount of heat for a longer time rather than a large amount of heat for a shorter time. It's more cost effective and maintains the warmth.

## Stay safe

Nothing is more important than staying safe in your home. Now with the cold weather drawing in, more of us will be spending more time at home which means that there's a greater risk of accidents occurring around the home.

We've put together some tips to help you and your family stay safe.



## Before you go to bed

A few simple checks every night could prevent an accidental fire in your home. Help reduce the risk and keep you and your family safe by:



- Closing all doors
- Turn off and unplug electrical appliances, unless they are supposed to stay on, like your fridge and freezer
- Make sure your oven, grill and hob are switched off
- Put candles, cigarettes and fires out
- Check your escape route is clear

## Candle safety

A few candles scattered around the room can add a lovely warm glow to your home, but if they are left unattended an open flame could leave a trail of devastation.



To prevent candle fires from starting in your home, you should make sure they are kept away from flammable materials like curtains.

**Always place lit candles away from pets and children and remember to put them out when you leave the room.**

## Don't play with fire

While a fire may seem like an easy way of getting rid of home and garden rubbish, this brings an increased risk of fire to the home. Please ensure you dispose of rubbish and unwanted goods responsibly.



## Socket overload

Don't overload plug sockets. An extension lead or adaptor will have a limit to how many amps it can take so, to help reduce the risk of fire, be careful not to overload them.





## “So much nicer!”

Customers living on a Thornaby estate have praised Thirteen’s investment team after their homes benefitted from a thorough makeover.

A 20-strong workforce began work earlier this year to improve the standard of the homes of 60 customers in the Redcar Road area who are delighted with the results.

The new upvc windows, doors and roof improvements have not only made a visible difference, but also made the homes more energy efficient and will ensure they remain wind and watertight.

“There’s been a great community spirit on the estate. It’s been a fantastic team effort and great to hear such positive feedback from our customers,” said investment team leader Mick Wilford.

Customer Lesley Houghton added: “My home feels much warmer and it’s quieter with the new windows. The estate looks so much nicer. We’re really pleased with everything the team have done.”

This year’s £31million investment plans will see over 2,400 homes benefit from improvement work over 45 estates across the North East.

# £800,000 investment boost to Stockton housing scheme

The transformation of a sheltered housing scheme in Stockton-on-Tees is now complete.

The £800,000 investment work was carried out by Thirteen, in partnership with Esh Construction, to give customers living in 24 flats at Laburnum and Magnolia Court new kitchens, bathrooms with level access showers, doors, new heating systems, a full electrical upgrade and decoration throughout.

Ewbank Gardens, the on-site community centre, was the first to enjoy a full makeover including roof improvements, a new kitchen, bathroom suites, doors, a full heating upgrade and modern décor. Complete with landscaped gardens, the project has created a welcoming and relaxing environment for customers to enjoy together.

## Safe and comfortable

“This is a very exciting project which will modernise these homes and the shared communal areas to make an incredible difference to our customers,” says Thirteen’s project manager Rubie Lee.

“The scale of the project has been complex during lockdown, but the safety of our customers has always been our priority. We’ve worked closely with them throughout, inviting them along to weekly coffee mornings to ask us any questions.

“Not only will our customers see a visible difference to their homes, but make them feel much warmer and energy efficient, too. It’s so important that people can live as independently as possible in homes that are modern and comfortable and meet everyone’s needs.”

Colin Ford, construction director at Esh, added: “The pandemic has emphasised the importance of having a safe and comfortable place to call home, making refurbishment schemes like these even more essential.”



# You never know what's going on behind closed doors

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone. We offer a range of support for customers that are experiencing domestic abuse, so please don't suffer in silence. There are lots of ways you can get in touch.

 **0300 111 1000**

 **Call or text 07464 655 582 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and someone from our tenancy support team will respond during working hours.**

- **Speak to a Thirteen colleague at your scheme in complete confidence**

## Compliments and complaints

To help us improve our services we're always keen to hear from customers about the things we do well and the things we can do better. Our complaints and compliments process makes it easy for you to give us your thoughts about our services:

 **Visit the compliments and complaints page on our website to complete our online form**

 **customer.relations@thirteengroup.co.uk**

 **0300 111 1000**

## Covid-19 updates

For the latest update on our response to the ongoing pandemic, please click on COVID-19 Coronavirus update on the homepage of our website: [www.thirteengroup.co.uk/covid19](http://www.thirteengroup.co.uk/covid19)

This is updated regularly and has FAQs on our services, information on scams to be aware of, links to support in the local community and lot of other helpful information.

## Home contents insurance

Did you know that Thirteen tenants and leaseholders can get low-cost insurance to cover your belongings, furniture and decoration in your home?

There's a range of cover options and insurance could cost as little as £33 a year for £9,000 worth of cover. There's no excess to pay on claims and if you make a claim, your premiums won't increase the next year.

Two companies offer the discounted insurance – you can find out all the details and apply for cover on our website: **[www.thirteengroup.co.uk/contentsinsurance](http://www.thirteengroup.co.uk/contentsinsurance)**

Or you can call direct on:

- Crystal Insurance on **0345 450 7286**
- RSA Insurance on **03456 718 172**

## A day to celebrate our frontline heroes

Starts at Home Day, launched in 2015 by the National Housing Federation, is a day when housing associations up and down the country celebrate supported housing and the positive impact it makes on thousands of lives.

This year, we used Starts at Home Day to salute the heroic work of frontline staff to protect older and vulnerable people who have been especially at risk during the pandemic.

### A safe home

Thirteen manage a number of schemes across the Teesside, the North East and Yorkshire, offering specialist support to help older, disabled or vulnerable people to live independently for longer.



If you or someone you know is interested in sheltered or extra care accommodation, visit our website for more information, or call us on **0300 111 1000**.