

Safeguarding Children Policy

1.0 Introduction and Scope

- 1.1 This document covers our policy on Safeguarding Children. The policy and procedures aim to provide clear direction to staff and others about expected behaviour in dealing with child safeguarding issues.
- 1.2 The purpose of the policy is, therefore, to ensure that safeguarding concerns and referrals are handled sensitively, professionally and in ways that support the needs of the child or young person.
- 1.3 The scope of this policy covers:

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|-------------------------|---|
| Gentoo Group | X |
| Gentoo Homes | |
| Gentoo Developments Ltd | |
| Gentoo Genie | |

It applies to:

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| 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 | X |
| Communal Areas, including those relating to Leasehold/Shared Ownership properties | X |
| Commercial Property (offices, depots etc) | X |
| Stock managed by Gentoo on behalf of a third party | X |
| Garages and outbuildings | |
| Remote plant (district heating, electrical pumps etc) | |
| Curtilage | |

2.0 Links to organisations 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:

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| Great Homes - Strong Communities - Inspired People |
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Values:

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| Do the right thing |
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| Make a difference |
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| Work together |
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|---------------|
| Keep learning |
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| Give all you've got |
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3.0 Regulation and Legislation

- 3.1 The Executive Director (Operations) will ensure this policy has regard to all legislation, regulation and best practice. The regulation and legislation applicable to this policy is attached in Appendix one.

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities

- 4.1 As a Housing Association, we have a statutory responsibility to comply with all relevant regulation and legislation in relation to safeguarding children.
- 4.2 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. They also represent Gentoo on the Sunderland Child Safeguarding Board.
- 4.3 The Director (Customer) is accountable for adequate resourcing and having effective processes in place to implement the policy.

- 4.4 The Heads of Operations are responsible for the day to day delivery of this policy but more specifically, the Operations Manager (Community Safety and Safeguarding) is the operational lead.

5.0 Monitoring and Review

- 5.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years or in line with business need.
- 5.2 This policy may be subject to an audit in line with the internal audit plan.
- 5.3 The toolkit will be regularly reviewed and updated where appropriate.

6.0 Our Policy Statement

- 6.1 Gentoo regards the safeguarding and protection of children/young people as paramount within all of its activities whether this involves direct or indirect contact with children/young people.
- 6.2 Staff, volunteers and board members may regularly come into contact with children/young people as part of the Group's organised activities e.g. during volunteering programmes, as part of the regular housing and neighbourhood management functions, or during our support role.
- 6.3 Gentoo does not operate in isolation. Safeguarding children and young people is the responsibility of all adults and especially those working with children.
- 6.4 Gentoo staff are encouraged to report anything that does not seem right and this will be sent to the relevant team for further investigation if necessary.
- 6.5 Gentoo's aim is to help protect the children for whom we have responsibility as part of our group functions and work consistently and appropriately with safeguarding agencies/ authorities.
- 6.6 The work undertaken by Gentoo is increasingly diverse and of a cross boundary nature. The policy therefore acts in accordance with national legislation, guidance and good practice implemented locally by the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB).
- 6.7 Whilst SSCB has a role in co-ordinating and ensuring the effectiveness of local individuals and organisations work to safeguard and promote

the welfare of children, it is not accountable for their operational work. This means that Gentoo Group retains accountability for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children through our services.

- 6.8 Gentoo is committed to respond in accordance with the SSCB procedures in all cases where there is a concern about Significant Harm.
- 6.9 This policy and accompanying procedure document covers the range of interactions the group has with children and young people and recognises the three overarching principles of prevention, protection and support.
- 6.10 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.
- 6.11 Our Safeguarding Children Policy will ensure that customers are treated as individuals with fairness and respect. An Equality Assessment has been completed on this policy.

7.0 Confidentiality

- 7.1 We will treat all information received in a private and confidential manner.
- 7.2 We will only disclose information to perpetrators, legal representatives, or other third parties once we have the consent of the complainant to do so.
- 7.3 We may however, have a legal obligation to pass information on, for example to the Police or Children's Services.

8.0 Data Protection

- 8.1 This policy fully complies with the Group's Data Protection Policy.

9.0 Policy outcomes

- 9.1 Our policy aims to achieve the following outcomes:
- 9.2 Prevention – by providing a positive atmosphere, appropriate support and good adult role models in our contact with children/young people.
- 9.3 Protection – by all staff being recruited, trained and supported to follow Gentoo’s Safeguarding Policy and respond effectively to any suspicions of significant harm.
- 9.4 Support – by looking after all staff who have handled suspicions / disclosures as well as children / young people Gentoo come into contact with who may have been abused. Gentoo will ensure that support from outside the organisation is sought where appropriate.

10.0 Modern Slavery

- 10.1 Gentoo take a zero tolerance approach to human trafficking and slavery. Modern slavery encompasses human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude which are all a form of abuse and must be dealt with as a Category 1, which is our highest priority. Gentoo carry out customer surveys which aim to ensure that the legal tenant and their household are living in the property and that it is not being used for illegal purposes, which includes human trafficking and slavery.

11.0 Escalation

- 11.1 Where a Board has concerns about significant issues in any area of compliance with safeguarding children they must escalate these concerns to the Executive Director (Operations).
- 11.2 Where a member of staff has concerns about significant issues in any area of compliance with safeguarding children they must escalate these concerns through their line management structure, ultimately to Group Executive Team.
- 11.3 Where a member of staff continues to have concerns about significant issues in any area of compliance with safeguarding children they should refer to the Group Whistleblowing Policy for further guidance.

12.0 Records

12.1 All safeguarding referrals and information relating to attendance at meetings is recorded on Streetwise. This information is not available for all staff to see but is limited to the Safeguarding team and the local management teams at Neighbourhood Operations Manager (NOM) level and above. All correspondence with agencies regarding safeguarding should be forwarded to the Safeguarding Team who will ensure that a copy is stored in a central location (Streetwise).

13.0 Qualifications and training

- 13.1 All new staff will be given initial induction training on our Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedure. Staff training is carried out annually to relevant staff (including depot staff) to remind them of their obligation to alert the safeguarding team to any concerns they may have and how they should communicate this alert.
- 13.2 Staff will have access to the [SSCB website](#) which provides information associated with child protection and includes advice and guidance for staff working with children and young people.
- 13.3 Managers across the group have received guidance from the Community Safety Team to assist them identify staff who will have interaction with children and young people within their job role. It is the managers' responsibility to ensure that their staff receive the necessary training and to inform Human Resources if staff require a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

Appendix 1

Regulation and Legislation

In fulfilling our obligations under this Policy, Gentoo will comply with all legislation and regulations as appropriate. This section aims to highlight the different areas of law and guidance, which may be of particular significance to Safeguarding Children.

This is a general overview and should not be used as a substitute for seeking legal advice in specific cases. If there is any doubt about the law relevant to a particular case, legal advice should be sought immediately from the Legal team.

- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children – a guide to multi agency working 2013
- Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board Procedures
- Sunderland City Council Whistle Blowing Procedures
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Equality Act 2010

Gentoo has a suite of complementary policies and procedures which staff may refer to in cases where there are cross cutting concerns, these include (but are not limited to):

- Safeguarding adults policy
- Community Safety
- Domestic abuse policy and toolkit
- Forced marriages policy and procedure
- Hate incidents policy and procedure
- Vulnerability toolkit
- Whistle Blowing