

Customer Complaints Policy

1.0 Introduction and Scope

- 1.1 Gentoo is a very diverse business and we have a diverse range of customers with different requirements. This policy applies to all divisions in Gentoo and is the Group’s approach to dealing with complaints consistently. There are divisions within the Group which are required by regulation and legislation to offer customers different routes at different stages of this process.
- 1.2 Each business stream is required to follow the high level consistent approach that this policy gives them, and to offer over and above when required, depending on the specific requirements placed on their service offering.
- 1.3 This policy is a key component of the Group’s customer strategy and will help ensure we are dealing proactively with individual customer problems, as well as learning for ongoing improvement.
- 1.4 The scope of this policy covers:

Gentoo Group	X
Gentoo Homes	X
Gentoo Developments Ltd	X
Gentoo Genie	X

It applies to:

General Needs rented properties	X
Supported Housing	X
Sheltered Housing	X
Leasehold/Shared ownership	X
Rent to Buy properties	X

Market rented properties (domestic)	X
Temporary Accommodation	X
Stock owned but not managed by the Group	
Communal Areas, including those relating to Leasehold/Shared Ownership properties	X
Commercial Property (offices, depots etc.)	
Stock managed by Gentoo on behalf of a third party	X
Garages and outbuildings	X
Remote plant (district heating, electrical pumps etc.)	X
Curtilage	X

2.0 Links to organisational goals

- 2.1 Our Vision and Values set the direction and culture of the Group. They ensure that the business is aligned around the desire to create sustainable homes and communities and to improve the lives of our customers. The vision and values ensure that all of our people understand Gentoo's ethos and are clear about what is expected of them and the contribution they can make.

The Group's Vision is:

Great homes, Strong Communities, Inspired People
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The Group's Values are:

Do the right thing
Make a difference
Work together
Keep learning
Give all you've got

- 2.2 The policy will help ensure we are delivering customer focused products and services and proactively managing our brand reputation.

2.3 It has been developed with reference to good practice from the Institute of Customer Service and other organisations.

2.4 This policy operations within our vision and values.

3.0 Regulation and Legislation

3.1 This policy makes reference to the following:

- Localism Act 2011
- Regulator of Social Housing: Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard: 1.1 'Registered Providers shall: provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants in the delivery of all standards: have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible and ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly'.

3.2 It also takes into account the requirements of the Financial Conduct Authority and the Scottish Housing Regulator.

4.0 Our Policy Statement

4.1 Our approach to handling complaints will be easily accessible and well publicised to take into account the needs and wishes of those people wanting to make a complaint. It will be simple and easy to understand.

4.2 We will look to prevent complaints from being made in the first place, by providing an excellent service which exceeds expectations. However, where complaints do arise, we will respond quickly in a way which the customer prefers, and negotiate an appropriate resolution following a full and fair investigation by an appropriate member of staff.

4.3 The success of this policy rests on members of staff within Gentoo, taking full responsibility and ownership when dealing with complaints around their business, in a proactive and polite way.

- 4.4 We will monitor complaints and use trends to identify the root cause of complaints and improve our services. We will communicate to customers any improvements made as a result of their feedback.
- 4.5 We are committed to the principles of equality and diversity throughout the organisation and aim to:
- Meet the needs and choices of people from all backgrounds
 - Ensure that our services are relevant, responsive and sensitive to the needs of our existing and future customers
 - Ensure that all sections of the community in which we work have equal access to our services
- 4.6 We reserve the right to refuse to deal with a complaint when the issue(s) being raised have previously exhausted our complaints procedure and no new facts or evidence have been provided.
- 4.7 We reserve the right to deal with a complaint or complainant outside the usual standards/offers in place at that time if the customer's behaviour is considered to be 'unreasonable' or they are a vexatious complainant.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

- 5.1 As a housing association, we have a statutory responsibility to comply with all relevant regulation and legislation in relation to dealing with and handling customer complaints.
- 5.2 The Executive Director (Operations) is accountable for ensuring this policy has regard to all legislation, regulation and best practice and for ensuring implementation of this policy effectively.
- 5.3 The Director (Customer) is accountable for adequate resourcing and having effective processes in place to implement the policy.

- 5.4 Overall responsibility for this policy lies with the Head of Customer Service.

6.0 Monitoring and Review

- 6.1 This Customer Complaints policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or in line with business need.
- 6.2 Performance will be included in the risk matrix and reported to Risk and Audit Committee. The Business Assurance Team will monitor this Policy within a maximum of 3 years, or in line with business need.
- 6.3 The Local Service Offer relating to customer service can be found in the Appendix 1.

7.0 Policy Outcomes

- 7.1 Our policy aims to achieve the following outcomes:
- Our service is fair and accessible and customers are communicated with in the way they prefer
 - Issues with services are dealt with so that complaints are prevented from arising in the first place
 - Prompt action is taken to investigate complaints and negotiate an appropriate resolution
 - Services are improved from trends in complaints and such improvements are communicated to customers

8.0 Escalation

- 8.1 Where a Board has concerns about significant issues in any area of compliance with Customer Complaints they must escalate these concerns to the Executive Director (Operations).
- 8.2 Where a member of staff has concerns about significant issues in any area of compliance with Customer Complaints, they must escalate these concerns through their line management structure, ultimately to Group Executive Team.

- 8.3 Where a member of staff continues to have concerns about significant issues in any area of compliance with Customer Complaints, they should refer to the Group Whistleblowing Policy for further guidance.

9.0 Records

- 9.1 Records regarding complaints are kept in Orchards and in a protected folder on the S Drive.

Appendix 1- Local Service Offers

Description	We will
<p>Customer Service - to provide a personalised, tailored service to our customers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a range of ways for customers to access services from Gentoo • Provide regular information on Gentoo products and services • Provide a range of ways for you to give us your feedback and to use your feedback to improve our services