



Community Involvement and Engagement Policy

Contents

1.0 Introduction and scope.....	2
2.0 Links to organisational goals.....	3
3.0 Regulation and legislation.....	4
4.0 Our Policy Statement	4
5.0 Roles and responsibilities	7
6.0 Monitoring and review.....	8
7.0 Training and awareness.....	8
8.0 Policy outcomes.....	8
9.0 Records.....	9
10.0 Vulnerable Customers	9
Appendix 1- RSH Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard	10
Appendix 2- KPIs.....	12

1.0 Introduction and scope

- 1.1 This document covers our policy on community involvement and engagement and how we will meet our responsibilities and duties as a landlord to ensure we are effectively working with customers to improve our services.
- 1.2 At Gentoo we have a long tradition of involvement. Customers can be involved on a number of different levels through a range of opportunities including our governance arrangements.
- 1.3 The range of engagement opportunities that we have form part of our 'Customer Voice'. In addition to the engagement opportunities we also listen to the voices of our customers through the surveys we complete, the complaints and compliments we receive, the satisfaction data we collect and through our interactions on social media.

1.4 The scope of this policy covers:

Gentoo Group	X
Gentoo Homes	X
Gentoo Developments Ltd	
Gentoo Genie	

It applies to all of our customers living in:

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	
Commercial Property (offices, depots etc)	
Stock managed by Gentoo on behalf of a third party	
Garages and outbuildings	
Remote plant (district heating, electrical pumps etc)	
Curtilage	

In addition it covers those non Gentoo customers living in our neighbourhoods.

1.4 Definitions

- Community Involvement- Involving communities in the design, delivery and scrutiny of service delivery.
- Community Engagement - Reaching out to communities to create engagement opportunities.

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.

Vision:

Great Homes - Strong Communities - Inspired People
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Values:

Do the right thing

Make a difference

Work together

Keep learning

Give all you've got

2.2 This Policy operates within our Vision and Values and links to the Customer Strategy and the Diversity & Inclusion Policy.

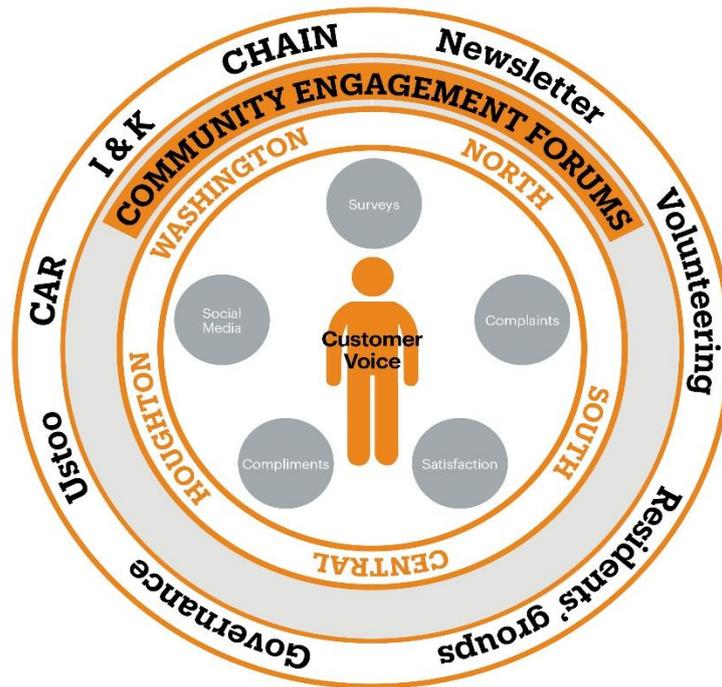
3.0 Regulation and legislation

- 3.1 This Policy helps to fulfil the RSH Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard detailed in Appendix 1.
- 3.2 This Policy has been cross referenced with good practice and the CIH Manual.

4.0 Our Policy Statement

- 4.1 Involved and engaged customers and communities are at the heart of Gentoo's Vision - Great Homes, Strong Communities, Inspired People. They are essential for the delivery of strong communities and to ensure we are working with customers to improve our services.
- 4.2 In accordance with regulatory requirements, we consult with our customers on a three yearly basis to establish if the engagement and involvement opportunities we have in place are fit for purpose. The latest consultation with customers took place between January and September 2018. In September 2018 Group Board approved four proposals created by customers to improve and strengthen customer engagement at Gentoo and to ensure our customers' voices are both heard and responded to. The Customer Voice model, below, shows the range of opportunities we have in place to listen to the voices of our customers.

The Customer Voice at Gentoo



4.3 The Model Explained:

- 1. Listening to Our Customers' Voices** - At the heart of the model are the range of ways that we gather the voices of our customers. We analyse, collate and disaggregate this information and share it with our actively involved customers through our Community Engagement Forums.
- 2. Community Engagement Forums** – Formed from a merger of previous engagement groups, we have a Community Engagement Forum in each of our 5 management areas. These are customer-led groups providing local residents with a voice within the Governance structures and the opportunity to improve their local neighbourhood services and policies through scrutiny and challenge and by working together with Gentoo.
- 3. Information and Knowledge (I&K)** – Held on a bi-monthly basis, Information and Knowledge events are open to all customers to attend. The subjects covered will be those key service areas provided by Gentoo and current issues affecting the housing sector. The aim of the sessions is to provide customers

with support and information to build their capacity to be more effectively involved.

4. **CHAIN projects**- CHAIN projects (Customers Helping Achieve Improvements Now) are task and finish groups. Focused on service area improvements and policy/strategy formulation.
5. **Tenants and Residents' Groups** – Gentoo collaborate with a number of Tenants and Residents' Groups across the City. Including SRF (Sunderland Residents' Federation) the residents' associations umbrella group. We have arrangements in place to provide support and advice.
6. **Customer Annual Report (CAR) & Newsletter** – We provide opportunities for customers to help shape the publication of our annual Customer Annual Report and Newsletter for actively involved customers.
7. **Volunteering**- Customers have the opportunity to give something back to their local communities through taking part in volunteering. A range of opportunities are available including 'Rate Your Estate' and being involved in community clean ups.
8. **Ustoo** – Ustoo are the customer scrutiny group. This group independently scrutinises the services Gentoo provides.
9. **Governance** – There are opportunities within our governance structures for customers to be involved. Gentoo Board and Operations Committee are made up of independent members, customer members and council nominees. They play an active role in ensuring we meet our objectives and plan effectively for the future.
10. We are committed to the principles of diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation and aim to:
 - Meet the needs and choice 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

Our Community Involvement and Engagement Policy will ensure that customers will be treated as individuals and with fairness and respect. An Equality Assessment has been completed with regard to this Policy.

4.6 Our approach to Community Involvement and Engagement will be reviewed with customers to ensure it is fit for purpose, as a minimum every 3 years.

5.0 Roles and responsibilities

5.1

Roles	Responsibilities
Executive Director (Operations)	Is accountable for ensuring effective implementation of this policy
Director (Customer)	Is responsible for adequate resourcing and having effective processes in place to implement this policy
Community Engagement Manager	Is responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to and that all staff are appropriately trained
Community Partnership Co-ordinators (CPC's)	The team of CPC's are responsible for delivering this service. The team is split. Half operate from a central HUB, the rest of the team are co-located with local area Neighbourhood teams.
All front line staff	Should be aware of this policy

6.0 Monitoring and review

- 6.1 This Community Involvement and Engagement Policy will be reviewed a maximum of every 3 years, or in line with business need.
- 6.2 The accountability for this Policy lies with the Executive Director (Operations) and responsibility for this Policy lies with the Director (Customer).
- 6.3 This policy maybe subject to an audit in line with internal audit plan.
- 6.4 This Policy is a grade 2 and changes will need the approval of the Executive Director (Operations) and Executive Director of Corporate Services.
- 6.5 The KPIs for this service are outcome based (see Appendix 2) and are reported through the appropriate governance structure. The Local Service Offers can be found in Appendix 2.
- 6.6 On a minimum 6 monthly basis a report will be taken to Board showing compliance with the RSH Regulatory framework consumer standards.

7.0 Training and awareness

- 7.1 Customers can access appropriate training which includes:
- Capacity building
 - Diversity and inclusion
- 7.2 All staff will have an awareness of the regulatory framework which includes the tenant involvement and empowerment standard.

8.0 Policy outcomes

- 8.1 Our Community Involvement and Engagement policy aims to achieve the following outcomes. Delivering:
- A range of ways for customers to be involved
 - Improved service delivery

- Sustained satisfaction regarding Gentoo listening to customer's views and acting upon them

9.0 Records

- 9.1 Records regarding community involvement activities are stored on the S drive under S:\Community Involvement (CPC).

10.0 Vulnerable Customers

- 10.1 It is important that vulnerability is considered throughout our community involvement and engagement activities.
- 10.2 When communicating with vulnerable customers, information and literature must be tailored to suit the different types of support needs. All written and verbal communications to customers with support needs must be clear, simple to understand and accessible.
- 10.3 As with general needs customers, customers with support needs should be consulted to find out how they want to get involved at a local level and they should be encouraged to take part in community involvement and engagement activities. Practical help must be provided to people with support needs to enable them to participate, this can include things like providing transport and ensuring venues are accessible. For more information please refer to the Vulnerability Policy.

Appendix 1- RSH Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

Registered providers shall ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in certain matters.

- The formulation of their landlord's housing related policies and strategic priorities.
- The making of decisions about how housing related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards.
- The scrutiny of their landlord's performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved.
- The management of their homes, where applicable.
- The management of repair and maintenance services, such as commissioning and undertaking a range of repair tasks, as agreed with landlords, and the sharing in savings made, and
- Agreeing local offers for service delivery.

Registered providers shall support their tenants to develop and implement opportunities for involvement and empowerment, including by:

- Supporting their tenants to exercise their Right to Manage or otherwise exercise housing management functions, where appropriate.
- Supporting the formation and activities of tenant panels or equivalent groups and responding in a constructive and timely manner to them.
- The provision of timely and relevant performance information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in a form which registered providers seek to agree with their tenants. Such provision must

include the publication of an annual report which should include information on repair and maintenance budgets

- Providing support to tenants to build their capacity to be more effectively involved.
- Registered providers shall consult with tenants on the scope of local offers for service delivery. This shall include how performance will be monitored, reported to and scrutinised by tenants and arrangements for reviewing these on a periodic basis.
- Where registered providers are proposing a change in landlord for one or more of their tenants or a significant change in their management arrangements, they shall consult with affected tenants in a fair, timely, appropriate and effective manner. Registered providers shall set out the proposals clearly and in an appropriate amount of detail and shall set out any actual or potential advantages and disadvantages (including costs) to tenants in the immediate and longer time. Registered providers must be able to demonstrate to affected tenants how they have taken the outcome of the consultation into account when reaching a decision.
- Registered providers shall consult tenants at least once every three years on the best way of involving tenants in the governance and scrutiny of the organisation's housing management service.

Appendix 2- KPIs

- Number of opportunities for customers to be involved
- Number of service improvements introduced during the year as a result of community involvement
- Percentage of tenants who are satisfied that their views are listened to and acted upon

Local Service Offers

Description	We will
Community Involvement and Engagement - to provide a diverse range of ways for you to work with us to improve neighbourhoods and Gentoo services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a range of opportunities for you to engage with Gentoo• Provide advice, support and guidance to empower you to be involved in your community