

gentoo



Built on Purpose

The Gentoo Environmental, Social and Governance report (ESG)

2024/25

www.gentooogroup.com

Welcome

A forward from our Chief Executive

This year has been one of delivery, ambition, and purpose.

At Gentoo, our commitment to Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles is embedded in the work we do for our customers, the partnerships we nurture and our dedication to brilliant culture.

We continue to focus on what matters most: our customers. We want to be the best provider of social housing in the country, and whether we're investing in energy-efficient homes, supporting community initiatives, or strengthening our governance, we are working towards that guiding vision.

We've made strong progress in improving the sustainability of our homes and the majority of our homes now meet EPC rating C or better. This reflects our commitment to reducing carbon emissions and improving energy efficiency for our customers.

We've also invested in our existing homes, delivering against our £42.9 million improvement plan to benefit 6,644 of our customers. These upgrades ensure our homes are warmer, safer, and more affordable to run, helping to support both environmental goals and customer wellbeing.

Our social impact is driven by our people and our partnerships. This year, our colleagues completed over 7,000 hours of customer service training through our CARE model, helping us deliver more empathetic and responsive support. We welcomed 28 new apprentices into the organisation in our largest ever apprentice intake, and we're looking forward to even more of our customers joining us in apprentice roles in the year ahead.



We've built purposeful partnerships with local organisations like Sunderland College, and charity Love, Amelia raising nearly £11,000 to support families in the North East and tackle child poverty. In addition, our Aspire programme awarded over £22,000 to 50 local groups, helping communities across Sunderland to thrive.

We also held three community events for families, bringing thousands of customers together for food, games, crafts and support from partners like Barclays. These moments of connection are a powerful reminder of the role we play in people's lives.

Strong governance underpins everything we do. This year, we were proud to achieve a C1 grading under the Regulator of Social Housing's new Consumer Standards, recognising our commitment to putting customers first.

Our new customer committee has played a vital role. Their feedback goes directly to our board, helping us to continually explore how we can improve service for all customers.

We also achieved Great Place to Work certification, reflecting the culture we've built and the investment we're making in our colleagues. This global accreditation helps us attract and retain talent, and ultimately deliver better outcomes for our customers.

As we launch our new ten-year strategy, co-created with customers and colleagues, our ESG performance will remain central to how we work. We are proud of what we've achieved, and we remain ambitious about what's next. Our goal is simple: to be the best provider of social homes in the country.

An introduction to our ESG reporting

This is the third year we have published an ESG report. We create the report in line with the Sustainability Reporting Standards (SRS) for social housing and include data for each requirement as well as stories from Gentoo customers, colleagues and partners to bring our work to life.

The SRS reporting themes align to the UN Sustainable Development goals. In this report we will demonstrate how each theme aligns to these goals.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



ESG reporting themes

Social

This standard assesses how we provide affordable and secure housing, how we manage customer safety and building quality, how we listen to customers' voices and how we support our customers in their local communities.



Environmental

The environmental standards reflect on how we tackle the impact of climate change, boost ecology and how we manage our resources in a responsible way.

Governance

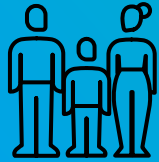
The governance standard assesses the strength of our governance structure and our approach to good governance, it also assesses how we support our employees and how responsibly we procure goods and services.

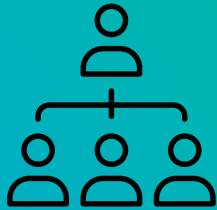


About Gentoo

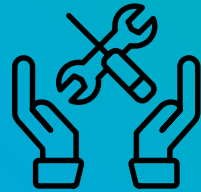
Gentoo in numbers 2024/25


28,500
Homes


60,000
Customers

1,000+
Colleagues

79% Live in Sunderland

£1 million
a week invested in existing properties
80%
of homes are EPC C
or above


We will invest
£467 million
over the next 5
years to maintain
and modernise our
homes and estates


405
new homes for
private sale by 2029


19,000
people on Gentoo's social
housing list


£5 million
in additional benefits and
discounts for customers


700
new affordable homes
built by 2029


G1,C1,V2
regulatory governance


80%
overall customer satisfaction
(IFF independent score)


We are a housing association that provides more than 60,000 people in Sunderland with a place they can call home.



Our new strategy

Gentoo’s new corporate strategy sets out clear direction for customer experience, operational excellence and sustainable growth.

Our five commitments for the next 10 years



A housing provider that listens and sorts things out



Helping our communities to thrive



Embracing modern technology and data



Achieving growth through partnerships and innovation



A professional, caring, great place to work

Vision

To become the best provider of social homes in the country.

Core Purpose

To provide warm, safe and decent homes for our customers of today and tomorrow.

Our Values

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



We care about people



We shape the future



We deliver



We take accountability



We bring leadership

Talking about... Environment

This section covers how we tackle the impact of climate change, boost ecology and how we manage our resources in a responsible way.



Climate change

How are we preventing and mitigating the risk of climate change?



What is the energy performance of our homes? (C1, C2)

At Gentoo, our approach to the energy performance of our homes is rooted in a firm commitment to sustainability, affordability, and customer wellbeing.

We want all of our customers’ homes to have a minimum EPC rating of C by 2030, with almost 80% of our properties already meeting this standard.

In our strategy, we prioritise a ‘fabric first’ methodology, enhancing insulation and thermal efficiency before introducing renewable technologies like solar PV, battery storage, and electrified heating systems.

EPC Rating	Our existing homes		New built homes	
	Number of homes	%	Number of homes	%
A	262	0.92%	53	54.64%
B	3,292	11.59%	44	45.36%
C	18,807	66.19%		
D	5,887	20.72%		
E	63	0.22%		
F	4	0.01%		
No EPC rating	99	0.35%		
Total	28,414	100.00%	97*	100.00%

*excluding Shared Ownership



Our focus on providing warm, safe and decent homes for our customers (C4)

We are proud to be delivering on our commitment to provide warm, safe, and decent homes for our customers. A key part of this is our continued investment in energy efficiency upgrades that improve comfort and reduce energy demand for our customers, supporting a more sustainable future.

In 2024/25, with funding from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (Wave 2.2), we invested in more than 4,900 homes across Sunderland. This included a wide range of energy efficiency improvements such as:

- Enhanced loft insulation
- Low-energy lighting
- Cavity wall insulation
- Smart, zoned heating controls
- Solar PV panel installations
- Removal of inefficient secondary heating systems
- Improved ventilation and draughtproofing
- Heating system upgrades and new 'A rated' boiler installations

As a result, just under 80% of our housing stock has now achieved an EPC rating of C or above, helping to lower energy costs and create warmer, healthier homes for our customers.

Through achieving this milestone, we are supporting both the UK Government's ambition to reach net zero by 2050 and Sunderland's goal to become carbon neutral by 2040.

In 2025, we also completed the replacement of the district heating system in Washington, installing more than 900 new, energy-efficient combi boilers in our customers' homes.

Additionally, our Pennywell modernisation programme was successfully completed last year, delivering improvements to over 1,000 homes, including new roofs, windows, and upgraded loft insulation.

We are continually investing in our customers' homes and are on track to see all our existing homes reach EPC C or better by 2030 (where financially and practically viable).

In 2025 we were awarded £6.1m from the Department of Energy and Net Zero's (DESNZ) Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund W3. As a result of this award, more than 1300 Gentoo properties are set to benefit from further energy efficiency work that will begin in 25/26 including the installation of solar PV panels, loft insulation, low energy lighting, air source heat pumps and smart heating controls.



Net Zero strategy (C3)

We are focussing on making sure that all of our homes achieve EPC C or better by 2030 (where it is practical and financially viable).

We are achieving this by:

1. Improving the quality of our energy efficiency data through proactive surveys and data validation.
2. Developing our in-house capability to complete EPC surveys within our in-house Stock Condition/ Energy Assessing Team.
3. Creating a property specific EPC delivery plan to enable retrofitting works to the properties below 69 SAP rating, so they achieve as a minimum, EPC C, adopting a 'fabric first approach'.
4. Following the delivery of the fabric first approach, beginning the journey to removing our gas heating systems and replacing them with a clean heat alternative.

Case Study

From roofs to roots: Pennywell's £19m transformation



Scan the QR code to
watch the video and
find out more

We're proud to share the success of a £19 million regeneration project that's transformed over 1,100 homes in Pennywell.

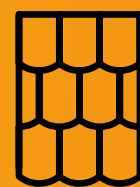
Since October 2022, we worked alongside our partners at RE:GEN Group to deliver a wide range of improvements that have made homes warmer, more energy-efficient, and more secure.

More than 1,100 homes have received upgrades such as new roofs, windows, loft

insulation, and improved fencing and gates. These changes have not only enhanced the appearance of the estate but also improved comfort and reduced energy costs for customers.

We used a 'whole house' approach, which looks at how all the parts of your home work together, rather than just improving one thing or area. This way, we can give customers the best results, helping them to stay warm, save money, and reduce energy waste.

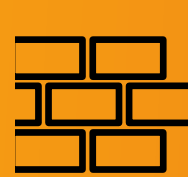
We made a wide range of upgrades, including:

 **864**
new roofs

 **870**
new windows

 **1,510**
new fences

 **838**
steel gates
installed

 **190** new walls
and
99 wall repairs

 **42**
garage
conversions

 **905**
lofts insulated

 **828**
outhouses rendered



Our commitment goes beyond bricks and mortar. We are committed to investing in the communities we serve. That's why this project also delivered around £900,000 in social and local economic value. We launched The Bread and Butter Thing (TBBT), a mobile food club offering affordable foods and access to support services. We also invested nearly £30,000 in the Pennywell Community Centre, created employment and training opportunities, and carried out local litter picks to help keep the area clean and welcoming.



Scan the QR code to find
out more about how we
supported Pennywell
Community Centre

Customers living in the area gave us overwhelmingly positive feedback, over **92%** of customers said they were satisfied with the improvements.

This work is part of our wider five-year investment plan, which will see over **£200 million** invested in existing homes and neighbourhoods across Sunderland.



Rose Taylor who has lived in her Pennywell home for 52 years, said:

"I've had new fencing, windows and a new garage roof. It's been wonderful. The house is a lot warmer, and the team were really good. It's made a big difference to Pennywell."



Monitoring environmental impact. Our Green House Gas emissions (C5)

Our Scope 1 emissions are direct emissions from sources we own or control. Scope 2 emissions are indirect emissions from energy we buy. Scope 3 emissions include all other indirect emissions that occur at sources that we do not own or control.

Scope	2024/25 (tCO2e)
Scope 1 & 2 emissions	1,286
Scope 2 emissions	2,285
Scope 3 emissions	200
Total emissions (tCO2e)	3,771
Intensity per employee	1: 2.75

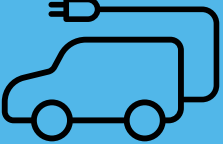
How have we saved carbon this year?

We commissioned a consultant to conduct several carbon saving studies to determine the amount of carbon likely to be saved by some of the work we are carrying out. These savings are the same as the annual energy consumption for nearly 300 homes.

We are currently procuring our fleet to include

10%

electric vehicles.





Investment scheme	Scope of works	No of homes hmpoved	Total carbon saving (kg of CO²/year)
City wide domestic boiler replacements	Combi boiler replacement	1,590	622,556
Washington District Heating	Combi boiler replacement	146	387,597
Fire removals	Removal of secondary heating	1,019	367,580
Enhanced time, temperature & zone control	Installation of Intelligent Thermostatic Radiator Valves (Radbot)	581	26,880
Low energy lighting	LED lamp replacement	613	49,843
Photovoltaic panel arrays	PV panel installation	19	6,625
Loft insulation improvements (City Wide)	Loft insulation only	956	645,339
Loft insulation improvements (Pennywell)	Loft insulation only	79	56,552
Loft insulation improvements (Concord & Usworth)	Loft insulation only	52	33,990
Cavity wall insulation (city wide)	Cavity wall insulation only	149	59,298
AirEx smart airbrick (city wide)	Replacement of airbricks only	92	12,634
Window replacement project (Pennywell, Concord & Usworth)	Window replacement only	87	16,160
Total carbon saving =		2,285,054 kg of CO²/year	





How do we assess the climate risks to our homes and supply chain? (C6)

We have carried out flood mapping to identify where our properties are at risk from fluvial and surface water flooding, with 98.1% of properties identified as at low risk of flooding (less than 0.1% risk).

We have a flood action plan and have established incident response arrangements for responding to periods of severe weather. We have signed up to the Met Office's severe weather warnings, the Environmental Agency's flood warnings and have entered a partnership with Previsico who provide surface water flooding alerts. We have also updated our customer handbook to provide clear guidance on flood risk.

All modernisation work on our properties is carried out in line with current building regulations, including the provision of enhanced ventilation in the form of extraction fans and trickle vents. Some of our properties are also fitted with smart thermostats which provide alerts where there is a risk of excessive heat within a home.

Green space and biodiversity near our homes (C7)

Our developments deliver 10% Biodiversity Net Gain in line with statutory requirements.

We are focussed on creating and improving natural habitats and making sure our developments have a measurably positive impact on biodiversity.

We incorporate green space with trees and landscaping for the enjoyment of future customers, along with consideration of children's play spaces and dog-walking.

All of our affordable developments are designed with sustainable drainage systems to help manage the water supply, provide habitats for wildlife and reduce flood risk. To improve wildlife corridors and increase biodiversity, we include new shrubs, tree-lined streets, wildflowers and wetland grasses.

Our approach to managing pollutants (C8)

Pollutant Identification and Risk

Assessment Site Assessments: before we begin construction, our contractors conduct detailed environmental site assessments to identify potential sources of pollution, such as contaminated land, asbestos, or chemical residues from previous uses.

Pollution Prevention Measures Dust and Emissions Control:

our contractors implement measures to control dust and airborne particles during construction, such as water sprays, dust barriers, and covering materials that could generate dust. They also ensure that machinery and vehicles are maintained to reduce emissions.

Waste Management: a key aspect of pollution control involves the management of waste. Our contractors develop waste management plans that include recycling, safe disposal of hazardous materials, and minimising the amount of waste generated. This helps in reducing pollutants that can contaminate land and water.

Water Pollution Control: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS): our contractors install SuDS to manage surface water runoff, reducing the risk of pollutants entering watercourses. These systems help to filter and clean water before it returns to the environment.

Spill Response Plans: these are in place across sites to ensure any accidental release of pollutants is quickly contained and cleaned up, minimising environmental damage.

Monitoring and Compliance Regular

Monitoring: our contractors engage in regular environmental monitoring during and after construction to ensure that pollutants are being managed effectively. This may include air quality monitoring, water quality testing, and soil sampling.

Compliance with Regulations: our contractors must comply with local, national, and international laws regarding pollution control. This includes obtaining necessary permits and following best practices as outlined by applicable regulatory bodies.



Using responsibly sourced materials (C9)

As part of our commitment to minimise our environmental impacts, we have a strategy in place to increase the use of responsibly sourced materials in our building works.

This is captured via our specification documents, the Supplier Questionnaire (SQ), and qualitative questions regarding materials, carbon reduction, Environmental Management Systems, and the energy performance of our properties. Via our stores contract, our supplier provides 100% traceability on all components, with timber products and timber coming from legal and sustainable sources, in line with the UK Government's Timber Procurement Policy (TPP).

In addition, joint strategies have been created around packaging and waste, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and the monitoring of modern-day slavery risk. For our affordable development activities, in addition to sustainably sourced timber, we also specify bricks that are from local manufacturers to limit transportation requirements.

Our approach to waste management (C10)

We recognise the critical importance of a robust waste management strategy that encompasses all aspects of construction, particularly the use and disposal of building materials. We request that our contractors aim for a reduction of waste at source by selecting sustainable materials and implementing efficient construction practices.

We also prioritise the reuse and recycling of materials wherever possible, ensuring that waste is minimised and managed responsibly throughout the construction process. This approach not only reduces the environmental impact of our developments but also aligns with our broader goals of creating sustainable, lowimpact communities.

Our repairs and maintenance teams work with local waste management companies and also carry out waste collection via our van based drop offs, reducing the need for other colleagues to travel to remove waste.

We have introduced new KPIs to monitor waste and environmental impact through our new 10 year Gentogether Partnership and propose to roll out this measure across our contractor base. In addition, we are working with our strategic kitchen supplier to recycle kitchen wood waste through the use of dedicated skips / collection points. This added value initiative is also reducing the cost of skip hire and fuel consumption, helping to maximise organisational efficiencies and minimise the environmental impact.

Our approach to water management (C11)

We take the opportunity to improve the water efficiency of our homes when we

carry out internal modernisation works. This includes ensuring flow rates for all outlets and bath and toilet cistern sizes are in line with, or above, the requirements of the current building regulations at the point of install.

Reduced water consumption is also a consideration in our approach of installing showers as standard when carrying out bathroom modernisation works. For new build homes, each development in our affordable homes plan is carefully designed to limit surface water discharge rates and help reduce flood risks. We use the hierarchy of drainage set out in the National Planning Practice Guidance wherever possible and use permeable paving to improve water quality.

Talking about... Social

This standard assesses how we provide affordable and secure housing, how we manage resident safety and building quality, how we listen to residents’ voice and how we support our residents in their local communities.



Affordability and security



Affordability and security (C12)

Number of bedrooms	Average Gentoo rent	PRS in Sunderland	LHA in Sunderland
1 bedroom house	£87.33	£110.54	£97.81
2 bedroom house	£96.33	£137.08	£109.32
3 bedroom house	£105.82	£163.62	£126.58
4 bedroom house	£115.41	£232.38	£161.10
All houses	102.29	£150	

Our share and number of existing homes (C13)

Home type	Number of new homes	Percentage
General needs	26,361	91.7%
Intermediate rent	31	0.1%
Affordable rent	1,800	6.3%
Housing for older people	202	0.7%
Low-cost home ownership	182	0.6%
Total homes	28,758	99.4%

Our share and number of new homes built within the last year (C14)

Home type	Number of new homes	Percentage
Affordable rent	105	81.4%
Affordable home ownership	24	18.6%
Total	129	100%

How do we try to reduce the effect of high energy bills for customers? (C15)

Our Money Matters Team supports customers to maximise their income through welfare benefits, better off calculations, budgeting and much more. The team also offers support to customers who are in fuel poverty. The service received 3,152 referrals in 2024/25 for customers, and we assisted 1,051 of these customers to increase their cumulative income by £3.39m, an average of £3,329 per customer.

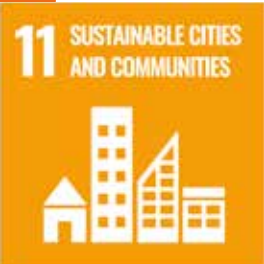
Our Crisis Fund provides support to our most vulnerable customers who are in immediate need or at a crisis point. We provided 679 gas and electricity top ups to our customers during the year from this fund and we helped over 10,000 customers claim over £1.7m in discounted water rates. We work with partners to refer customers to specialist agencies such as Green Doctor for energy support, debt advice services and grant providers.

How do we provide security of tenure for customers? (C16)

Security of tenure makes a huge difference to people’s lives. We want to build strong and sustainable communities and we believe that offering long-term tenancies is key to delivering this.



Building safety and quality



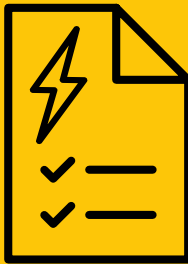
Building safety and quality (C17 and C18)

The safety of our customers’ homes is a priority for us and we’re proud of our building safety quality and performance.



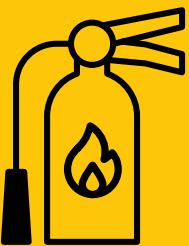
100%

of our homes for which all required gas safety checks have been carried out



100%

of our homes for which all required electrical safety checks have been carried out



100%

of our homes for which all required fire risk assessments have been carried out



0%*

of homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard

*Actual performance was 0.03% but in-line with the TSM guidance this has been rounded to 0%.

Managing the risk of damp and mould for residents (C19)

Over the past year, we've adopted an even more more proactive, customer-focused approach to damp and mould as we completed over 15,800 repairs across 2,868 homes. Our approach reflects our zero-tolerance stance and commitment to safer, healthier homes ahead of Awaab's Law.

In 2023 we introduced a new Damp and Mould Policy, using the zero-tolerance principle of the 2021 Housing Ombudsman Spotlight report. We also worked with customers to create a new, customer-friendly damp and mould procedure.

We introduced a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which means colleagues have a full view of every interaction we have with customers, including repairs, complaints and communication

preferences. We also introduced a dedicated case management process, so customers have one point of contact to deal with throughout their repair getting fixed and to provide aftercare to make sure all issues are sorted.

This year, we also produced new damp, mould and condensation guidance offering advice on how to report, deal with, spot the signs of and treat damp, mould or condensation.

Dedicated resource

We introduced a dedicated damp and mould telephone line, recruited extra colleagues and set up a specialist Damp and Mould Team to support more calls, inspections and remedial works. This meant we were able to introduce a rapid response clean down within 48 hours of damp and mould being reported to reduce the risk of the most severe reports.

Maintenance teams were also moved from a 'trade based' approach to an 'area' approach to offer a consistent personal service for customers. This means one maintenance manager and one assistant maintenance manager oversees a geographical area of homes, meaning they can be more familiar with customers and the properties in their area.

Knowledge is key

We reinforced an 'every visit counts' approach for all staff, and frontline colleagues completed dedicated awareness training to proactively look for signs of damp and mould when visiting a customer's home. Relevant teams also completed Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Damp and Mould training to identify and treat damp and mould, and we continue to upskill and train colleagues with external partners.

To make sure we know as much as possible about our homes and ensure our property data is always up to date, each stock condition survey includes an inspection of the home to identify visible signs of damp and mould. An Empty Homes Surveyor also visits empty properties and carry out a damp and mould assessment before they are allocated to a new customer.

We have also looked at hotspot areas for damp and mould so that we could target inspections and property investment towards those areas. This includes a loft top-up programme and an improved specification of mechanical extractions in kitchen/bathroom improvements.

As part of our aftercare process, case coordinators check in with customers 8 weeks and 12 months after work has been completed to confirm there has been no return of damp and mould.

Since adopting this new approach, customers have expressed their satisfaction with the quick response times for cleaning down cases of damp and mould and with having one point of contact throughout the process. From our Tenant Satisfaction Measures, we know that 82% of customers are satisfied that their home is safe and 78% of customers are satisfied with repairs and we want those scores to continue to improve.

We want to address all instances of damp and mould with the urgency and proactivity they demand. We will continue to engage with customers, provide training to our colleagues, upskill frontline teams, and take proactive measures to identify and resolve cases as early as possible.



Resident Voice



Our Tenant Satisfaction Measures (C20)

Tenant Satisfaction Measures are required by the Regulator of Social Housing to measure our performance as a landlord.



Our Tenant Satisfaction Measures for 2024/2025

76%

Overall satisfaction

76%

Satisfaction that your home is well maintained

68%

Satisfaction that we make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods

78%

Satisfaction with repairs

76%

Satisfaction that we keep you informed about things that matter to you

75%

Satisfaction that we keep communal areas clean and well maintained

79%

Satisfaction that your home is safe

36%

Satisfaction with our approach to handling complaints

63%

Satisfaction with our approach to handing anti-social behaviour

80%

Agreement that we treat you fairly and with respect

74%

Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair

66%

Satisfaction that we listen and act



How can customers hold management to account for the provision of services? (C21)

Our customer voice matters more than ever. Our recently established Gentoo's Customer Committee supports the Group board in its oversight of customer engagement, scrutiny and the outcomes and actions relating to the Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

Our Customer Voice team works closely with our Customer Committee members and our involved customers. The Customer Committee has a clear terms of reference with part of its role to scrutinise the services we deliver as well as reviewing our policies and procedures.

Each quarter we report on our TSM perception scores and complaints handling numbers, to contextualise the numbers and to allow for greater scrutiny. This year we worked with TPAS to provide refreshed scrutiny training to our Customer Committee and involved customers.

Over the past year, customer feedback has helped shape real change, from neighbourhood improvements to service redesigns. In 2024/25, we hosted 13 Customer and Community Voice meetings across Sunderland.

These sessions gave customers the chance to raise concerns, share ideas, and work with us to improve their neighbourhoods.

Your Gentoo Voice at a glance

More than 1,400 customers are now part of Your Gentoo Voice, our digital platform where they can share feedback, ideas, and help shape the services that matter most. This year there were 2,000+ project views on the platform with 350+ responses received and thanks to customer input this year, we've made improvements, including:

- **Move the Dial** – projects to improve customer experience with repairs and customer service
- **Rent statements** – making them clearer and easier to understand
- **Customer charter for property** – setting out the standards and service customers can expect from us
- **Lettable Standard** – creating a checklist of what customers' homes should include when they move in
- **Complaint letters** – improving how we communicate when things go wrong
- **Creation of new Service Standards.**

We've also partnered with customers to review and redesign services through several major initiatives:

- Tpas accreditation assessment

Tpas is a national organisation that helps customers and landlords work together to improve housing services. The accreditation is a nationally recognised award that shows a landlord is excellent at involving customers in decisions about their homes and communities.

- Complaints Self-Assessment

In May 2024, customers helped validate our approach to ensure we meet the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code

- Genogether tender process

Customers joined interview panels and helped select contractors for our long-term home improvement programme.

- Empty Homes Deep Dive

- Community Fund redesign

Case Study

This year Gentoo's Customer Committee marked its first-year anniversary

The Committee first met in November 2023 after being created to put customers at the heart of our decision making.

Passionate about the communities they live in and sharing a desire to raise standards in social housing, our members meet bi-monthly and give direct feedback to board members to ensure services are delivered to the best possible outcome, customer standards are being met and that Gentoo is achieving value for money.

In its first year, the Committee helped reshape how we deal with cases of damp and mould by helping to create a more customer-friendly procedure alongside a more empathetic approach to dealing with any such reports. Members have also helped us make decisions on how we communicate important subjects such as rent updates, using their own experiences to provide valuable insight on what information customers require and how it should be presented.

Customer Committee member Angela Dalzell said:

"I have really enjoyed my first year being on the Customer Committee, meeting other committee members who also want the best service for Gentoo customers.

Shadowing teams within Gentoo has been rewarding and given the committee the chance to see how the teams support customers.

Scrutinising and contributing towards policies has been interesting, with a highlight being working towards Gentoo gaining the C1 grading in the new Customer Standards."

Fellow committee member Doreen Richardson added:

"I would say the highs of the first year on the Customer Committee are the numerous times we have seen the suggestions we made being put into actions to further benefit customers."



Scan the QR code to watch the video and feel the difference customer involvement makes.



Housing Ombudsman determinations 2024/25

Gentoo received 15 Housing Ombudsman determinations in 2024/25.

There were:

- 11 findings of service failure
- 12 findings of maladministration
- 10 cases where there were no findings of maladministration or service failure
- 0 rulings of severe maladministration

The main themes of the determinations were Property Maintenance, Housing Management and Leasehold Management. The main issues were lack of communication, damp and mould concerns and repair timescales.

Key learnings taken from determinations include:

- The Introduction of new Stage 2 response letter signed off by an Executive Director following a review made by relevant Director or Head of Service before being shared with a customer.
- The completion of a customer survey during October 2024 to capture customer data around vulnerabilities.
- A new customer liaison role introduced in the Repairs and Maintenance teams, working proactively with customers to ensure follow on works and completed jobs are completed within timescales.
- Using the insights captured to commission a mobile 'bus' taking Gentoo out on the road to reach those customers who don't interact with us often.

Learning from complaints (C22)

In 2024/25 we received:

485 Stage 1 complaints

140 Stage 2 complaints

We have seen a significant reduction in the percentage of Stage 1 complaints progressing to Stage 2. These figures demonstrate the work that's been undertaken over the last financial year delivering our complaints service improvement plan in full and in conjunction with investing in colleagues with over 7,000+ hours of face-to-face customer excellence training. In addition, we also invested in advanced complaints training for our complaints team.

Key complaint themes throughout the last financial year have centred around repairs timescales, delays to having work completed and damp and mould.

As an organisation Gentoo continues to improve the culture of accountability using customer feedback and the insight captured, investing in colleagues so they can be the best they can be to deliver customer excellence.

In April 2024, we appointed a Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC), Morven Smith. The MRC ensures that complaint handling drives service improvement for our customers and learning and business improvement. The MRC champions a positive complaint handling culture, seek assurance that complaints are being managed, change is happening and that our customers are being heard throughout the process





Our support services for customers (C23)

We aim to support customers in the most suitable ways for them to help them manage their home, achieve sustainable tenancies and live independently.

These include:

- Community safety including supporting customers experiencing domestic abuse
- Employment assistance and training
- Energy advice
- Extra care schemes that provide 24-hour care and support for those with care needs
- Furniture packages
- Home contents insurance
- Money, benefits, debt and financial management
- We support older customers with wellbeing services to provide aids and adaptations to their homes, promote healthy and active living, and reduce social isolation

We also work with a number of key partners, including care providers and supported housing providers. Our partners support customers who are in abusive situations, are ex-offenders or have:

- Alcohol and drug misuse or dependency problems
- Learning disabilities
- Mental health conditions



In 2024 to 2025, our specially trained support officers supported many people in different situations.

These included:

- 1,802 support referrals
- 2,498 referrals to wellbeing support
- 1,803 social activities for people in sheltered or extra care schemes
- 198 people who faced antisocial behaviour and domestic abuse (129 DA, 69 ASB)
- 173 child, and 101 adult, safeguarding alerts, leading to referral of 48 cases to the Together for Children service / Sunderland City Council
- 156 people with mental health, drug and alcohol conditions
- 142 young people through outreach support and 23 living at our supported housing scheme for people leaving care aged 16 to 21
- We also supported customers with grant applications and secured £10,888 worth of grant funding

During 2024/25 we received 1,384 victim support referrals of which 1,004 were domestic abuse (DA) related and the remainder were victim support due to anti-social behaviour (ASB).

138 cases were opened by the team for support for DA and
54 cases were opened for support for ASB.

All DA cases identified are dealt with by a specially trained team of Domestic Abuse Support Coordinators regardless of whether support is required.

All support plans are individual and we work with a number of agencies including the Police and Wearside Women in Need to make sure customers feel safe in their homes. This sometimes involves sourcing alternative accommodation or looking at additional security measures that can be put in their home. We attend multi agency meetings to advocate and support victim/survivors and arrange appointments with solicitors and other relevant agencies who can help.

For those people who do not require full support, we offer advice and signposting to ensure they are fully aware of the services available in their area. We will make referrals for them to other services and they are also advised to contact us at any time for advice or support.

Our investment in communities (C24)

One of the commitments in our new strategy is to help our communities to thrive. We will do this by:

- Building purposeful partnerships to create vibrant, thriving communities
- Helping our customers to improve skills and employability
- Expanding the Gentoo Trades Academy
- Helping to end child poverty in our communities
- Providing more communities that adapt to our customers’ changing needs.

Case Study

Redeveloping a new community centre in Hetton-le-Hole.

In partnership with Adderstone Living, we contributed £35,000 towards the transformation of Moorsley Hut, a newly renovated community centre in Hetton-le-Hole near to one of our affordable development Eskdene Rise.

Jackie Worthington, Volunteer at Moorsley & District CIO said:

“We are so proud of our new building and look forward to welcoming all residents of the area and their friends into the Hut for activities, education, and entertainment.”



Paul Smith, Project Manager at Adderstone Living said:

“I am very much enjoying working on the Eskdene Rise scheme, along with the great team from Gentoo. The community spirit in the area is really strong and it was great to play our part in refurbishing the Moorsley Hut which is exactly the sort of facility the locals need.

I look forward to future engagement in the area whilst based on site in Moorsley.”

Case Study

Partnering with The Fans Museum to bring a roadshow of football memories to sheltered housing residents and school children.

Volunteers from the museum visited residents across eight Gentoo schemes in Sunderland to showcase a rare collection of football memorabilia dating from 1884 to present day.

Local schools were invited to provide the opportunity for school children to see the football collection, try on shirts and interact with residents at the schemes.

The residents and children enjoyed trying on shirts previously owned by iconic players from Sunderland including Jordan Henderson, Jill Scott and Jordan Pickford.



Residents and volunteers from the Moorsley and District CIO, recognised a need for a community centre in the area and campaigned for over 18 years to receive approx. £600,000 in funding to redevelop the community centre.



Michael Ganley, founder of The Fans Museum said:

“Delivering these sessions for Gentoo has been invaluable. The partnership between the museum, Gentoo residents and the local schools is so important as bringing all ages together encourages respect amongst the children but also provides residents the opportunity to socialise and bond over a mutual love of football.

We have seen residents with dementia speak about memories of football from their youth and children light up when they see shirts from their favourite players. The visits have been very powerful.”



Our Aspire grant programme

This programme is dedicated to supporting grassroots organisations that bring people together, promote wellbeing, and create opportunities for all. What makes this programme unique is that Gentoo customers are at the heart of the decision-making process, with each grant approved by our involved customers. In the past year, we awarded 50 grants totalling £22,142 to local groups across Sunderland. These small but powerful investments are helping to build safer, more connected, and more inclusive communities, many of which directly benefit customers.

Launched in 2003, our Aspire grant programme has awarded over £220,000 since it launched and has benefited hundreds of local groups and organisations over the

years, including art, music and drama clubs, toddler play groups, local football clubs, older people's clubs and resident and community associations.

Our charity of the year

Giving back In 2024, Gentoo colleagues raised an incredible £10,928 for Sunderland children's charity Love, Amelia. From summer BBQs and sponsored runs to raffles, tuck shops, and payroll giving, our teams went above and beyond. We also rolled up our sleeves to volunteer at the charity's warehouse and supported key campaigns, donating over 2,000 back-to-school kits, 250 Christmas presents, and thoughtful gifts for Mother's Day. This partnership is especially meaningful, as many of the families supported by Love, Amelia live in our homes.

A community Christmas

Following the success of the 24/25 Easter and Summer fun days, at Christmas we held an event at the Sunderland Foundation of Light for over 1,000 customers to enjoy a range of activities from sports and crafting activity to visiting Santa's Grotto.

In addition, December 2024 saw the seventh year of the 'Your Gentoo Christmas' appeal where 200 turkey dinners with all the trimmings and a dessert were hand delivered by colleagues on Christmas Eve, and hundreds of families received an assortment of gifts including toys, selection boxes, board games and gift sets as well as pantomime tickets.



Talking about... Governance

The governance standard assesses the strength of our governance structure and our approach to good governance, it also assesses how we support our employees and how responsibly we procure goods and services.



Structure and governance



Our Structure and governance (C25, C26, C27, C28)

Gentoo is a not for profit, registered with the national regulator of social housing (RSH). We follow the National Housing Federation Code of Governance 2020.

In August 2024, we were one of the first social housing providers in the North East to be assessed against the new consumer standards (the Neighbourhood and Community Standard, the Safety and Quality Standard, the Tenancy Standard and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard).

This year, we were delighted to receive a consumer grading of C1, a governance grading of G1 and a financial viability rating of V2.

This demonstrates that we;

- are delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards, that we meet the RSH's governance requirements and we continue to manage the risks of our activities
- meet the RSH's governance requirements, having provided evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of our governance arrangements
- continue to manage the risk of our activities, allowing us to deliver our strategic and charitable objectives
- meet the RSH's financial viability requirements and have the financial capacity to deal with a reasonable range of adverse scenarios and have demonstrated an improvement in financial performance and capacity, and resilience to external economic risks.





How do we manage ESG Risks? (C29)

We monitor and manage ESG risks as part of our risk management framework. This framework defines our strategic risks and embeds risk management activities in our day-to-day operations.

The framework, and the Group's risk appetite statement, are presented annually for review and approval to the Risk and Audit Committee (RAC) and Group board. The Group's risk appetite statement sets out the approach the Group will take on a range of risk categories.

The Group's strategic risks are reviewed regularly by our executive team, RAC and Group board. The risk management framework integrates with the business

planning process, with regular stress testing and mitigation planning in place to quantify the impact on the Group's corporate strategy of risks crystallising.

Risk considerations are embedded and explicit in all key executive and board decisions.

The Group's internal audit strategy and plans are designed with reference to the Group's key risks.

We track and review threats faced by the social housing sector, including the Regulator's annual Sector Risk Profile report. Our established risk management framework allows us to identify, assess, analyse, track and report important risks. This includes putting in place proportionate improvements and treatment plans.

How do we make sure we get input from a wide and diverse range of people into our governance processes? (C31)

It is really important to us that we include a range of customer voices in our wider governance structure. We hold customer and community voice groups, open to all customers, who meet quarterly.

Our Customer Committee supports our Group board in overseeing customer engagement, scrutiny and the outcomes and actions related to the Tenant Satisfaction measures (TSMs). The Customer Committee has approved a scrutiny plan, which involves regular deep dives with involved customers to scrutinise Gentoo's processes, and identify service improvements. The Customer Committee also approved the Customer Engagement Strategy which outlines the work we are doing to hear from a wide range of customers.

Our board has a resident board member, and also receives updates on the work and views of the customer committee at each meeting. Our executive team and board discuss customer insight on a quarterly basis and our reporting templates ensure that customer voice is part of every decision.

At board meetings we share customer stories, where the board hears either directly from customers, or from the Housing or Property teams, on individual customer cases.

The People Committee has recently approved an updated Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging and policy, which include references to recruitment to both the board and to all colleagues.

Customer Committee member Angela Dalzell said:

"Shadowing teams within Gentoo has been rewarding and given the committee the chance to see how the teams support customers."

Scrutinising and contributing towards policies has been interesting, with a highlight being working towards Gentoo gaining the C1 grading in the new Customer Standards."

Committee member John Dannell commented:

"I see how we are encouraged to contribute by all of the senior leadership team and that our opinions are valued."

I see now that customers are now truly at the heart of everything Gentoo plan and do. This committee works and I am proud to be a part of it."



Our board

Our board (C32, C33, C34, C35, C36, C37, C38)

You can get to know more about our executive and board teams here
Governance - Gentoo Group

From September 2024 Gentoo's executive team has contained 5 members. 3 of the executive team have been appointed in the last 2 years. Previously, the executive team contained 4 members, and 2 of those left Gentoo in the last 2 years.

All Gentoo Group board members are non-executive directors, and five board members reached the end of their tenures and left the board in the last two years. New board members have been appointed in their place.

Our current committee chair, on the Group's Risk and Audit Committee who is professionally qualified has recent and relevant financial experience. However, there is other, non-professionally qualified financial experience on the Committee, including significant budgetary management experience.

Have we provided a succession plan been provided to our board in the last 12 months?

Oversight of our planning is delegated by our Group board to the People Committee, as outlined in the Group's standing orders and committee terms of reference. This covers both Executive and Non-Executive succession planning. The Group board has oversight of this via boardreporting.



How long has our current external audit partner been responsible for auditing our accounts?

Beever and Struthers are our external auditors and 2024/25's financial statements were the second to be audited by them.

When was our last independently-run board effectiveness review?

This was carried out in January 2025 and reported to the board in February and March 2025.

How do we handle conflicts of interest at board?

Our board members complete a declaration of interest form on their appointment, and then annually, and inform the Group of any changes during the year. Our board members are encouraged to discuss any potential conflicts of interests before taking up other interests.

At board and committee meetings, members disclose any potential conflicts of interest where relevant to business under discussion. Group board members are also Directors of Gentoo Homes Limited. We have a board policy around the management of actual or potential conflicts of interests between these 2 roles.



Colleague wellbeing



Gentoo is officially a Great Place to Work. This certification is a result of the significant work our teams have done on the culture at Gentoo and we are proud to be an employer of choice in the sector and the region.

Our approach to pay (Q39, Q40 & Q41)

Every colleague at Gentoo is paid the Real Living Wage or above. Our Gender Pay Gap remains significantly lower than the UK Median of 14.9%

	FY25	FY24	FY23
Median Gender Pay Gap	9.3%	9.2%	9.4%
CEO: median worker pay ratio	6.09:1	6.08:1	7.53:1

How do we promote Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging at Gentoo? (C42)

This year, we launched our first Equality, Diversity and Belonging (EDB) Steering Group to embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the organisation. This group of colleagues from across the business was set up to review colleague profiling data, to co-design our EDB plan, to agree and drive action and to develop and promote network groups across the business.

How do we support the physical and mental health of colleagues? (C43)

We support colleagues' physical and mental wellbeing in a range of different ways. This includes:

A comprehensive occupational health service with support that ranges from individual health screening to designing return-to-work plans for colleagues returning from long-term absence.

Cash healthcare plans - Colleagues can claim money back through our healthcare plan covering a range of different services, including dental and optical to health screening and scanning services .

We take part in a range of wellbeing activities throughout the year, including the Oasis Cup which is a football competition in the housing sector that colleagues can take part in.

We offer a range of support to colleagues through external partners, including an occupational health service and an employee assistance programme.

We have colleagues across the business who have volunteered to be Mental Health Advocates. They have been trained in Mental Health First Aid and are available to have a confidential, non-judgemental chat with colleagues.

We have various policies in place to help colleagues, including our Employee Health and Wellbeing Policy, Substance Misuse Policy, Smoking Policy and work-life balance policies.

How do we support the professional development of colleagues? (C44)

We encourage our colleagues to take ownership of their own personal and professional development. All colleagues have a Brilliant Conversation every quarter with their line manager to agree their goals and any development needs to support them in their current role, or a role that they may aspire to in the future.

Professional development takes many forms at Gentoo. Colleagues can apply to do a formal qualification, request attendance on various courses, attend conferences or seminars, access elearning courses or

undertake self-study. In 2024/25 37 colleagues studied for professional qualifications (excluding apprenticeships).

We also initiate organisational wide programmes of learning that support corporate objectives that we invite colleagues to attend throughout the year. New colleagues joining the Group are welcomed with a formal on-boarding and induction process. This helps them to find out everything they need to know to carry out their role effectively with planned activities throughout the first six months of employment.

This year we delivered over 7,000 hours of customer excellence and complaints training for our colleagues, focusing on delivering the best possible service every time. The training is guided by the CARE model (Clear, Assured, Respectful, Empathetic).

To support future skills, we launched the Gentoo Trades Academy in partnership with Sunderland College and Bishop Chadwick Education Trust. This innovative programme gives 14-16 year olds hands-on construction experience alongside their GCSEs, with guaranteed progression routes into apprenticeships or further education. The Academy will move to the new Housing Innovation and Construction Skills Academy (HICSA) in 2025.

Following on from our most successful apprentice open day, we received over 480 candidates and welcomed a large intake of 28 apprentices this year. They took up roles in trades, housing, and business support.

Supply Chain



How do we consider social value creation when procuring goods and services? (C45)

We place social value at the heart of our procurement strategy, using our purchasing power to foster positive change within our communities. Social value forms a core part of our tender evaluation and ongoing contract management, ensuring it is considered alongside quality and cost for all contracts exceeding £100,000, in line with the Procurement Act 2023 and the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.

Our use of the Social Value Portal enables us to track, measure, and report on the social impact delivered through our procurement activities. Oversight is provided by our Social Value Committee, which meets quarterly to review progress and ensure that social value is realised where it can make the greatest difference for our customers and communities.

How do we consider sustainability when procuring goods and services? (C46)

Sustainability is considered in all stages of our procurement process, from pre-market engagement, where we explore carbon reduction opportunities to product consolidation, life-cycle considerations and contract delivery.

For tenders exceeding £100,000, environmental impacts can be assessed via the Social Value Portal, with commitments reviewed quarterly by the Social Value Committee to ensure effective monitoring and prioritisation.

Upon contract award, Tier 1 and Tier 2 suppliers are required to provide environmental policies. Additionally, all suppliers delivering works on our behalf must hold CHAS Advanced certification, which encompasses a review of sustainability policies and procedures, relevant accreditations, training, and environmental performance monitoring. This is then monitored on an annual basis as part of our SRM defence model.



Thank you for reading this year's Gentoo Environmental, Social and Governance report. We hope you enjoyed it.

Visit our investor relations page to learn more about how we are performing.

www.gentooigroup.com/investor-relations

