

thirteen



Proposed changes to your landlord

Delivering services on behalf of

thirteen
Care and Support

**Erimus
Housing**

**Housing
Hartlepool**

**Tees Valley
Housing**

**Tristar
Homes**

Working in partnership

Since the Thirteen Group was formed in April 2014, our four housing association members, including your landlord, have been working together in partnership to deliver benefits to our customers.

The Thirteen Group currently provides services to its partners which own and manage 34,000 homes across the North East. The partners in the Group are:

- Erimus Housing Limited
- Housing Hartlepool
- Tees Valley Housing Limited
- Tristar Homes Limited
- Thirteen Care and Support

Through pooling our resources and expertise, we have been able to strengthen our offer to customers and share services such as property maintenance, administration and IT. By joining services together in this way we have been able to save resources, build on one another's strengths and share our experience to provide our customers with the best possible service and improvements in their homes.



Facing the future

The social housing sector is currently in a state of dramatic change, and there is now a real need to make savings within the Group as a result of the Government's announcement to:

- cut social rents by 1% each year for the next four years
- extend the Right to Buy to all housing association tenants (not just those who were former council tenants)
- limit the amount of rent which will be payable for all new tenancies which were entered into after 1 April 2016.

The Group needs to achieve savings of **£55million** to continue to provide the services which our tenants have

indicated are important. We also need to ensure we are in a strong position to be able to deal with any further changes made by the Government after 2020.

We have already implemented measures to help to achieve these savings but we are also proposing to simplify our Group structure (and refinance the money we borrow in the Group) to save a further £3m. This would be used to ensure the continued provision of social housing and community regeneration by the Group in the North East.

Details of the proposals for the new structure are set out in the next few pages.



How you can help

We are proposing to **simplify the structure of the Thirteen Group**.

To help us do this, we would like your opinions about our proposals.

You can give us your opinions by reading this leaflet about simplifying our organisation, then commenting on the proposals using the details on the back page.

Simplifying our organisation

At the moment the Thirteen Group provides services to the four landlords in the Group. Each landlord is legally separate. This means they are registered separately, with each landlord having their own homes, board and funding.

As each landlord is set up differently, there is a lot of duplication and overlap, which ultimately costs money and means the Group is both complicated to manage and not as cost effective as we'd like it to be.

We want to simplify the way our organisation is set up and the systems and processes we use to do business – this is known as the Group's corporate structure.

To simplify the structure, Erimus Housing, Housing Hartlepool, Tees Valley Housing, Tristar Homes and Thirteen Care and Support will all come together to form **one organisation called Thirteen**.

Benefits of the change

A simpler structure would mean less duplication and paperwork and free up more time for us to focus on improving our services.

A larger organisation would mean less risk as we'd be more financially stable and we'd have more spending and bargaining power.



The change would also help Thirteen to make financial savings by streamlining how we buy supplies and deliver our services. We could use these savings to fund new services to benefit our customers and continue to invest in home and estate improvements.

Working as one landlord would help us to remain a strong organisation and allow us to focus on delivering the following key benefits:

- being more efficient in the way we deliver services
- delivering more effective repairs services

- using our assets more effectively
- delivering more homes to those in need in the North East
- investing in our homes and estates
- ensuring homes are effectively and efficiently re-let, and
- collecting rents to enable services to develop.



Your rights

Your rights as a tenant of a registered provider of social housing **would be unchanged**. For example:

- you would still have the same rights to remain in your home and to apply for mutual property exchanges
- your rent and service charges would not be affected and your rent would continue to reduce by 1% each year until 2020
- Thirteen would continue to be overseen and regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency, and
- you would still have the same legal rights to make complaints that you do now.

You would also still receive services in the same way as you do now – you would still report repairs and other issues in the same way. We already have one customer contact centre, one phone number and staff who deliver services on behalf of Thirteen – none of this would change.

For those tenants who were formerly tenants of a local authority and transferred as part of a stock transfer, you would still have the same rights. For example, you would continue to have the Preserved Right to Buy and the promises made by your landlord on transfer would still be valid, with some small variations just to take account of the new structure.

What would change?

The four landlords would merge into one single housing landlord **called Thirteen**.

Thirteen would be led by one single board, made up of people recruited from the current board directors across the Group.

Tenants and leaseholders of Erimus Housing, Housing Hartlepool, Tees Valley Housing and Tristar Homes would become tenants and leaseholders of Thirteen.

The most obvious thing you might notice is that letters and statements would arrive on a Thirteen letterhead, rather than from your current landlord. You would also pay your rent to Thirteen rather than to your current landlord.

There would be no change to your tenancy or lease and your rights as a tenant would not change.

Simplifying our structure will help us to:

- concentrate more on local communities
- enhance locally-focused services
- deliver even better customer service
- save £500,000 each year, which could pay for 3-4 environmental improvement schemes or 2,000 individual window replacements.

How would Thirteen be governed?

It is proposed that the board of Thirteen would be made up of 11 people, who would be selected on the basis of their skills and experience to oversee the work of the Group and ensure that Thirteen is providing a good, value for money service for its customers.

It is not proposed that there would be designated tenant or local authority places on the board; however, this does not mean that tenants would not be able to sit on the board. We would advertise vacancies to allow tenants to apply for a place, provided they have the relevant skills and experience to act as a board member.

What next

There are a number of steps we would need to take before we could create the new landlord.

We're aiming to merge the landlords by **April 2017** but this would only go ahead after we have your views and the boards of each landlord have considered these and any other issues.

If we go ahead with the proposals we would let you know. We wouldn't need to send you a new tenancy agreement or lease, but we would send you a formal notice with details of the new landlord after the merger.

The main thing to remember is that **these proposals wouldn't affect your rights, your rent or the services you receive.**



Continuing to work with you

We value the input of tenants and customers into our work. We want to hear what you think about our services and we'll continue to both value and encourage this. Our Customer Voice has over 1,000 people volunteering to help us in many ways, including commenting on what we do and how we do it. We also have some more formal structures that include:

- Local Neighbourhood Panels where we can get together to talk about what's going on where you live and work to address issues and challenges
- Reports produced by Thirteen's Scrutiny Panel, which includes tenants from all four landlords. The panel reviews our services and makes recommendations for improvements
- Thirteen's Customer Council which is involved in monitoring the Group's performance, its compliance with regulations, value for money and developing strategies and policies
- The chair or a representative of Thirteen's Customer Council would be invited to attend Thirteen's board meetings and present annual reports about the work of the Customer Council.

Investment in my area

We're committed to your neighbourhood through investment in homes and communities. The changes to our organisation should make us more efficient and help us to continue to improve homes and also improve the appearance of estates.

Comments

We would like to hear your comments about our proposals to simplify the Group. We need your thoughts by 5pm on **13 October 2016** and you can comment (or ask questions) by:

- email: **onelandlord@thirteengroup.co.uk**
- telephone: **0300 111 1000**
- writing to us at:

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