gentoo

Vulnerability Policy

Policy:	Vulnerability Policy
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Policy Owner:	Operations Manager (Community Safety and Safeguarding)
Policy Author(s):	Operations Manager, Community Safety and Safeguarding, Support Manager
Accountable Exec Director	Executive Director (Housing)
Approved by:	Executive Director (Housing)
Equality Assessment:	Yes
Next review of policy due:	2026
Policy Grade:	3
For the full version history of this policy, see the back page	

Please avoid referring to printed versions of this policy.

Printed versions may quickly go out of date – contact the Policy Team for support and advice.

Contents

Vulnerability Policy

1.0 Introduction and Scope

1.1 This document covers our policy on vulnerability and highlights the ways in which we will identify tenants that we might describe as being vulnerable. It also describes how we will work with these tenants to ensure they are provided with the support they need to sustain their tenancy.

1.2 The procedure will also highlight the importance of helping those who are vulnerable achieve independence whilst living in our neighbourhoods. This Policy should be used in conjunction with:

- Vulnerability Procedure
- Hate Crime/Incidents Procedure.
- Malicious Complaints Procedure.
- Illegal Money Lending Procedure.

Also refer to the following policies and procedures where appropriate to provide support and assistance:

- Domestic Abuse Policy & Procedure
- Community Safety Policy & Procedure
- Safeguarding (Children & Adults at Risk) Policies & Procedures
- Anti-Money Laundering Policy & Procedure
- Tenancy Management Policy & Procedure
- Income Management Policy & Procedure

1.3 The scope of this Policy covers:

Gentoo Group	X
Gentoo Homes	
Gentoo Developments	
Gentoo Genie	

It applies to:

General Needs rented properties	X
Supported Housing	X
Sheltered Housing	X
Leasehold/Shared ownership	X
Rent to Buy properties	
Market rented properties (domestic)	
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	X
Garages and outbuildings	
Remote plant (district heating, electrical pumps etc)	
Curtilage	

2.0 Our core purpose and vison and priorities

Our core purpose is to provide safe and decent homes for our customers of today and tomorrow.

Our vision is to provide great homes, strong communities, and inspired people for Sunderland.

The safety of our customers and colleagues will always be our number one priority.

We have identified six further priorities which will guide the delivery of our services.

We live our values in everything we do from the boardroom to the front room, to deliver our priorities for our customers.

- We know our customers.
- We provide great homes.
- We help communities to thrive.
- We are a great place to work.
- We spend our money wisely.
- We are well governed.

Our values are what we stand for and what we want to be known for. They are what makes us, us.

- We care about people.
- We take accountability.
- We shape the future.
- We bring leadership.
- We deliver.

3.0   Roles and Responsibilities

3.1   The Executive Director (Housing) is accountable for ensuring this policy has regard to all legislation, regulation, and best practice and for ensuring the implementation of this policy effectively.

3.2   The Executive Director (Housing) is accountable for adequate resourcing and having effective processes in place to implement this policy.

3.3   The local Heads of Neighbourhoods are responsible for the day-to-day delivery of this policy at a local level, but more specifically, the Operations Manager (Community Safety & Safeguarding) is the operational lead.

3.4   All housing management colleagues are responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy and associated procedures.

4.0   Regulation and Legislation

4.1   The Executive Director (Housing) will ensure this policy has regard to all legislation, regulation and best practice.

4.2   The regulation & legislation applicable to this policy can be found in Appendix 1.

4.3   The Policy has been cross referenced with good practice from similar housing organisations.

5.0   Monitoring and Review

5.1   This Policy and Procedure will be fundamentally reviewed every 3 years, or in line with business need

6.0   Our Policy Statement

6.1   As part of the Group's vision to build strong communities, we will strive to ensure that every one of our tenants can access our services and sustain their tenancy.

6.2   We may consider someone to be vulnerable where they are "**an individual or household experiencing difficulties with everyday living.'**   This does not mean that everyone who meets the definition is vulnerable, but we will use it as a guideline when assessing the needs of our tenants.

6.3   We want to empower tenants to feel in control of their everyday life and will achieve this by effective profiling, early intervention and appropriate support provision, working with partners whenever we need to.

6.4   We will seek to proactively identify people who may require assistance at the earliest opportunity and aim to ensure that we secure the most appropriate, tailored solution for that tenant and their household. We will therefore alter our

service delivery to vulnerable tenants to ensure they receive an excellent service and are not placed in a dangerous or disadvantaged position. However, such changes will be reasonable adjustments.

6.5   To enable our tenants to remain in their homes and live as independently as possible, we are committed to ensuring that every opportunity has been provided to support them in their tenancies. This Policy will therefore be used to amend or temper other policies when it is apparent that there is a vulnerability which needs to be considered.

6.6   Where necessary, we will take enforcement action against tenancy breaches, however we will evidence that we have offered support repeatedly, offered to make reasonable adjustments and ensure any action is proportionate.

6.7   Every tenant is treated as an individual when assessing vulnerability and determining the level of support required.

6.8   We will draw upon the expertise of our staff and partner agencies to formulate the most appropriate solution in every scenario.

6.9   We want to empower tenants to feel in control of their everyday life and will achieve this by effective profiling, early intervention and appropriate support provision.

6.10 Gentoo will remain 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.

An equality assessment can be found in Appendix 2.

6.11   Our vulnerability policy will ensure that our tenants are treated as individuals and with fairness and respect.

7.0   Policy Outcomes

7.1   This vulnerability policy seeks to:

- Treat tenants with support needs as individuals
- Make reasonable adjustments where individuals require additional support in obtaining and maintaining a tenancy with Gentoo Group
- Ensure responses and support offers are joined up and flexible and tailored to life events or personal circumstances.
- Encourage vulnerable tenants to make their own choices and decisions about the services they want

8.0   Training

8.1   Gentoo will ensure that all staff receive the appropriate training to enable them to carry their responsibilities as stated in this policy.

9.0   Records

9.1   All records regarding vulnerable tenants including all contacts and attempted contacts, offers of support, any agencies involved etc. should be stored on the appropriate computer systems.

10.0 User Defined Characteristics (UDCs)

10.1 The Group uses UDCs which hold information about individual customer requirements, for example communication needs, disabilities etc. This information is accessible in the Orchard system and is transferred onto the handheld technology and/or printed works orders utilised by trade staff so they have this information in advance of visiting a tenants' home.

11.0 Data Protection

11.1 The 'Basic Principles' of data protection are that personal information should be shared on the basis that it is:

- Necessary for the purpose for which it is being shared
- Shared with only those who have a need for it
- Accurate and up to date
- Shared securely and in a timely fashion
- Not kept for longer than necessary for the original purpose

12.0 Confidentiality

12.1   We will treat all information received in a private and confidential manner.

12.2   We will only disclose information to third parties once we have the consent to do so.

12.3   We may, however, have a legal obligation to pass information on, for example to the Police or other relevant agencies.

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

13.0 Version Control

Version	Reason	Issuer	Date
1.0	Full review of policy	Sarah Treadwell & Julie Lister	March 2018
2.0	Amended format	Sarah Treadwell	March 2018
2.1	Changes made as per staff consultation	Mel Smith	May 2019
2.2	Changes made as per customer consultation	Mel Smith	June 2019
2.3	Final changes made – add in Data Protection paragraph, proof read	Mel Smith	August 2019
3.0	Approved by Michelle Meldrum	Sarah Treadwell	August 2019
4.0	Full review of policy	Julie Lister	December 2022
4.0	Approved by Susie Thompson and format amended by Chloe Appleby	Susie Thompson and Chloe Appleby	February 2023
4.1	Updated core purpose and values and	Catherine Loftus	August 2023

Appendix 1 – Legislation

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 from the Legal Team.

The Policy helps fulfil the following legislation, in no particular order of importance:

- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Hate Crime: The Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- The Equality Act 2006 & 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- Financial Services and Marketing Act 2000
- The Housing Act 1985, 1988, 1996 & 2004
- Housing and Regeneration Act 2008
- Data Protection Act 1998/2018
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- The Care Act 2014
- The Children's Act 2004
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Human Rights Act 1998

Appendix 2

Appendix 2

Equality Assessment (EA)

1. What is this Equality Assessment being completed on?

Specify a clearly defined service area – too big becomes too hard to complete.

This document refers to our policy on Vulnerability and our approach to delivering services to vulnerable tenants and ensuring they get the right support when they need it.

2. Does the policy/service/project/process/function outlined above have an impact on people? Please tick relevant box √

People means staff, customers and other stakeholders who are either involved in it, in receipt of it or affected by it, either directly or indirectly.

√	**Yes – High impact** *(reasonable or significant level of direct impact/ contact, requiring a reasonable or significant level of knowledge and understanding of diverse groups)*
	Yes – Low impact - *(infrequent contact which involves minimal interaction at a level which requires only basic awareness)*
	No *- If you select "no", add an explanation below to justify your assessment.*

If you have selected "yes", please continue….

3. Which groups of people* ("protected characteristics") is it impacting? Please tick √ relevant box (See notes)

	All groups			Only specific groups
√				

The "protected characteristics" are specified by equality legislation. They are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. If you are selecting "All", you still need to think about whether the "service" may be of greater relevance/ have greater impact for any one or more of those groups, and include details.

Please detail which groups and why

All groups with protected characteristics are potentially affected by the service as it impacts upon all existing customers/tenants.

4. **Please justify how you can be confident that this policy/service/project/ process/function it's tailored and sensitive to individual needs, that it doesn't discriminate, and that it promotes equality of opportunity / levels the playing field? (See notes.)**

Remember within every group there will be individual and different needs. See attached guidance/things to think about. Please list the measures you have in place to give you confidence.

- This policy commits to identifying vulnerability (which would include individual needs related to protected characteristics) and working with all staff to respond appropriately. It also seeks to ensure that, where a vulnerable person has breached their tenancy, we will ensure that any action taken is proportionate and legitimate.

- User Defined Characteristics (UDCs) hold information about individual customer requirements, for example communication needs, disabilities etc. this information is accessible in the MRI ICT system and is transferred onto the handheld technology and/or printed works orders utilised by trade staff so they have this information in advance of going to a customer's home. This enables staff to make reasonable adjustments to services where necessary.

- Corporate letterhead used for letters to customers. This advises of availability of information in alternative formats, and of interpretation services.

- Staff have access to relevant guidance and information to increase awareness and understanding of diversity and inclusion in relation to delivering services.

5. **Please detail the checks and balances that you have in place which give you confidence that the above measures are in place and being implemented effectively. (See notes)**

If you are unsure about effectiveness, or if as part of completing this assessment you have identified further work that is required in order for you to feel confident, please detail this in section 8 below.

- The Policy will be fundamentally reviewed every 3 years, ensuring outcomes are achieved.
- MRI housing management systems hold key data about vulnerability and relevant individual needs.
- Tenant surveys give us accurate live data regarding tenant vulnerabilities
- Prior to any legal or enforcement action checks are carried out by line management (NOMs) to ensure the correct procedures have been followed and all aspects of the tenants circumstances have been taken into consideration before it is approved.

6. **The duty to foster good relations is about tackling prejudice and promoting awareness and understanding between those who share a protected characteristic and those who don't share it. Is this duty relevant to this "service"? Please tick √ relevant box. (See guidance notes)**

This question will not be relevant to all assessments. See notes.

√	**No** - This duty is **not** relevant to this "service".
	Yes - This duty **is** relevant to this service. *

*If this duty is relevant, please detail below how the "service" is fostering good relations.

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If you identify further work that is required to comply with this duty, add actions in section 8 below.

Are you confident that the checks and balances that you have in place, effectively mitigate the equality and diversity risk to the Group? Please tick √ relevant box.

Level of confidence that checks and balances mitigate risks in respect of.....	Very confident	Confident but more work required*	Not confident
Legislation/legal action in relation to equality & diversity (e.g. harassment or discrimination, or failure to give due regard to all elements of the Public Sector Equality Duty)	√		
RSH Regulation in relation to E&D	√		
Reputation in relation to E&D	√		

(Use Q.8 to specify your proposed actions to remedy your lack of confidence)*

7. Actions to be completed following this EA:

Please detail the actions you will put in place following this EA and the timescales for your next review.

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Awareness raising and/or training around this policy and procedure will be undertaken.	*Operations Manager – Community Safety and Safeguarding*	*June 2023*

Completed by: Julie Lister   Date: 13 December 2022